BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY Volume 1: Genesis - Deuteronomy

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GENESIS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

GENESIS CHAPTER 1

1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*- Genesis 1 begins with the summary statement that God created “in the beginning”. But this Hebrew word *reshit* can refer to a period of time at the beginning, rather than a specific moment in time (see Job 8:7; Gen. 10:10; Jer. 28:1). If a single moment of time was intended, then other Hebrew words could have been used, e.g. *rishonah*. How long this period was, or the processes used, are simply not spoken about. I suggest that “heavens and earth” is a merism, i.e. putting two words together in order to describe something greater. I don’t believe, therefore, that we are to divide the term into “heavens” and “earth”. This verse is a simple statement that in the beginning, perhaps over a period, all things were created by God. The process used is not commented upon.

But the zoom of the record then focuses upon the preparation of the *eretz* / the “earth”. Analysis of Gen. 1:2-2:4 demonstrates that we are reading here of the “earth” being prepared, rather than created. Sure, God created planet earth and all things else, that much is stated in 1:1. But the focus of all the cosmos is upon the *eretz* , and the structure of the record goes further and reveals that the pinnacle of that creation was in the man formed on the sixth day. Significantly, the Pentateuch begins with the account of the creation of “heaven and earth” and concludes with Moses appealing to the “heavens and earth” of Israel (Dt. 32:1; 33:28).

The Hebrew for "beginning" is very often translated "firstfruit". The suggestion may be that the creation we are to now read of is but a firstfruit; and indeed, James 1:18 appears to allude here in saying that through the creative word, we are "a kind of firstfruits of all His creations". The implication straightaway is that this creation is but a firstfruit, with far greater promise implied in future ages.

"Created" doesn't have to mean 'from nothing'. You can create something, without that 'creation' implying that you brought matter into existence. The Genesis record of creation is alluded to so often, especially in Psalms, Isaiah and Paul' writings, as being the basis for God's creation of a new creation of persons; re-working the chaos and disorder of their lives into something beautiful and to His glory. Later usages of "create" are paralleled with 'calling forth / into visibility', and especially "forming" or moulding. This, I suggest, is what the "creation" here may refer to. And yet there is indeed the visual impression given of a creation from nothing, *ex nihilo*. That would be because effectively the new creation, the re-ordering and re-building of human life, is tantamount to something totally new.

One of the most fundamental differences with the creation myths is that Genesis 1 presents God as uncreated, having no beginning, and focuses upon what *He* created- whereas the other records seek to explain where their gods came from and how *they* were created: "These foreign creation myths recount not only the origins of the visible world, but, at the same, of the gods. Genesis 1, however, distinguishes itself radically from these all sincere there is no such theogony. This observation indicates the grandeur of Israel's religion" (Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997) p. 126).

1:2 *Now the earth was formless and empty; darkness was on the surface of the deep and God's Spirit was hovering over the surface of the waters*-There is fair debate over whether Gen. 1:2-2:4 is poetry or not. Redneck creationists argue it is not- because they consider this is a literal scientific account of creation. But there is fair evidence that it is in fact poetry- although the rhyme is in terms of the ideas rather than assonance of the words. The material is based around the number seven. Gen. 1:1 has seven Hebrew words, 1:2 has fourteen; 2:1-3 has 35 words [5x7]; *Elohim* is used 35 times; "firmament" and "earth" 21 [3x7] times each; and "it was so" and the comment that God saw "good" in it occur seven times each. The numerical value of the Hebrew words is also full of 'seven' patterns. This isn't quite what one would expect in a scientific account. And what was God intended to do in explaining origins? To explain them in scientific terms comprehensible and acceptable to a modern person? Or in terms acceptable to a primitive Israelite? I suggest He avoids that conundrum by presenting the creation account as limited only to *eretz* Israel, and presenting it as a drama, a kind of Divine slideshow.

The speeches in the book of Job are likewise poetry; these were therefore surely not the words that literally fell from the lips of Job and his friends. But that does not mean that the words are not inspired, nor does it make them myth. The poetic structure of Genesis 1:2-2:4 can be seen reflected even in translation; the work of each day is described within the same rubric: "There was evening and morning… God said… It was so… God saw that it was good… there was evening and morning". The account of creation is not evenly balanced, i.e. there is more detail given to some things than to others. This isn't what we would expect if the text is intended to provide a literal account of creation. The Bible uses various genres- it is a collection of poetry, direct statement, history, letters etc. Inspiration and revelation are two different things. All the Bible is inspired, but not all of it is a specific "Thus says the Lord…". The words of Job's friends are recorded by inspiration, but God Himself says that they were not all true. We are to interpret, to perceive the genre, the essence being communicated. And nowhere is that more true that in the creation record.

So I suggest that we should read Genesis neither as literal history, nor as myth. It is a dramatic presentation of the origin of Israel, produced in a particular context at a

specific time, and re-worked in the context of Judah's captivity and God's intention to re-create Israel at the restoration. The entire text from Gen. 1:1-2:4 is poetic; this itself surely warns us not to read this as a literal, blow by blow account of historical creation. If such a historical account was provided, we surely would find description and argumentation employed. But instead, we have a kind of poetry. Victor Hamilton has spotted many examples of chiastic structure within the section, and also within the individual verses. Take Gen. 1:5- Hamilton translates this as "God named the light 'Day'; the darkness he named 'Night'"; and he observes that the structure of verb- indirect object / indirect object – verb in the Hebrew text is essentially poetic. (Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Eerdmans, 1990) p. 118).

The earth- I will be arguing that *eretz* here, as in much of Genesis and the Hebrew Bible, refers specifically to the land of promise. I have elsewhere discussed the definition of *eretz* at length- see *The Last Days* Digression 3 'The earth- land- *eretz*'. The Spirit "flutters" over the waters in Gen. 1:2, just as God like an eagle [a symbol of the Spirit] "flutters" over Israel in bringing about their creation as a nation (Dt. 32:1). The point is, what God did at creation, He can do at any time.

Understanding *eretz* as referring to the land promised to Abraham enables us to read the account of the flood as describing a local event in that area. The watery formless waste of the Genesis 1 creation drama is repeated in the flood; a re-creation occurs, with Noah taking the role of Adam. I suggest that the same geographical area is in view- *eretz* Israel, rather than the entire planet. Likewise the events of Babel and confusion of languages make more sense if they refer to a localized situation within the *eretz* of greater Israel; the list of nations descended from Noah's sons in Genesis 10 all refer to the peoples within *eretz* Israel, rather than having any global reference. The nations mentioned there are found elsewhere in the Bible- and they refer to peoples within the land promised to Abraham, and not outside of it. No comment is made about e.g. Aborigines, African tribes or American Indians. Note also that later Biblical allusions to the flood speak of it as representative of God's judgments upon Israel; and this has an added appropriacy if the reference is to the same geographical territory. Noah was to take both clean and unclean animals into the ark, and we are surely intended to think that the later classification of clean and unclean animals was used. But that classification concerns animals known in *eretz* Israel. The intention was to keep life going on the *eretz* after the flood. There was no classification of all the animals of Australasia or the Amazon into clean or unclean, and no special comment on specific animals from those regions; the special comments on clean or unclean animals were all concerning animals known within the *eretz*.

The sons of God marrying the daughters of men resulted in the *eretz* falling into sin; I suggest this refers to the people of God who had been placed in the *eretz* marrying the other surrounding peoples. The language used about the state of things in the *eretz* is

exactly that used by the later prophets concerning the situation in Israel. The people were frightened by the "giants" they met in the land of Canaan (Num. 13:33), likely connecting them with superhuman beings. These *nephilim* [LXX *gigantes*] had their origin explained by Moses in Genesis 6- the righteous seed intermarried with the wicked outside of the *eretz*, and their offspring were these *nephilim*, mighty men of the world.

We read that people moved eastward and settled in Shinar before building Babel (Gen. 11:2); but 'east' is relative to a fixed, defined area on earth. If we insist that it means the entire planet, then it's hard to conceive where 'east' would be on a sphere like planet earth which is rotating on its own axis. But it makes sense within the boundaries of the *eretz* promised to Abraham. The same can be said of the account of Adam and Eve leaving Eden and moving east (Gen. 3:24), and the rejected Cain likewise heading east (Gen. 4:16).

Jer. 27:5 alludes to the creation record in speaking of how God had 'made' [the Hebrew word means more 'prepared' than 'to create'] "earth" and would give it to the king of Babylon: "I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight". It's significant that Gen. 1:1 speaks of God creating all things- *bara*. But this word is paralleled in the later account with another word which has the sense of 'making' / preparing. The "earth" was to be given to Nebuchadnezzar- clearly it is the specific *eretz* of Israel which is in view, and not the entire globe. Jer. 27:6 actually defines the *eretz* as also including Ammon, Moab, Sidon and Tyre- all areas within the *eretz* promised to Abraham.

If we understand Eden as being within the *eretz* Israel, then the Biblical predictions that the ravaged land of Israel would become as Eden take on an obvious appropriacy (Is. 51:1; Ez. 36:35; Joel 2:3). It is the same geographical area in view. Note that the garden was *in* Eden (Gen. 2:8), on the east of Eden. Adam and Eve were sent forth from the garden to the east- in the direction of Babylon (Gen. 11:1), which was built east of Eden. This clearly looks forward to the expulsion of Israel from their land, to Babylon, and confirms the equation of Eden and *eretz* Israel. Adam's place in Eden was dependent upon him obeying the "commandment" of Gen. 2:16, and a related word is used of how Israel's place in the land / *eretz* was also contingent upon their obedience to Divine commandment (Dt. 30:16).

Now the earth was formless and empty- This Hebrew phrase *tohu wabohu* is important in defining the "earth" spoken of as Israel. The Hebrew better means an "uninhabitable wilderness", although there is the idea of chaos also present. The same phrase is used in Jer. 4:23-26 about the state of *eretz* Israel after Israel had been exiled from it and it had been judged by God. There are other creation allusions in that passage: "I looked on the earth, and behold, it was *formless and void* (*tohu wabohu*); and to the heavens, and they had no light (cp. Gen. 1:2... the fruitful land was a wilderness... there was no man,

and all the birds of the heavens had fled". The first audience of Genesis 1 was Israel, as they were travelling through a wilderness to the promised *eretz*. It has been claimed that *tohu* means "deserted", and this would have relevance for the Jews in exile in Babylon, where Genesis was likely edited, being encouraged that God could indeed re-form the *eretz* they had left, and turn chaos into the beauty of His Kingdom. Note how the NASB margin offers "wasteland" for "formless". The same word is used in Dt. 32:10 about the wasteland where Israel were located when Genesis was first given- for their instruction. Dt. 32:11 continues the creation allusion by speaking of God as a bird 'hovering over' Israel- the same word used to describe how God's Spirit hovered over the surface of the waters (1:2).

As to whether there were previous creations before our own, my basic sense is 'Yes, probably there were'. The earth being "without form and void" (Gen. 1:2) uses a phrase elsewhere used to describe the judgment that has come on an order of things (Jer. 4:23; Is. 24:10; 34:11). It may be, therefore, that there was a previous creation on earth which was destroyed in judgment. John Thomas in the first section of *Elpis Israel* suggests (without much direct support from the Hebrew, it must be admitted) that the command to Adam to " replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28) implies to re-fill, as if there had been a previous creation that was destroyed, presumably by water. "In the beginning" , perhaps a huge period of time ago, God created the heavens and earth. But the present creation can be seen as being constituted some time later, after the previous creations. When during the six days of creation He said " Let there be light" this may not have necessitated the actual manufacture of the sun; this was presumably done "in the beginning" . But the sun was commanded to shine out of the darkness (2 Cor. 4:6), and therefore from the viewpoint of someone standing on the earth, it was as if the sun had been created. The earth was covered with water at the time the present creation began (Gen. 1:2). This would mean that the destruction of the earth by the flood in Noah's time was actually a repeat of something God had previously done. This sheds light on His promise to never again destroy the earth with water: "I will stablish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:11). This sounds as if destruction of the earth by flooding had happened several times before. It's almost as if the God of all grace is showing Himself progressively gracious to earth's inhabitants: 'I've done it before several times, but now I promise you humans, you new race of inhabitants upon whom my special love is to be shown through My Son, that I'll never do it again'.

Formless- Later allusions to the creation record parallel God's creation with His forming or molding. Isaiah's descriptions of God forming and molding the earth to be inhabited by His people clearly refer to His creation of the specific land of Israel, to be inhabited by the returning exiles (Is. 43:1,7,10,21; Is. 44:2,21,24; Is. 45:18). The drama starts off with the land of promise being formless, waiting for God to form it into something habitable. I suggest we have here a kind of prologue to the Pentateuch. The creation is

described as a series of six events, observed by someone standing on earth with it happening all around them. This is how Job begins. Clearly the book of Job is poetry, it is drama, and whilst Job was a historical person [at least, other Scripture alludes to him in this way], it is unlikely that the friends literally spoke in poetry, or that his loss of children was balanced out by gaining new ones, as if the pain of the loss was thereby compensated. And so the drama of creation is a poetic way of explaining to Israel in the wilderness where their promised land had come from. Just as it would be unwise to push the prologue of Job into a strictly literal framework of interpretation, so with the drama of creation which we have in early Genesis. The promised land being initially empty and formless speaks directly to the situation of the land when Israel first heard these words of Moses; they were travelling towards that land, whilst God was preparing it. Creation is therefore described in these terms, to remind them that the God of the cosmos was no less powerful in creating Israel. This is the sense of the many creation allusions in the restoration prophets. The deserted, abandoned land was to be re-formed by the same creative power which made it in the first place. The Babylonian invasion had made the land formless, empty and dark (Jer. 4:23), using the very words of Gen. 1:2 about the land before God began to prepare it for His people.

The surface of the deep- The usage of the more poetic "deep" rather than "sea" sets up allusion to how the Israelites came out of the deep to enter the land (Ps. 106:9; Is. 51:10; Is. 63:13), just as the 'land' is portrayed in this drama as it were emerging from the deep. "The surface of the deep" occurs only three times in the Hebrew Bible, and one of them suggests that at this time, God was preparing the land for His people: "When he prepared the heavens… when he set a compass upon the face of the depth" (Prov. 8:27). The allusion to Genesis 1 presents God as preparing rather than creating *ex nihilo*. He as it were is marking out with a pencil how He is going to prepare the material. And the focus of all His creative work was the earth, the land, and the people upon it, i.e. Israel.

God's Spirit was hovering over the surface of the waters- This rare word translated 'hovering' is to be found in the description of God hovering over the wilderness / formless land from whence He took His people (Dt. 32:11). The point is, what God did at creation, He can do at any time in the creation / formation of His people. In almost every phrase of the creation account, there appears reference to the creation of Israel. The land and people of Israel are frequently identified- appeals for the *land* to mourn obviously refer to the *people*. The later allusions to the creation record are therefore far more than simply allusions to God's creative power; they are so frequent because the same *eretz* or land is in view as that which is centre stage in the drama of creation which opens the history of Israel. And out of our formless and chaotic lives, the Spirit brings forth a new creation. The Genesis account of creation is very much of re-creation and re-ordering, forming beauty out of pre-existing chaos brought about by judgment. And this is what the Spirit is doing in the lives of all those born of the Spirit. The way the

Spirit hovered above the waters of baptism at the Lord's baptism clearly alludes here; and His baptism is programmatic for our baptism of water and Spirit. The language of Jn. 3:3-5 about being born out of water and Spirit may well allude here too; as the land arose from the waters, so the new life arises from the waters of baptism, with the gift of the Spirit from then onwards forming the new creation in that reformed, recreated life and person.

In the first group of three days, we read of things appearing in the sky (days one and two), then the seas (day three), and then the land (days three and four). In the second three days, things again appear in the sky (days four and five), then the seas (day five), and then the dry ground (day six). This strengthens the impression that we are being presented with a dramatic presentation, rather than a strictly literal, historical account of events. I write of 'impressions', and of course the interpretation of any Bible passage is in a sense deeply subjective and personal. I can only say that reading Genesis 1 and 2 as literature, I don't get the impression that this is symbolic; it isn't a case of dragons with stars on their tails as we have in the book of Revelation. I also do not get the impression that there is an attempt to provide a scientific explanation of the creation process; neither in ancient nor modern terms. I do get the impression that we are to read the record literally, and later Scripture clearly takes Adam as a literal person- I don't see the days as being presented as anything less or more than literal days. This is evidenced by the fact Adam was created on the sixth day but died at less than a thousand years old at some time after the seventh day. And yet clearly the record has elements of drama to it. I prefer therefore to liken the 'creation' account to a Divine drama or slideshow, observed by someone on the *eretz*. The events literally happened, in this dramatic presentation which serves as a prologue to the Pentateuch; just as the events of Job 1 are a prologue to the book, and are clearly drama. They happened literally enough- in the drama. But that is not to say that they are strictly literal, historical, verbatim

1:3 *God said*- The creation record emphasizes that God spoke, and it was done. Creation was through a spoken word. This contrasts with the creation myths, which nearly all claim that the present world emerged from conflict between good and bad gods; or that the world came forth as a kind of self-birth or self-reproduction [the pagan forerunner of atheistic evolution], or the gods playing with dust in their hands. The Biblical record is strikingly different, demonstrating that God is omnipotent of Himself, His word is all powerful, and there is no personal Satan or other cosmic force of evil. The new creation likewise comes about through the word of the Gospel.

Let there be light, and there was light- The sun was 'created', or appeared, on the fourth day. It has been argued that this light was therefore the *shekinah* glory of God. But I think that is an unnecessary argument. "Let there be light" doesn't have to mean that light or the sun was then created, because I suggest the creation of all things in the

cosmos was already touched on in 1:1. If we understand the whole record as a drama unfolding before an observer, we are to imagine dawn breaking, light appearing- and then on day four we find that this light comes from the sun. The same term describes the appearance of light at sunrise; and the sun or light isn't created at a sunrise, but it is observed as appearing (s.w. Gen. 44:3; Ex. 10:23; Neh. 8:3). But in the Divine drama now unfolding, light as it were appears upon the *eretz* like a spotlight shining on a dark stage. Paul powerfully uses this image to speak of the light of Christ breaking into our otherwise chaotic and formless lives to re-work that same material into something beautiful. The "heavens and earth" were already in existence (1:1); therefore all we now read about can't refer to their creation, but rather their appearance in the drama which is being unfolded. The whole language of "let there be light" doesn't sound as if the creation of light is in view; but rather pre-existing light is summoned to appear. Rev. 22:5 pictures a return to beginnings in saying that there will be light in the new Jerusalem, but no need of the sun [not 'no sun', but no need of it]. We see here how the provenance of 'creation' in Gen. 1:2- Gen. 2:4 is paralleled with the *new* Jerusalem, suggesting that the old creation drama was likewise centered around the *old* Jerusalem.

"Let there be" and "and there was..." translate the same Hebrew word, used twice in the sentence. The idea presented is that the Divine word of command was its fulfilment. The new creation is brought about by that same word of total power. What God says is as good as done. This explains why the Bible often uses language beyond and outside of our conceptions of linear time. The future is now. To the eye of faith.

It would seem from later Scripture that the orders and intentions outlined by God on the six literal days are *still* being fulfilled. Take the command for there to be light (Gen. 1:3,4). This is interpreted in 2 Cor. 4:6 as meaning that God shines in men's hearts in order to give them the knowledge of the light of Christ. The command was initially fulfilled by the Angels enabling the sun to shine through the thick darkness that shrouded the earth; but the deeper intention was to shine the spiritual light into the heart of earth-dwellers. And this is still being fulfilled. Likewise the resting of God on the seventh day was in fact a prophecy concerning how He and all His people will enter into the "rest" of the Kingdom. The Lord realized this when He said that even on Sabbath, God was still working (Jn. 5:17). The creation work had not *really* been completed in practice, although in prospect it had been. In this very context the Hebrew writer comments that although we must still enter into that rest, "the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb. 4:3).

The Genesis creation account repeatedly alludes to the Baal myths of creation- in order to show that it is God and not Baal who controls the cycles of nature and has brought an ordered creation out of chaos. Moses states early on in his inspired account that God created light. The Egyptians considered that light was in itself a great god, Re. And "in Persian cosmology...light...is uncreated and eternal" (J. Skinner, *Commentary On*

Genesis (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956)). So to say that the one true God created light, and light is not a god in itself, was a radical thing. And hence the account of the fourth day of creation is longer than the accounts of the other days; because the sun, moon and stars were seen as gods in themselves. The moon god, Sin, was thought to be the one who "fixes day, month and year". But Genesis 1 teaches that it is the one God who created the moon, who set the moon and stars to define time periods. There was only one God, one creator. We are to look beyond all created things to the Creator behind them. The peoples around the Israelites worshipped created things as if they were God. Moses was teaching that no, there is only one God, and we must primarily worship Him rather than anything which He has made. Paul brings out the error of worshipping the created rather than the Creator. And this echoes down to our day; where we can so easily worship the 'idols' of which this world is so full, rather than the ultimate Creator. That there is only *one* Divine Creator is a challenge to *any* form of idolatry.

1:4 *God saw the light, and saw that it was good*- This shouldn't be read as meaning that God looked at what He had created, and was impressed by His own handiwork when He saw it in physical existence. That would seem strange for an omnipotent and omniscient God. The idea could equally be that God looked at the light because it was good, recognizing it was good, whereas He doesn't look at the darkness; His looking at the light as it were made it "good". The light of the new creation is clearly presented in John's gospel as the Lord Jesus, who was alone "good" in God's eyes. Seeing or looking in Hebrew thought is connected with presence. The Father in that sense cannot look upon evil (Hab. 1:13), but He looks upon the Son, and we are in Him, and thereby in His presence acceptably.

God divided the light from the darkness- This is the language of God's 'creation' of Israel when He gives them light and divides them from the darkness of Egypt (Ex. 10:21; 14:20). The division of light from darkness was the prelude to Israel's inheritance of the prepared land; and thus it was at the beginning of creation. Likewise, prior to their entrance to the land, they heard the voice of God Himself coming out of the thick darkness (Dt. 5:23) just as it did in this record of the creation of the land. Judah in Babylon were in darkness (Is. 42:7); a darkness created by God just as much as the light (Is. 45:7). They were brought to light in their return to a restored land: "Darkness shall cover the land, and gross darkness the peoples; but Yahweh will arise on you, and His glory shall be seen on you" (Is. 60:2). This imagery is taken directly from the drama of creation, and the same 'land' is surely in view. The connections between the restoration prophecies and the creation record are so strong that my personal belief is that Moses' initial creation account was re-written in Babylon, under inspiration. I suggest Moses was the original inspired author because of the way parts of the Pentateuch are attributed to him in other Scripture, and because of the obvious relevance of the work for Israel in the wilderness, whom he was leading and teaching.

The idea of "division" is of separation; it is the word used of how God separates His people unto Himself. The division was in that God proclaimed a difference between light and darkness; what previously had been an apparent mixture of light and darkness is now clearly divided. This is helpful to all those who are part of the new creation. Outside of the Spirit's creative work, all seems an endless blur of grey. Moral truth and error is not apparent; people live according to feelings, or what society at their time defines as light and dark, good or bad. In the new creation, we progressively come to perceive light and darkness, and the chasmic difference between them.

1:5 *God called the light day, and the darkness He called night*- To name something was understood as effectively creating it (see on 2:20). So this naming was not *per se* creating these things, for they were already created in 1:1. Likewise Adam's naming of the animals didn't literally create them, but effectively brought them into known existence. And again likewise with God's calling or naming of things in the creation account after 1:1. As noted on Gen. 1:4, in the new creation, there is a labelling and crystal clear definition of light and darkness; darkness and light are called out for what they are. No longer are we left in the endless shades of grey which arise from human reflection upon ethical and moral issues. And the calling out of those things is in His word. Just as it was His voice which declared what was light and darkness.

There was evening and there was morning, one day- Many have wondered why the Hebrew day begins at sunset and ends in the morning. The answer presumably goes back to the timing of creation- implying God started work on day one in the darkness, and the evening and the morning became the first day (Gen. 1:5)- and the sequence thus continued. God's creative activity begins with all of us in the darkness, and creatively works to bring us through to the light. Interestingly, *ehad*, translated "first" in Gen. 1:5, can imply 'unified'. The two periods- day and night- become united into one "day". The light and the dark, the created and the not yet created, the achieved and not yet achieved, are somehow united in God's understanding of our 'days'.

Paul, writing to those who thought they believed in the unity of God, had to remind them that this simple fact implies the need for unity amongst us His children, seeing He treats us all equally as a truly good Father: " If so be that God is one... he shall justify the circumcision by faith, and [likewise] the uncircumcision through faith" (Rom. 3:30 RV). Unity amongst us is inspired by the fact that God seeks to be one with us, exactly because He is Himself 'unity', one in Himself. The Rabbis have always been at pains to point out the somewhat unusual grammar in the record of creation in Genesis 1, which literally translated reads: "One day... a second day... a third day", rather than 'One day... two days... three days', as we'd expect if 'Day one' solely referred to 'firstness' in terms of time. "The first day" (Gen. 1:5) therefore means more strictly 'the day of unity', in that it refers to how the one God sought unity with earth. "*Yom ehad,* one day, really means the day which God desired to be *one* with man... the unity of God is a concern for the unity

of the world" (Abraham Heschel, *Man is Not Alone* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979) p. 123). The spoken word of God is what brought light and darkness together in some meaningful synthesis; as noted on Gen. 1:4 and above on :5, there are now no longer the endless shades of grey in our lives. There is clear definition of right and wrong. And it is only God's creative work which enables us to synthesize the light and darkness into daily understanding. The Hebrew for "night" can suggest that which turns away [from the light]. This is very much the conception of John's gospel, presenting the Lord Jesus as the light, and all else as a turning away from that light, because of a preference to remain in evil deeds.

1:6 *God said, Let there be an expanse in the middle of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters*- The language of "an expanse" is to me one of the clearest evidences that we are reading a reported drama and not a scientific, historical account of creation. Some creationists claim that it refers to a water or ice canopy which came to earth at the flood. But this just will not do, for the same word translated “expanse” or “firmament” occurs later in the Bible, as if it still existed (e.g. Ps. 19:1; Ps. 150:1; Dan. 12:3). And the water released at the flood came from the clouds as well as from beneath the earth; there is no mention of this ‘firmament’ dissolving. God had already created the heavens and earth in Gen. 1:1, so the ‘firmament’ cannot refer to space or the atmosphere; that was already there if the heavens were already created. Further, the Hebrew word itself refers to something which is beaten out, a dome covering the land. It was intended to separate the waters from the waters, and something solid is implied by that alone. If it were indeed a canopy of water, then it would not be separating the upper waters from the lower waters- because it would itself be water. Gen. 1:20 in Hebrew speaks of the birds flying on the face or surface of this ‘firmament’, as if it were a constraining dome. We are invited to picture the clouds pinned to it above, and birds constrained by it beneath. Seeing that birds can fly through clouds, it will not do to claim that this “firmament” is merely the sky or a water canopy. A water canopy would have made the earth too hot for humans to live on. Why use the unusual and hard to define Hebrew term translated “expanse” or “firmament” if in fact merely the sky or atmosphere was intended? And why use a word which implies something tangible and material? There are other Hebrew words which mean ‘space’ as in the gap between two objects; but they aren’t used here [consider the Hebrew words used for ‘space’ in Gen. 32:16; Josh. 3:4; 1 Sam. 26:13]. Rather is there the idea of a “firmament”; this is not the same as saying ‘there was a space’. Job 37:18 uses the verb related to the noun “firmament” in saying that God “spread out [‘firmamented’] the sky, which is strong, as a molten looking glass”. The allusion is clearly to a common Ancient Near Eastern belief that there was such a dome over the earth. But later Biblical allusions to the firmament state that it is the platform upon which God sits and His cherubim ride (Ez. 1:23,25,26; 10:1 etc.). The firmament was understood as a solid structure and not simply the atmosphere. Is. 40:22 continues this understanding, although in the context of Israel, by

saying that God “stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in”. Moses saw God Himself enthroned upon such a blue firmament. My suggestion is that this was a prop, as it were, in the drama of creation; and above it is enthroned God and the Angels. But they are enthroned upon and over *Israel*. That is the point. Perhaps this is why day two of creation is the only one which lacks the Divine comment, that He saw what He had made and it was good. This expanse / firmament was part of the furniture on the stage, as it were, and not a reference to anything which He had materially created. The description in :14 and :17 of the planets as “lights” firmly located or “set” within this ‘firmament’ again gives the impression of a fixed dome, into which the lights are inset like spotlights shining down on a stage. And again, this is all appropriate to a person standing upon earth; for in reality, the planets are located at vastly differing distances from planet earth. We have similar language in Ezekiel 32, where we read of a kind of de-creation of Egypt, with the lights in her firmament going out as if they were strobe lights being turned off over a stage: "When I shall extinguish you, I will cover the sky and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of the sky will I make dark over you and set darkness on your land, says the Lord Yahweh" (Ez. 32:7,8).

The restoration prophets speak of how God will as it were re-create Israel when He restores His people to their land. And the verb *raqa*, to spread out, to ‘firmament’, is used about the earth / land of Israel, paralleling the spreading out of the land to the spreading out of the heavens above it: “He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the land” (Is. 42:5); “He that stretches forth the heavens alone, that spreads abroad the earth / land by Himself” (Is. 44:24); “Him that stretched out the land / earth” (Ps. 136:6). Clearly, the ‘firmament’ was seen as a dome over the land of Israel; what was seen in the drama of creation was going to be repeated at Israel’s restoration. That restoration will not involve a literal creation of land out of nothing.

The idea of the creation scene occurring beneath a covering is one of many connections between the creation record in Genesis 1, and the tabernacle. There are so many points of contact:

- As creation was achieved by a series of successive Divine commands being fulfilled, so the tabernacle was created in obedience to Divine commands, and was inspected by God and found good, and was blessed (Gen. 1:31 = Ex. 39:43).

- The creation was “completed” (Gen. 2:1) as the tabernacle was (Ex. 39:32).

- God finished His creation work (Gen. 2:2), as the tabernacle was a “work” that was “finished” (Ex. 40:33).

- The completed creation and tabernacle were both Divinely blessed (Gen. 2:3 = Ex. 39:43); and creation and tabernacle were both "sanctified" on completion (Gen. 2:3 = Ex. 40:9).

- The tabernacle was built in response to seven successive Divine speeches to Moses, each beginning with "The Lord spoke to Moses" (Ex. 25:1; 30:11,16,22,34; 31:11,12). This obviously connects with the seven days of creation, and some Jewish commentators perceive similarities between the events of the creation days, and the material constructed for the tabernacle in each of the matching sections of Ex. 25-31. Thus "sea" was created on the third day (Gen. 1:9-11), and it was in the third command that the bronze laver or "sea" was commanded (Ex. 30:16-21). And the seventh speech (Ex. 31:12-17) mentions the need to keep the Sabbath, which was the theme of the seventh day of creation.

- The significant theme of 'separation' in creation (Gen. 1:4,6,7,14,18) is reflected in the 'separation' of holy and less than holy in the tabernacle (Ex. 26:33) and the associated legislation regarding separating clean from unclean.

- Both creation and the construction of the tabernacle were the work of God's Spirit (Gen. 1:1; Ex. 31:3; 35:31).

- The tabernacle was finished as the new started (Ex. 40:17), continuing the connection between tabernacle and creation.

- The "firmament", literally 'the beaten thing', uses the same word found in Ex. 39:3 and Num. 16:39 for the beating of metals into material for tabernacle usage. The precious stones of Gen. 2:12 are the very stones found in the breastplate.

- Adam's role was to dress and keep the garden (Gen. 2:15); but the Hebrew words used are elsewhere used for "worship" and for dressing and keeping the tabernacle. The whole phrase "Behold I have given you..." (Gen. 1:28) occurs later when the Priests are told what God has given them (Ex. 31:6; Lev. 6:10; Num. 18:8,21; Dt. 11:14).

- As God walked in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8), so He would walk in the midst of the camp of Israel in the wilderness (Dt. 23:15).

The point is that the *eretz* and Eden were presented as God's tabernacle, with the man of the *eretz*, Adam the first Israelite, intended to keep God's ways and do His service within it. My point is that the focus of Genesis 1 is upon Israel and God's people within that *eretz*, rather than being a literal account of the creation of the cosmos from nothing.

We note again as on Gen. 1:4,5 the idea of division; as light was separated from darkness, so the waters were divided. The new creation is very much about division and separation- not simply *from* evil, but more positively, *unto* God's things.

1:7 *God made the expanse*- A different word to that translated “created” in 1:1. It has been well observed that in the six days of creation God is *preparing* this land for man and not *creating* it. Indeed, the Hebrew word translated ‘made’ in the context of creation can be used just as in English we speak of ‘making a bed’. We don’t mean we created a bed, but that we prepared the existing materials for usage. The Hebrew word is used in just this sense in places like Dt. 21:12 [to ‘make’ fingernails]; 2 Sam. 19:25 [to ‘make’ feet] and 2 Sam. 19:24 [to ‘make’ a beard]. And this is exactly relevant to Israel in the wilderness being led to a land which their God had prepared for them. The *eretz* is presented to us in terms of its relation to the seas (:10) and sky (:20)- rather than with reference to the further cosmos, stars etc., as would be required if the *eretz* referred to the whole planet.

And divided the waters- A phrase repeatedly used of the dividing of the Red Sea so that Israel could pass on “dry land” (:9). The creation and formation of Israel is consistently described in creation language- because it was exactly their creation which the creation drama speaks of. And the new creation likewise in each heart is to modelled on this same huge creative, re-ordering power seen here.

Which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse- Such references to location ("under... above") imply a flat surface is in view, from the viewpoint of a person standing on the earth.

And it was so- There is a very positive feel in the record of the natural creation- each creative action is concluded with the comment “And it was so”- literally, “it was Yes” (Hebrew). This same positive upward spiral will be found in lives which submit to God’s new creation.

1:8 *God called the expanse sky. There was evening and there was morning, a second day*- The Hebrew means to call out, to proclaim. This fits the idea of a Divine drama unfolding, with the voice of God as the narrator. The idea of a drama or slideshow helps us better address the question as to whether the events of Genesis 1 literally happened. ‘What happened in the film’. ‘What happened next in the slideshow?’- such questions have a ‘literal’ answer. The observer, in whose shoes we are placed by the drama, saw these things literally happen as they were presented to him. Whether that is what literally happened in order to create the cosmos is not the question in view. The creation of all things was briefly addressed in 1:1, and then the spotlight moved on to *eretz* Israel. Likewise the New Testament presents Adam as the first man, and yes indeed he is presented as the first man in the Genesis record. But that record is a drama of creation, focusing specifically on *eretz* Israel and the man and people of God upon it. No attempt is made at wider explanations concerning the rest of the planet or indeed the cosmos. The things recorded were indeed literally seen by the observer; I am not much attracted by attempts to make the events all purely symbolic or mythical. They are presented as literal events.

1:9 *God said, Let the waters under the sky be gathered together to one place*- See on 2:24. "One place" means just that, and the term often refers to the Jerusalem sanctuary or tabernacle. The reference does not fit comfortably with the idea of all water on the globe being gathered into the various ocean basins. Which is how we have to read this if we want to understand the record here as explaining the literal creation of planet earth. There are inland seas, and the distribution of the oceans hardly fits the idea of "one place" as it is Biblically used. The gathering of the seas or peoples is envisioned as being to "one place", the sanctuary of Yahweh.

Let the dry land appear- This hardly sounds like the actual creation of the dry land; rather does it fit admirably with the idea of a drama or slow motion slide show [as it were] being recorded in words, from the standpoint of an observer. The events of the various days of creation are visions, acts in a drama, whereby the *eretz* of promise appears, as it were, out of the sea; the mist covering it is gathered up into clouds, the dry land appears etc. The drama is recorded from the standpoint of a human standing on the already created earth, watching it happen. This was God's creation story; it was how He wished Israel to dramatically conceive of the creation of their land, as opposed to accepting the fanciful creation myths they had encountered in Egypt. The "seas" are spoken of in the plural whereas the *eretz* is singular. There are various islands and continents on planet earth; the focus is on a particular land mass, the *eretz* of Israel. If we wish to read this as referring to the emergence of the continents, then "land" would have to be in the plural; but it isn't. A particular land is in view.

1:10 *God called the dry land earth*- This does not specifically state that the earth is flat, but it's significant that there is no mention of it being a sphere; and the words would rather suggest that a flat earth was in view. But this makes sense if the "land" in view is that of Israel. This would also explain why there is no obvious reference in Genesis 1 to the 'earth' as being spherical, which we would rather expect if the global planet was in view. This explains why Is. 40:28 speaks of 'God creating' (the same words as in Genesis 1) "the ends of the earth / land". The Hebrew for "ends" means a frontier, a border, a corner. If we are insistent upon understanding the *eretz* as referring to the whole planet, then we are left with the conclusion that the Bible speaks of a flat earth, with literal ends and boundaries to it. I suggest however that Isaiah is understanding the Genesis creation as referring specifically to the bringing about of the land of Israel. The borders were created, in that they were defined by God and then the enclosed territory was promised to Israel. In the same way we read of God creating the north and south- of the land of Israel. We have similar language in Is. 45:18, where the 'creation of heaven and earth' is cited as evidence that God didn't therefore create the earth / land in vain, but to be inhabited; and this is in the context of God assuring Judah that they would return to their land, for He had created the heavens and land of Israel in order that the land should not remain waste, for that would have meant creation in vain, but rather to be

inhabited- by the returned exiles. The new 'heavens and earth' which were to be created are defined specifically as being Jerusalem and a restored Judah (Is. 65:17,18).

The gathering together of the waters He called seas- Perhaps a reference to the three 'seas' which are spoken of in Israel, the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee and the "Great Sea", the Mediterranean. Waters and flooding are Biblical symbols of judgment. God can be seen as gathering together the previous judgments, and bringing order and beauty out of condemnation. Which is exactly why the creation narrative is so repeatedly used as the pattern for our transformation by the work of the same Spirit.

God saw that it was good- This comment is specifically about the earth / *eretz* which has now 'appeared'. The *eretz* is very often called the "good" land, using the same Hebrew word translated "good" in the repeated declarations that the created *eretz* and all in it was "good" (Gen. 49:15; Ex. 3:8; Num. 14:7; Dt. 1:25,35; 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 11:17 and many other times). The making "good" of the land can be understood as a function of God's seeing or looking upon it. The land was in His eyes, in His presence, as the idiom can mean.

1:11 *God said, Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed*- The same words used in Amos 7:2 for how the "grass of the earth", i.e. the land of Israel, was eaten up by her invaders. The emphasis is upon how the *eretz* was to be filled with vegetation as a result of seed being distributed. This lays the basis for the promises to Abraham concerning the spread of His seed throughout the *eretz*.

And fruit trees bearing fruit after their kind, with its seed in it, on the earth; and it was so- This particular emphasis upon fruit trees with edible fruit appears strange if the whole planet is in view. But it suddenly makes sense if the *eretz* in view is in fact the garden, to which we will be introduced in Genesis 2. That garden was full of fruit trees which had fruit on them. Likewise the reference to "grass" is relevant to the land of Israel; for not all areas of planet earth have grass or fruit trees.

1:12 *The earth sprouted vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind*- Again this is not the language of creation from nothing. Rather is the visual impression given of vegetation arising, having already been created and now planted in the earth of the *eretz*.

And trees bearing fruit, with its seed in it, after their kind; and God saw that it was good- The record focuses on the grass and fruit trees- characteristic of Israel. There is no attempt to mention every aspect of the plant and animal creation, but only those things which are felt to characterize Israel. There is no focus upon the creation of bushes, or even trees generally; the focus is on fruit trees. The text is clearly not even attempting a scientific explanation; rather are we seeing something impressively visual, fruit trees,

appearing on the stage in the drama being unfolded. As noted on :11, the language of seed and fruit is full of spiritual imagery. It is the people of Israel who were to fill the face of the earth with (spiritual) fruit (Is. 27:6).

1:13 *There was evening and there was morning, a third day*- We note the Hebraic way of progressing from evening to morning, the darkness towards the light; whereas in western thought, the day begins with night and fades into darkness. This is reflected in the sense that the past was wonderful, the present is far worse, and the future will be awful. Whereas from God's perspective, the darkness is past, and the best is ahead. At least for the believer.

1:14 *God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of sky to divide the day from the night*- The Hebrew idea is: 'Let the lights in the expanse be for separating the day and night...'. The actual planets, sun and moon etc. were already created in the "beginning" (1:1); but now in this Divine slideshow presentation, they play a specific role over the *eretz* of Israel. The stars do not of themselves divide day from night. God had already divided light from darkness in :4; now we learn how He did it. Again, we are not being given a blow by blow account of strict chronological creation.

Let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years- This is the language of the Mosaic feasts. The GNB offers "religious festivals" as a fair translation here. The stars were placed in order to tell Israel beneath them when to perform the rituals of Divine worship. Again, we are invited to see the 'land' upon which these heavenly bodies shined as the land of Israel, inhabited by God's people.

1:15 *Let them be for lights in the expanse of sky to give light on the earth*- The "lights" in view are hardly the entire cosmos, because not all planets shed light upon planet earth. The stars likewise are spoken of giving light on earth (:16,17). If we are going to limit the reference of the lights and stars to those relevant to planet earth, we are tacitly admitting that the creation record is not speaking of the creation of literally all planets, or all things. It is therefore no problem, surely, to accept that in fact the record here may not be speaking simply of part of the cosmos, i.e. planet earth, but of a part of the planet, the *eretz* promised to Abraham. We note that God "prepared" the "light [s.w.] and the sun" (Ps. 74:16). This is a direct statement that the 'creation' record in Genesis 1 speaks of the preparation of things rather than their creation *ex nihilo*. Note that the moon is not of itself a light source- it reflects light. Yet in this drama of creation, the moon over the *eretz* is presented as a bulb which is switched on, thus giving light on *eretz* Israel. These lights were intended to give light on the *eretz*. Perhaps believers or Angels are in view. The idea of giving light is clearly suggestive of sharing the light of God's word. It may be that these lights don't refer to the stars, because they are "made" in :16. In this case, Moses is seeing a special creation around the *eretz*, and the lights in view here are not referring to literal planets.

1:16 *God made the two great lights*- I have noted earlier that 'made' is used in the sense of 'preparing', as in 'making a bed'. The heavens and earth, a merism for 'everything', had already been created in 1:1. We are to imagine at this stage of the drama the preparation of two great lights, and then placing them inset into the 'firmament' or dome (:17). The plants and vegetation had already appeared on the previous day, which would have been impossible without the sun. Their appearance was apparently instantaneous. Clearly this is all part of a drama which we are invited to watch unfolding, entering into the man standing on earth seeing it all come about, rather than seeking to read all this as literal acts of the historical creation. This answers the obvious objection: "How could light be produced on the first day, and the sun, the fountain of it, not be created till the fourth day?". In the drama presented, the sun is only revealed on 'Day Four'. This is strong evidence for thinking that the whole drama is being recorded from the viewpoint of a person standing on earth. It is not, therefore, a literal explanation of the historical creative process.

The sun and moon are only "great" relative to the earth; so we are not reading here of an explanation of the cosmos, but are seeing things described from the viewpoint of a person on earth.

Having recently left Egypt, the Israelites had been exposed for 400 years to the idea that Ra, the sun God of Egypt, was ruling the world. But Gen. 1:16 teaches that the God of Israel created the sun, the sun was not uncreate as the Israelites had been taught, and he ruled only by God's fiat and allowance. Even if people wanted to believe in a sun God who ruled- the point being made was that the God of Israel was far above that sun god, had created the sun, and given it power to 'rule'.

It's possible to perceive significance in the colours of the things created. The record starts with black and white, day and night; then the blue sea and sky; then green grass; now yellow sun; and finally man is created from the *adamah*, the red soil. This would then complete a rainbow, and we note a rainbow appears when God as it were re-creates the *eretz* after making it a watery mass again at the flood. Again we are invited to see the provenance of the flood as being that of the *eretz* of Genesis 1, and there are good reasons for believing the *eretz* of the flood to refer to a specific part of the Middle East rather than the entire planet.

The greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night- Rulership of day and night is hard to apply to the literal sun and moon. The concept of rulership suggests we are to see something more than literal creation here.

He also made the stars- This is added as an afterthought, almost. The focus is upon sun and moon. Seeing sun and moon are almost insignificant compared to the other stars in the cosmos, we are obviously being given a very earth-centred account, rather than an explanation of the entire cosmos. The pagan creation myths gave priority to the stars,

which they considered critical in determining human fortune; but God's account says that He brought them into being, but gives no great emphasis to them. Joel 3:15 speaks of the sun, moon and stars no longer shining when Israel is overcome by; again, the message is that the creation record is focused upon *eretz* Israel. The literal stars are billions of light years away, and if they were suddenly created, they would not be immediately observed by an observer standing on earth. Again it stands to reason that we are not reading a literal account of creation, but rather a dramatic presentation of how things appeared to an observer on *eretz* Israel.

For want of a better way of putting it, the spiritual culture of God comes through so sublimely in these records. He began His written revelation with the comment, as an almost throw-away clause, that "He made the stars also" (Gen. 1:16). The vastness of that creation, far more wondrous and extensive than just this planet, is treated *en passant*. The actual resurrection of the Lord Jesus is likewise not recorded; we only learn of it from the recorded witness of those who went to the tomb, and who later met the Lord.

1:17 *God set them in the expanse of sky to give light to the earth*- The stars don't really give light to the earth as in the entire planet. This strengthens my suggestion that the account of creation here refers to a vision seen, and the focus is upon *eretz* Israel rather than the globe. The lights which are placed in the material "firmament" or "expanse" are as it were spotlights fitted into a stage set, giving light in various forms upon the specific territory defined as the "earth" or *eretz* which is the stage upon which our attention is focused. We are as the stars (Dan. 12:2) in giving light to others. The mediation of light was therefore through various heavenly bodies, of different magnitudes and each giving light in a different way. And this is exactly how God's self revelation operates towards His people, coming through people, prophets, leaders and Angels.

1:18 *And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good*- The sun, moon and stars do not literally divide light from darkness. This would support my suggestion that Genesis 1 describes a kind of slideshow of creation, with a material dome in which the planets are set. The planets all being set within the same dome, or firmament, they divided light from darkness in that they were located on the dome ["firmament"] which did so. This all sounds like a description of some kind of model, a theatrical set above which lights appear, waters gather, land appears, grass shoots forth etc. The language of 'ruling over' nudges us to see in it something symbolic. For the sun and moon do not in any literal sense 'rule over' day and night.

God had divided light from darkness in Gen. 1:4; now we read that He created or better "made" the solar system in order to divide light from darkness. So clearly we aren't reading a chronological account of creation. At best we are reading what He "did" on one "day", and then how this came about on a later "day".

1:19 *There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day*- The Divine concept of "day" is the very inverse of how humans would intuitively understand a day- beginning with dawn and ending with night. His day begins with the evening of darkness, and concludes with the light. Out of our darkness, He creates eternal light, and that is how His eternal day concludes- in light, not in the closure of darkness. This is the dramatic inversion of all evil which is the ultimate hope exhibited in the gospel of God's Kingdom.

1:20 *God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures*- "Swarm" translates a word implying that the waters "brought forth" these creatures. The literalist reading, following the KJV, would have to conclude that the creatures somehow originated from H2O. The sentence makes more sense surely if we read this as drama- the spectator saw the creatures swarming out of the water. This was how it appeared, visually, to the observer. But that was for the purpose of the dramatic scene, and shouldn't be read to mean that the creatures evolved as it were out of water.

The creation account was the basis for the de-creation, if you like, of Egypt through the plagues. The same Hebrew term for 'the waters swarming' is used in Ex. 8:3 about how the Nile water swarmed with frogs. As He made the waters "swarm" in Gen. 1:20, so He made the waters of the Nile "swarm" with frogs (Ex. 7:28) in order to save His people from a no-hope, chaotic, disordered, hopeless situation.

The idea of the Hebrew word for "swarm" is of "abundance. We have been given life in Christ, and "life more abundant" (Jn. 10:10)- an allusion to how the natural creation brought forth life 'abundantly' (Gen. 1:20). Those who have become part of the new creation are to experience this same 'abundance' of life- whether trapped in poverty, difficult family situations, ill health or even clinical depression. The 'abundance' of our lives is to be what makes us different from those in the world- we are to salute not only our brethren because we are living "more [same Greek word translated 'abundantly'] than others (Mk. 5:47). There is a power at work in us which does "exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

And let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of sky- The idea is that the birds arose out of the water. This is clearly not a scientific statement, but rather a visual account of how the scene looked to the observer of the drama. The AV more correctly reflects the Hebrew word for "firmament": "fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven". The birds are described in Hebrew as flying 'across the face of' the "firmament" rather than "in" it. This further supports the idea of a dome, arching across an area of flat land, with the birds moving across the surface of it- the same surface where the planets are spoken of as being "set". This is clearly not a literal scientific explanation of material creation, but rather does it seem to describe the appearance seen by the observer of this Divine drama in which the dome or firmament is a major stage prop.

1:21 *God created*- Again, the idea is that He "made" things, but 'making' is used about making things out of pre-existing material, rather than creation from nothing, *ex nihilo*.

The large sea creatures- Most of the other Biblical occurrences of the Hebrew word refer to large creatures which live in rivers- serpents, crocodiles etc. Why the strange focus upon just one kind of water creature? Surely because the record is focusing upon the animals of the *eretz* which lived in the rivers which formed the boundaries of *eretz* Israel. Remember that “sea” can refer to any body of water, and not necessarily a saltwater ocean.

And every winged bird after its kind. God saw that it was good- It might seem axiomatic that birds have wings, but the stress upon wings may well be because of the pagan, and Babylonian specifically, belief in winged gods. This is another reason for believing that the Genesis record was edited, under inspiration, whilst the Jews were in Babylon. The point being that it was Israel’s God who had created all winged beings.

1:22 *God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas*- This is presented as a command which the animals, especially fish, had the capacity to understand and choose to obey. For the same language will later be used in the command to Adam and Eve. Again we are being nudged to perceive that this record of creation is intended to be understood as having a strong figurative element to it. For fish in their literal sense do not listen to Divine commandment and then decide as to whether or not to obey. If there is no element of choice implied, then the concept of commandment seems misplaced and inappropriate.

And let birds m*ultiply on the earth*- The same words used about the multiplication of animals in the land / earth which had been the territory affected by the flood (Gen. 8:17; 9:1). This command of God to animals surely wasn’t understood by them; it makes more sense as part of a dramatic presentation, where Yahweh’s voice addresses the scene rather than literally the animals. The specific command is for birds to multiply on the earth; when birds typically live above the earth in nests on trees. The idea is that the multiplication on earth, in obedience to Divine commandment, results in birds flying above, higher than, where they began. The command to multiply on the *eretz* is going to be used later about the multiplication of Abraham's seed on the *eretz*, with the implication they had the potential to arise so much higher.

1:23 *There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day*- As noted on :19, the Divine concept of "day" is the very inverse of how humans would intuitively understand a day- beginning with dawn and ending with night. His day begins with the evening of darkness, and concludes with the light. Out of our darkness, He creates eternal light, and that is how His eternal day concludes- in light, not in the closure of darkness. This is the dramatic inversion of all evil which is the ultimate hope exhibited in the gospel of God's Kingdom.

1:24 *God said*- One major difference between Genesis and the pagan creation myths was that Moses told the Israelites that God created everything by His word. He spoke, and it was done. This was markedly different to the [then] popular myths of gods hatching eggs, or procreating to produce the world. Repeatedly, later Scripture alludes to the fact that it was by the word of God that the world was created; and that same powerful, re-forming, saving word was and is that heard by His people still (Ps. 33:6,9; 104:7; 147:15-18; 148:3-5; Is. 40:26; 44:23; 48:13; 50:2; 55:10). A. Heidel comments: "The word of the Babylonian deities was not almighty. On the contrary, the word of the creator in Gen. 1 is almighty. He commands and the result is in perfect conformity to his command...there is a profound difference between the Bible and non-biblical religions" [on this point of the word being the agency of creation]. This feature of Genesis 1 paves the way for Ex. 25:1 and many other passages later in the Pentateuch recording how "God said...", and Israel therefore ought to obey His word of command in 'creating' the tabernacle out of existing materials. Thereby they would show themselves at one with the Angel-elohim, who had earlier likewise obeyed God's word of command in creating the world. God spoke, and it was done. And so when God speaks now to His *elohim*, His people- it ought likewise to be done.

Let the earth produce living creatures after their kind, livestock, creeping things- The Hebrew translated "produce" has a wide range of meaning. The account of the emergence of animals from Noah's ark is clearly intended to be understood as a re-creation on the *eretz*. The same word is used of how the animals 'came out of' the ark and likewise began to reproduce abundantly in the earth (Gen. 8:17,19; 9:10). This doesn't mean they were created *ex nihilo*, they appeared on the *eretz*; and that is the same picture we have here in Genesis 1. The word is used of how rivers were produced, or sprung out, of the land of Israel (Dt. 8:7), and frequently of the 'coming forth' of Israel from Egypt. So I suggest the drama of creation at this point saw the animals of the *eretz* arising out of the *eretz*. This is not to say that animals were created from dust, because that would require a different Hebrew word. Here, *eretz*, the land, is used.

God created matter. Ultimately, all that exists was made by Him; and by faith we believe that things which now exist were not made from what already existed apart from God. The Genesis record of creation, however, emphasizes how God brought order out of chaos. He brought this present world of beauty and order out of a darkness that brooded upon a sea, and from an earth that was "without form and void", the Hebrew images behind the words implying 'a chaos'. The frequent references to the earth and sea 'bringing forth' (e.g. Gen. 1:12,24 "produce") use a Hebrew word which means 'to let something which is within to come out'. The present world was created by a re-organization of things which existed in some form before. This means that when our own lives, or the collective life of God's people, appears to be in chaos- then we can in faith reflect that God has brought beautiful order out of chaos, and He can likewise

powerfully bring order to what seems hopeless. This is the context of the creation allusions in the laments of Ps. 74:12-17; 89:10-15; Is. 51:9 etc.

And animals of the earth after their kind; and it was so- We can understand this as the observer of the drama viewing specifically the animals native to the earth / land of Israel appearing; likewise the birds which appeared on the *eretz* in :22 would refer specifically to birds known to *eretz* Israel. Likewise the lists of clean and unclean animals we encounter later in the Pentateuch are all animals known within *eretz* Israel, they are not a global list. If the intention of the record is to describe the entire animal stock of the planet, the emphasized additional phrase "of the earth" would appear superfluous. This would explain too why there is particular emphasis upon *fruit* trees. Such trees are not in every land of planet earth, but they were characteristic of Israel.

1:25 *God made the animals of the earth after their kind, and the livestock after their kind*- As noted on :24, the reference here is to the specific animals of the *eretz*, the land promised to Abraham. The command in :24 to "let the earth produce..." these animals is now put into operation by God. The idea is that He states His intention, and then puts His word into operation on the ground. The impression is given that His word is then operationalized. And His spoken word to this day has that same pregnancy of power. The oft repeated "after their kind" suggests that all the various animals within their respective families were created. The impression is of the creation of families, even within the animal kingdom. And as we will see later in the Genesis record, the creative purpose of God operates through families.

And everything that creeps on the ground after its kind. God saw that it was good- The same word used later in the Pentateuch for the "creeping" animals which were unclean. But here we learn that even those 'creepers' were created by God and pronounced "good". Hence Paul argues that there is nothing unclean in itself (Rom. 14:14). The distinctions between clean and unclean were therefore purely for teaching purposes, and not because the "unclean" were unclean of themselves; for here they are pronounced "good" because of their very presence or 'seeing' before God. Here, then, we see the great hope of the Gospel- the unclean were created by God and can be "good" in His presence or eyes.

1:26 *God said, Let us make man*- Adam is presented as the first man, and the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 10 trace the developments of genealogy from him. But the list of nations in Genesis 10 relate specifically to the peoples found in the land promised to Abraham. This relieves us from worrying about whether there were other people around before Adam, or from where his children found marriage partners. The focus of the account is upon the land promised to Abraham; and the later Biblical mentions of Adam as the first man can be understood as continuing this Israel-centered focus which we find throughout the Bible. The Bible is the Divine history of His

relationship with His people and their land; it doesn't attempt to chronicle human or global history beyond that.

The *elohim* in view here can be understood as an intensive plural referring to God Himself. But the word is once translated "angels" in the KJV. In this case, man is made in the image and likeness of God, as manifested through the angels. Thus man is made in the image and likeness of God, as manifested through the Angels. These words cannot apply to man's mental image, because by nature our minds are totally distanced from God and in many ways fundamentally opposed to His righteousness. " For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Is. 55:8,9). Therefore the image and likeness which we share with God must be in physical image. Whenever Angels have been seen on earth they are described as having the form of men - e.g. Abraham entertained Angels unaware, thinking that they were ordinary men. Our creation in the image of God surely means that we can infer something about the real object of which we are but an image. Thus God, whom we reflect, is not something nebulous which we cannot conceive of.

"Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26), "Behold, the man has become like one of us" (Gen. 3:22) and "Come, let us go down" (Gen. 11:7) are examples from early Genesis of a plural being used about God. Franz Delitzsch analyzes the Hebrew constructions here at great length, concluding that these verses manifest a "communicative plural", implying God conferring with His council. Perhaps here we have the Angels making a joint decision, as they did at Babel: "The LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded (again, the language of limitation, as if God had to make closer inspection- the 'LORD' must therefore be the Angels). . Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language" (Gen. 11:5,7). And in Gen. 18 we have an example of Angels discussing their policy with regard to one of their charges in the physical presence of the saint: . . "and Abraham went with them (the Angels) to bring them on their way (they were therefore in his presence). And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him. . " (v. 17-19). This conversation was presumably inaudible to Abraham. Who knows what conversations go on between our guardians as we sit with Bibles in our hands, obedient to God, and our Angels decide how much to reveal to us in accord with how they know we will behave in the future? The cherubim and living creatures are representative of the Angels. See on Ez. 3:13.

I note that Trinitarians are increasingly recognizing that their standard arguments are weak. There was a time when Gen. 1:26 would be often quoted to support the Trinity. But it's now widely recognized that there are several Hebrew words which have plural endings, and yet refer to a singular entity- e.g. panim means "face". Nearly always,

elohim is referred to in the singular by the grammar surrounding it. Thus "Christians have traditionally seen this verse as [proving] the Trinity. It is now universally admitted that this was not what the plural means to the original author" (G.J. Wenham, Genesis 1-15 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1997) p. 27). The note in the NIV Study Bible likewise takes the approach that this passage refers to Angels: "God speaks as the Creator-King, announcing his crowning work to the members of his heavenly court".

The Hebrew construction used here has been described as “a plural of deliberation”. C. Brockelmann describes it as “a form of speech which occurred primarily in self-deliberation”. In other words, an individual may use a plural to describe his or her decision. Take David’s words in 2 Sam. 24:14: “Let *us* fall into the hand of the Lord…but let not *me* fall into the hand of man”. Ezra 4:18 has a King saying: “The letter ye sent unto *us* hath been plainly read before *me*”. In Is. 6:8 we read the same of God Himself: “Whom shall *I* [singular] send, and who will go for *us*?”. And this would enable us to better understand God’s decision making in Gen. 11:7: “Go to, let *us* go down, and there confound their speech”. The same sort of thing occurs in modern English slang: “Let’s see…” = ‘let me personally consider’; ‘Give us that pen’ = ‘Give me that pen’; ‘We was just…’ = ‘I was just…’. So “Let *us* make man…” may refer to God’s personal self-deliberation in making human beings; to a Semitic reader of the original, it would emphasize the vast passion which God Almighty put into this decision. And it therefore follows, that He passionately wishes to have a very definite purpose with us, that He *so* loves us, and wishes only our eternal good.

In our image- The kings of Babylon and the ancient world were called ‘the image of God’. Here we see the huge value ascribed by God to the human person. It’s not at all that the leaders are God’s image and the rest of humanity of no significance. All God’s people are His king-priests to reign on the earth (Rev. 5:10). Many of the creation myths emphasize the infinite gap between the gods and man, and how this was particularly manifest at creation. But the true account of creation emphasizes God’s closeness to man and His particular focus upon not only the earth and solar system, but specifically *eretz* Israel.

When we read that we are made in God’s image, the Hebrew word for ‘image’ is that to be used later throughout the Old Testament concerning the ‘images’ of idols. Hence the awfulness of Israel making images of the false gods, in human likeness (Ez. 16:17)- because this was a studied statement that they rejected the one true God as their creator, in His image. If we are made in God’s image, then we simply cannot admit the existence of any other image of God- which, in the end, is what all the gadgetry and idols of this world amount to.

After our likeness- James 3:9 speaks of “…men, which are made in the similitude of God.” Our creation in the image of God surely means that we can infer something about the real object of which we are but an image. Thus God, whom we reflect, is not

something nebulous of which we cannot conceive. Ezekiel saw God enthroned above the cherubim, with the silhouette of “the likeness of a man” (Ez. 1:26; 10:20); it is God Himself who is located above the cherubim (2 Kings 19:15 RV). All this has a practical import; because we are in the image of God, because it is imprinted on every part of our bodies, we must give that body to God, just as men were to give the penny which had Caesar’s image on it to Caesar (Lk. 20:25). Commenting on this matter in relation to Gen. 1:26,27, Risto Santala writes: “There are two Hebrew words here, *tselem*, ‘image’ (in modern Hebrew ‘photograph’), and *demuth*, ‘figure’ or ‘similitude’... these expressions are very concrete. God is a person and he has a definite form and being” (*The Messiah In The Old Testament In The Light Of Rabbinical Writings* (Kukkila, Finland: BGS, 1992), p. 63).

And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth- This continues the use of royal language which we noted in the idea of the image of God. It was royalty who ‘exercise dominion over’, but here that invitation is to Adam. And it is to us too, insofar as we dominate the natural mind and extend Kingdom rule over all creation. The language of "dominion" is used of how Israel were to subject the peoples living in the land / *eretz*. They failed to do so, and were therefore dominated by them. The animals of the *eretz* are thereby presented as symbolic of the inhabitants of the land, whom Israel were to provide light to, care for and lead / be masters over. We can reason back that Adam and Eve failed in this, being dominated by the serpent rather than dominating it. Right at the beginning of the Bible, the "beast" is therefore introduced as symbolic of the entities dwelling within the *eretz* promised to Abraham, who were to be dominated and cared for by God's special creation, Israel His people. And this symbolism continues and recurs in later Scripture, particularly in Daniel and Revelation. Misunderstanding or ignoring Genesis has led to all manner of fanciful historical interpretations of the beast.

1:27 *God created man in His own image*- The impression is again given that God states His word of intention, and then fulfils it. His word is, therefore, pregnant with power and certain of fulfilment. This is the inspired narrator’s comment upon the preceding account of how God had decreed “Let us make man in our image”. This comment shows that the *elohim* in view amount to God Himself personally- not so much Angels, and certainly not a Trinitarian godhead, which is unknown to the Bible text. If any plurality was in view, the narrator here would have written of God creating man ‘in *our* image’. The plural I therefore take as being an insight into God’s mind, just a man may say to Himself “Let’s [‘let us’] see... let me just make this...’.

In God's image He created him; male and female He created them- This comment seeks to show in what we are differentiated from God. And in contrast to the animals, there are no species of human beings, all humans are one and the same.

The creation of man is clearly given special attention; the word 'create' is clustered three times in that one verse alone: "God created man in His own image. In God's image He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). God addresses man directly, in a way He is not recorded as doing to the other created things and animals (Gen. 1:28,29). The Pentateuch, and the book of Isaiah, repeatedly insists that Israel are not to have images of God; the reason is that they have an image of God constantly before them, in their own bodies. We are to share God's immense human focus, perceiving the unique value and meaning of the human person. In passing, focus upon the welfare of the rest of creation is all well and good, but it must not lead us away from God's emphasis upon the unique value of human beings. God is, if you like, the humanist *par excellence*. Unlike the emperors of Babylon and the ancient world, the one true God doesn't need to have images of himself built throughout his empire, as evidence of His ownership; we humans are witnesses to Him. And moreso in the new creation, made spiritually after the image of the Lord Jesus, who in spiritual terms was the exact replica of His Father (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15).

The Babylonian Marduk myth and Ras Shamra epic has the creation story reaching a climax and crowning conclusion with a temple being built for Marduk the creator. The Biblical record is quite different- the climax to the story is the creation of a man. We see in this the supreme importance attached to humanity by the one true God; and this tacitly paves the way for the explicit New Testament teaching that the human body is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19)- supremely of course demonstrated in the Lord Jesus, who was in person the temple (Jn. 2:21).

1:28 *God blessed them*- No pagan creation myth includes the idea of the Divine Creator then *blessing* His creation. Here we see the surpassing grace of God. He lavishes His love upon what He created. None of the creation myths include such a wonderful feature. Within Genesis, this idea of blessing of course paves the way for God promising to "bless" the children of Abraham, and the blessings upon them with which Deuteronomy concludes (see too Lev. 9:22; Num. 6:22-24). The pagan creation stories sometimes spoke of the things created by the gods then blessing *them*. The Sumerians recorded that at 'creation', "The whole universe, the people in unison, to Enlil in one tongue gave praise" (S.N. Kramer, *Sumerian Literature and the Bible* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblica, 1959) p.107). But the true God, the God of all grace, not only creates His people and other creatures, but then blesses *them*! And the spirit of that grace should be seen in all our relationships. The Sumerian and Babylonian myths speak of people being created in order to serve the gods, "to bear the yoke of the gods" (S.G.F. Brandon, *op cit* p. 115), to relieve them in their everyday work. But the Genesis creation

has God creating man and giving him great freedom, and blessing him. It has often been rightly observed that the first use of a word in Scripture should influence how we later understand it as we read through the Bible. ‘Blessing’ in Gen. 1 is clearly related to the ideas of fertility and reproducing. When we later read that God has ‘blessed’ us His people with the Abrahamic blessing of forgiveness (Acts 3:24-26), the implication is that this must lead to some bringing forth of fruit. We can’t simply be passive to what we’ve received. We must go forth and multiply it, in sharing it with others, in bringing forth spiritual children, in creatively forgiving others...

And God said to them, Be fruitful, multiply- This contrasts sharply with the pagan ideas that fertility and reproduction required rites and sacrifice. The silence of the Biblical record about anything like this stands in opposition to this. The simple statement is that human reproduction is a result of God’s gracious blessing of man, and requires no ritual to realize it. “Be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth” is the language of Israel multiplying in the land of Israel (Dt. 6:3; 30:5,16; Josh. 24:3). Adam, the first Israelite, was intended to do this; but like Israel, he was distracted by the serpent, whom he failed to dominate and subdue as commanded.

What happened in Eden was that the garden was planted, Adam was placed in it, and commanded not to eat of the tree of knowledge. The animals are then brought before him for naming; then he is put into a deep sleep, and Eve is created. *Then* the very first command Adam and Eve jointly received was to have children, and go out into the whole earth (i.e. out of the garden of Eden) and subdue it to themselves (Gen. 1:28). The implication is that this command was given as soon as Eve was created. There he was, lying down, with his wife beside him, " a help meet" ; literally, 'an opposite one'. And they were commanded to produce seed, and then go out of the garden and subdue the earth. It would have been obvious to him from his observation of the animals that his wife was physiologically and emotionally designed for him to produce seed by. She was designed to be his 'opposite one', and there she was, lying next to him. Gen. 2:24 implies that he should have cleaved to her and become one flesh by reason of the very way in which she was created out of him. And yet he evidently did not have intercourse with her, seeing that they failed to produce children until after the fall. If he had consummated his marriage with her, presumably she would have produced children (this deals a death blow to the fantasies of Adam and Eve having an idyllic sexual relationship in Eden before the fall). Paul saw Eve at the time of her temptation as a virgin (2 Cor. 11:2,3). Instead, Adam put off obedience to the command to multiply. There seems an allusion to this in 1 Cor. 7:5, where Paul says that married couples should come together in intercourse " lest Satan (cp. the serpent) tempt you for your incontinency". Depending how closely one reads Scripture, there may be here the

suggestion that Paul saw Adam's mistake in Eden as not 'coming together' with his wife.

As Adam and Eve were to "be fruitful and multiply" in the land / Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:28), so Noah and his sons were to do just the same in the same land after the flood (Gen. 9:7); and the children of Abraham were promised that they would do likewise in the very same land (Gen. 35:11).

Replenish the earth, and subdue it- I suggest that this is parallel to caring for the garden of Eden, which is therefore the *eretz*. See on 2:15. The only other references to 'subduing' in the Pentateuch are to Israel subduing *eretz* Israel (Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). The *eretz* was to be understood as Israel. As to whether "replenish" implies a previous creation, see on 1:2. Adam and Eve were disobedient; because the serpent subdued them, rather than they having dominion over it. And Israel likewise were subdued by the inhabitants of Canaan, rather than subduing them. The descriptions of the promised land, covered with good trees, whose fruit could be freely eaten, were reminiscent of the descriptions of Eden. Israel were to enter that land and tend it, as Adam should've done; they were to learn the lesson of Adam and Eve's failure in their possession of Eden. But as Eve lusted after the fruit, so Israel lusted after the fruits of Egypt. As Adam and Eve failed to "subdue" the garden of Eden (Gen. 1:28), so Israel failed to fully "subdue" [s.w.] the tribes of the land (Num. 32:22). They subdued a few local to them; but they never really rose up to the reality of being able to have the whole land area promised to Abraham subjected to them. And so Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 promised a curse to come upon the land [of Eden / Israel] for their failure within it, just as happened to Adam and Eve; and of course ultimately they were driven out of the land just as Israel's very first parents had been.

There is good internal reason to think that the Pentateuch likewise was re-written in places to bring out the relevance of Israel's past to those in captivity. Consider the use of the word *pus*, 'scatter'. It was God's intention that mankind should scatter abroad in the earth and subdue it (Gen. 1:28); but it required the judgment of the tower of Babel to actually make them 'scatter' (Gen. 11:4). Thus even in judgment, God worked out His positive ultimate intentions with humanity. And this word *pus* is the same word used with reference to Judah's 'scattering' from the land into Babylonian captivity (Ez. 11:17; 20:34,41; 28:25). The intention, surely, was to show the captives that they had been scattered as the people had at the judgment of Babel / Babylon, but even in this, God was working out His purpose with His people and giving them the opportunity to fulfil His original intentions for them.

Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth- The Hebrew word for "dominion" likewise elsewhere

refers to having dominion over *eretz* Israel by driving out or conquering the peoples who lived there (1 Kings 4:24). The Messianic King was to have dominion over the land promised to Abraham, the *eretz* (Ps. 72:8). The “fear and dread” of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the “fear and dread” which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21; 3:8; 11:25). But as Adam failed to have dominion over the serpent, so Israel failed to subdue the land and its inhabitants.

The most basic principle behind the symbolism of the beast is found in Gen. 1:28, where man is told to " have dominion over" (Heb. 'to break to powder', cp. Dan. 2:35) the beasts. This was to teach him the need to dominate the bestial instincts of the flesh. Thus the beasts are set up as representative of the flesh. Indeed, Strong defines the Hebrew word for 'beast' as fundamentally meaning 'raw flesh'. It is therefore understandable that the devil (sin), the beast and the serpent are linked in Rev. 12:9, and that Prov.28:15 parallels " a wicked ruler" with a wild bear or lion; the beast epitomizes the sinful person who controls it. The Apocalyptic beast of the earth (Rev. 13:11) must look back to the common phrase " beast of the earth" in Genesis (e.g. Gen. 1:25).

1:29 *God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree, which bears fruit yielding seed. It will be your food*- Surely this doesn’t mean that Adam was to literally eat of every tree and herb on the planet. Adam was invited to eat from all the plants which were on the surface of the *eretz*. Unlike in the present creation, they were all edible by him. Again we have the implication that we are not reading here of how our current planet came about, but of something more specific and local, with especial reference to Adam. The parallel account in chapter 2 says “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat” (Gen. 2:16). I suggest that the *eretz* in view is the garden of Eden. See on Gen. 2:19. Not all plants on the surface of the planet are edible, and so this sits more comfortably with reference to a specific, localized area of planet earth. The objection of course is that such inedible plants were a result of the fall. But the Biblical record of the fall doesn’t say anything to the effect that once Adam sinned, the Angels, as it were, sped around the planet smashing the place up and making many plants inedible. This is an argument from silence. The Genesis record doesn’t state that- although it is required by those who believe that the *eretz* includes the whole planet, and that references to all plants and animals on “earth” is to be read on a global level. This creates all manner of practical and moral difficulties; were the Siberian tigers only created after the fall, when their habitat had become cold and inhospitable, etc etc. For the record stresses that everything was created according to its species, both plant and animal, before the fall. It is far more natural to read the changes required by the fall as applying to Eden / *eretz* Israel, rather than the whole planet. The whole phrase “Behold I have given you…” occurs later when the Priests are told what God has given them (Ex. 31:6; Lev. 6:10;

Num. 18:8,21; Dt. 11:14). We see here a hint that the situation before Adam's personal fall can be partially restored in the experience of God's obedient people.

1:30 *To every animal of the earth, and to every bird of the sky, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food; and it was so*- The animals and birds were given all the leafy plants of the earth as food, whereas Adam was given all the fruit bearing plants to live from (:29). This sounds like a special situation in a localized area. Because some species are designed to eat other animals, some plants aren't edible by animals, and some fruit bearing plants aren't edible by man; some birds only eat fish, not plants. To argue that this was all a result of the curse means that we are positing that new species were created after the fall. But the record appears to disallow that. I suggest all manner of logical and scientific problems are avoided by reading the "earth" here as a specially designated area on the planet, where there were special conditions. The message seems to be that in the *eretz*, which I suggest was the same as Eden, there were only herbivores. When Adam sinned and was exiled from the garden and *eretz* Israel, the carnivores from the surrounding world moved in. And that is exactly what happened when Israel sinned "like Adam" and were exiled from their land; the carnivorous beasts moved in. And the beasts of Daniel and Revelation refer, I suggest, to Israel's enemies moving in upon her land and sanctuary.

1:31 *God saw everything that he had made*- The "everything" refers to the creation of man on the sixth day. Man was God's "everything"; the rest of creation had been described as "good" in God's eyes, but man was seen as "very good". The drama of creation has come to a climax. Gen. 1:1 begins with the comment that God created literally all things, and then from Gen. 1:2 the focus is upon the creation of *eretz* Israel, and now the focus narrows down to man within that land- God's people. And we sense the especial Divine focus and thrill in Adam.

And, behold, it was very good- Adam alone was "not good" . Adam and Eve together are described as "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Paul seems to have this in mind when he says three times that "it is good" to be single (1 Corinthians 7:1,8,26). But what's the point of this paradox? Perhaps Paul's point is: 'In the old, natural creation, it wasn't good that a man should be alone. But now, in the new creation, it's good that a man does try to live a single life, because as Adam married Eve, so we are now married to Christ'. Or it may be that attention is being drawn to the fact that God's provision of Eve was the first of God's countless concessions to human need. It was God's intention, ideally, that Adam be single, therefore he was potentially "good" in his single state. But he couldn't handle it, therefore God made him a partner. And therefore Paul says that to live the single life is "good" . But in the same way as God made a concession to Adam, so He does to believers now; "but if they cannot contain, let them marry".

"Behold" invites us to look upon this creation as God did; to see the goodness in it, particularly in mankind whom He created; to take a positive rather than a negative view.

There was evening and there was morning, a sixth day- The English translations generally miss the point that days one to five are described as e.g. 'a second day', 'a third day'. But the determinate "*the* sixth day" (Hebrew-missed by many translations, including NEV) is different, to highlight the importance of the creation of Adam. This is yet another reflection of the supreme value and meaning God attaches to the human person. And His perspective is to be ours.

Previous Creations

As to whether there were previous creations before our own, my basic sense is 'Yes, probably there were'. The earth being " without form and void" (Gen. 1:2) uses a phrase elsewhere used to describe the judgment that has come on an order of things (Jer. 4:23; Is. 24:10; 34:11). It may be, therefore, that there was a previous creation on earth which was destroyed in judgment. John Thomas in the first section of *Elpis Israel* suggests (without much direct support from the Hebrew, it must be admitted) that the command to Adam to " replenish the earth" (Gen. 1:28) implies to re-fill, as if there had been a previous creation that was destroyed, presumably by water. " In the beginning" , perhaps a huge period of time ago, God created the heavens and earth. But the present creation can be seen as being constituted some time later, after the previous creations. When during the six days of creation He said " Let there be light" this may not have necessitated the actual manufacture of the sun; this was presumably done " in the beginning" . But the sun was commanded to shine out of the darkness (2 Cor. 4:6), and therefore from the viewpoint of someone standing on the earth, it was as if the sun had been created. The earth was covered with water at the time the present creation began (Gen. 1:2). This would mean that the destruction of the earth by the flood in Noah's time was actually a repeat of something God had previously done. This sheds light on His promise to never again destroy the earth with water: " I will stablish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:11). This sounds as if destruction of the earth by flooding had happened several times before. It's almost as if the God of all grace is showing Himself progressively gracious to earth's inhabitants: 'I've done it before several times, but now I promise you humans, you new race of inhabitants upon whom my special love is to be shown through My Son, that I'll never do it again'.

All That Fall

It was presumably in one of the previous creations that the Angels were developed. They have knowledge of good and evil, just as fallen man has (Gen. 3:22). This could suggest that they too had the experience of temptation and choice between sin and obedience. Job speaks of the angels who were charged with folly as if this fact was well known (Job

4:18). Bro. Thomas suggests that the " angels that sinned" in 2 Pet. 2:4 lived at this time. There is no doubt that this passage in Peter, and the parallel in Jude, has some reference to Korah's rebellion. However, there are many such warnings to God's people which combine reference to more than one historical event, and it could be the same here: as if to say, 'History repeats itself. The angels that sinned so long ago went through in principle the same process of apostasy as Korah's company, and you too are capable of falling from grace in the same basic way'.

Apostasy has a long continuity; all who fall follow a similar pattern, ultimately sharing the same apotheosis. It could even be that the fall of the Kings of Tyre and Babylon (Is. 14; Ez. 28) are recorded in the language of an angel / " anointed cherub" who wanted superiority over the others, and who then fell from Heaven (Ez. 28:14; Is. 14:13,14 cp. Eph. 4:10). There are strong similarities between these passages and the Jewish understanding of Angels that sinned before creation. These similarities would be in order to show the same kind of historical continuity: between the Angels who once sinned, and spiritually blessed men who turned away from what they could have had. The fact that *all* the Angels *now* are righteous and incapable of sinning (cp. Lk. 20:35,36) doesn't mean that Angels never sinned in a previous creation. But the point to note is that they are now in the grave, chained in darkness- not running around as evil spirits causing mischief. They are " reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4), when " we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3).

The Wonder Of It All

From these thoughts comes a powerful devotional point. God, who existed from eternity, has doubtless been *active* from eternity. He is Spirit, and His Spirit is essentially His power in action. There was at least one previous creation, involving the Angels. The fossil record, if indeed it can be taken seriously, would suggest that there were plants and animals (e.g. dinosaurs) which lived millions of years ago. These may have been part of those previous creations. And yet Adam was the first human being (1 Cor. 15:45), created around 6,000 years ago.

The human race which descended from him has generally rejected God. The majority of His chosen people, Israel, rejected Him to the point of crucifying His Son. But for such a small group of people, existing at such a small time and in such a tiny physical area in the perspective of infinite time and space, God gave His only begotten Son. The Lord Jesus didn't physically exist before His birth; He wasn't some kind of time traveller who had shown up in previous creations. The *only begotten* Son of God was born for the very first time. This is the pure wonder of the narratives of His birth. He was a human being, not an Angel, because He shared the nature of those He came to redeem (Hebrews 2 develops this at length). The *only* and *begotten* Son of God was a human being because He came to save just a few million (or however many) little human beings on this little insignificant planet, a pin prick in the vastness of space *even within this present*

creation, people who lived out their history for just a few thousand years compared to infinity. And this only son of His was born to an illiterate young girl, and then the crying, gurgling *Son of God* was laid down in a cattle stall (Luke, the doctor who appreciated the need for hygiene, so emphasizes this: Lk. 2:7,12,16), because the other guests in that cheap hotel couldn't make space for a heavily pregnant woman (again, Luke the sometime-gyn doctor would've sensed the shame of it). And this was the beginning of the *only and ever begotten Son of God*, who dwelt light years away from that humble barn. It's almost too wonderful to believe. There will be many " ages" to come, as there have doubtless been many " ages" of previous creations already (Rom. 1:25; 9:5; Heb. 13:8); but for our " age" alone was the only begotten Son of God given as a representative of *us*, the humans who live in this brief " age" . God thus describes Himself as a first timer falling in love with His people; as a young marries a virgin, so God marries us (Is. 62:5); Israel were as the lines graven on a man's palm, with which he was born (Is. 49:16). Thus from absolute eternity, we were the great " all things" to Almighty God, the God of all, all past and future creations.

We may well ask why space is so big, why there were countless previous creations, why out of all the teeming species and forms of life on this planet (and perhaps others), God's salvation in Christ is only for human beings, whom He represented in His very nature; why out of all humans, only a few are called, and why out of those few called are even fewer chosen; why in the past He *delighted t*o chose Israel, one of the smallest and unlovely nations, and their small, despised land, as *His* land and *His* people (and in principle He has done the same in His calling of the new Israel)... and the answer may be that God has arranged it this way in order to show us the magnitude of His humanly senseless love; that He has given *so* much, even His Only Son, for *so very few* in such a very small geographical area in such a very short time span. Brethren, think on these things. Look up at the night sky and like father Abraham, struggle, successfully, to believe the wonder of it all.

GENESIS CHAPTER 2

2:1 *The heavens and the earth were finished, and all their vast array*- My suggestion has been that the creation of the cosmos is briefly spoken of in Gen. 1:1, and then we have a dramatic slide show of the preparation of the *eretz* Israel. But we are being told here that the intention of the creation of the cosmos was not finally fulfilled until Israel was created and populated. Paul shares a glimpse of this when he writes of how all things are for our sakes. The "vast array" translates the common Hebrew word usually rendered "hosts". Again the hint is that we are to see in these "hosts" a representation of beings, be they Angels, Israel or God's people generally. The "array" may refer in the first instance to the stars, but they are connected as belonging to "the heavens and earth". This would mean that the stars are presented as belonging to the earth; they are the array around the earth, as it were. This is the impression given in chapter 1, where the stars and lights in the firmament are to give

light upon the earth / *eretz*. This is not the literal function of the physical stars and planets; the planets of the solar system revolve around the sun, not around the earth. But this is how they are presented, both here and in the account in chapter 1. Again, we are not being given a literal account of how the cosmos came into being; at best we are being given a perspective from someone standing on earth, to whom it could appear that all the "array" of the heavens circle around the earth. But this isn't bad science; the "creation" envisioned here is a special "model" as it were, and the "hosts" of heaven do indeed circle around the *eretz*. All things are for Israel's sake and for the sake of that territory. Yahweh is Yahweh of hosts, the God of the hosts of Angels and of His people; and they are all centred around the things of the Kingdom, the *eretz*.

2:2 *On the seventh day, God finished His work which He had made*- Heidel understands the grammar here to mean rather "God declared His work finished" (Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) p. 127). Seeing nothing was created on the seventh day, this would make sense. The finished work of God in creating all things, the whole universe, is therefore only finished in the creation of His Kingdom-land *eretz* and His man- the Lord Jesus and all who are in Him, the second Adam. Quite literally, all things were on account of the Christ, and thereby all things are for our sakes. Let us never therefore feel insignificant in the vastness of the cosmos. Let us never again slip into a sense that we are meaningless, that the scale of the cosmos means that therefore we are without significance. Quite the opposite. The scale of the cosmos and the range of life forms even on planet earth are simply in order to provide scale and context, in order to bring home to us our intense significance before the loving Father who created us.

When Moses "finished the work" of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:33), there is clear allusion to God 'finishing the work' of creation.

And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made- "Rested" is Heb. S*habbat*. Remember that the creation record alludes to contemporary creations myths in order to deconstruct them, and to teach Israel Yahweh's version of creation. The suggestion has been made that much of the Hebrew language in early Genesis alludes to similar words in the surrounding languages which were used in the creation myths of the pagan peoples. In this case, the allusion would be to the Akkadian *shappatu*, the day of the full moon, the 15th day of the lunar month, a day when sacrifice had to be offered to appease the moon god, hence the word meant 'the day of the quieting [cp. 'rest'] of the heart' [of the god] [Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17 (*Eerdmans, 1990) p. 142) . The contrast is that in the Biblical record, God 'rested' from the colossal works of grace He had performed throughout the week in the preparation of His land for His people. He was not resting because He had been appeased by human sacrifice, but rather because He was at rest / peace / at quiet after all His expenditure of energy in the grace of creating all things for His beloved people.

The Mesopotamian legends speak of the flood being sent to stop man destroying Enlil's "rest" by his noise. The Mesopotamian gods sought for a "ceasing from toil", "rest from labour"- identical ideas to the Hebrew concept of shabbat. This was why, it was claimed, the gods first created man and put him to work in their garden- so that they could "rest" (Joseph Campbell, *The Masks Of God: Vol. 3, Occidental Mythology* (New York: Viking Arkana, 1991) p. 103). This background is alluded to in the way that Genesis speaks of man being cast out of tending the garden of Eden as a punishment- scarcely something the gods would wish if man was there to save them working there. God speaks of Him giving man a shabbat as a rest for man from his labour. And the flood, although it was Divine judgment, ultimately worked out as a

blessing of 'rest' for man in that the 'world' was cleansed from sin. Thus 'Noah' was given that name, meaning 'rest', "because this child will bring us relief from all our hard work" (Gen. 5:29 G.N.B.). Adam's work in Eden wasn't onerous; his work when cast out of the garden was hard. The wrong ideas are clearly alluded to and often reversed- in order to show that a loving God created the world for humanity, for our benefit and blessing- and not to toil for the gods in order to save them the effort. The 'rest' so sought by the Mesopotamian gods was actually intended by the one true God as His gift to humanity.

A unique feature of the Genesis account of creation is that God is described as resting on the seventh day. No creation myth includes this feature. Moses developed this theme later, when he taught that therefore, man was to rest on the seventh day likewise. Whilst God is omnipotent, there is what I have called elsewhere 'the limitation of God'- in that He *portrays Himself* as somehow limited, only allowing Himself to use some of His limitless power. This idea of a God who seeks to come so close to us that He limits His limitless power is altogether wonderful. The pagan gods were all some kind of supermen, untouched by human emotions and limitations. But the true God is not like that; He has always wished to come so close to His creatures. In a related way, the Genesis record brings out how God has delegated so much freedom and freewill to His creations. Gen. 4:20-22 explains how it was human beings who themselves developed skills of metal working, cattle breeding, music etc. The creations myths of the world surrounding the Israelites assumed that these *very things* were "the outcome of the internal conflicts of the gods". The Sumerian legends taught that things like ploughs and axes were created by the gods, and they should be praised for them. Moses teaches a far higher respect for humanity, in keeping with the hugely-significant teaching that man was made in God's image.

When Elohim rested on the seventh day, the implication is that they were tired- language impossible to apply to God Himself. The Hebrew for "rested" does not only mean that He ceased, but that He ceased for a reason. Ex. 31:17 is even clearer- "In six days the LORD made Heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed"- the word used to describe refreshment after physical exhaustion, e. g. regarding David and his men at Bahurim when fleeing from Jerusalem (2 Sam. 16:14). Notice in passing that the Angels who gave the Law of Moses are often mentioned specifically as instituting the sabbath (e. g. Ex. 31:3; Ez. 20:12,13,16,20)- because it is "the sabbath (the rest) of the Lord" (Lev. 23:3)- i. e. of the Angels who rested on that day back in Genesis. The fact man was to physically rest on the sabbath as a replica of how the Angels "rested" on that day implies that they too physically rested. The 'language of limitation' in Scripture may well often refer to the Angels rather than God personally.

2:3 *God blessed the seventh day, and made it holy, because He rested in it from all His work which He had created to make*- God is spoken of as resting on the seventh day as if all creation has been finished. This is indeed what it sounds like- and from God's perspective, it was true. He had spoken, and so it was done. *He* through His word had created. The Angels were now working it all out in practice, having 'set it up' in the six literal days. This view of the record explains two verses which would seem to defy any other sensible interpretation: "God blessed the seventh day... because that in it he had rested from all his work which God had created to make" (2:3 AVmg.). God "had created to make" by the seventh day. He had created, because His word was as good as executed; but the things were not all made. But He had "created to make". Likewise Gen. 2:5 speaks of the day that the Lord "made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb

of the field before it grew". Now this is saving the best for last. Here surely is concrete evidence for the thesis presented. The plants were made before they were actually in the earth. This doesn't mean that they were made in Heaven and then transplanted to earth. Surely it is to be read in the context of all the other hints that God stated His commands regarding creation, and this was as good as it all being made. But in material terms, it all appeared some time later.

God made the seventh day holy at that time; yet that doesn't mean that *we* must always sanctify or make it holy. He sanctified or made holy various things, not least the tabernacle and the Levitical priesthood (Ex. 29:44). But we are specifically taught that we need no tabernacle nor Levitical priesthood because they have been replaced in Christ. And it's the same with the Sabbath. He is our rest, our means of being at peace with God without works- every moment of every day, not just one day out of seven. The emphasis is upon God sanctifying the seventh day rather than Israel sanctifying it; it was a reminder that God and not their works sanctified them (Ex. 31:13). That lesson is now taught and commemorated in Christ and not in ritual observance. So the fact something was sanctified or made holy in Old Testament times was to teach something; no day is any more holy of itself than any other day. Likewise all the firstborn were made holy to the Lord (Num. 3:13) but that doesn't mean that we have to treat firstborn likewise today.

The stars in particular were thought to be in control of human destiny but the Genesis record emphasizes that they are merely lights created by God with no independent influence, therefore, upon human life on earth. The sun, the moon and the stars were all worshipped as gods in the Middle East but in Genesis 1 they are simply created things made by God. Genesis 1 is based around the number 7- and the practical issue of the creation record was that Israel were to remember the seventh day as Sabbath. Yet this was a purposefully critical commentary upon the Babylonian views. "According to one Babylonian tradition, the seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days of each month were regarded as unlucky: Genesis however, declares the seventh day of every week to be holy, a day of rest consecrated to God (2:1-3)" (Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary Genesis 1-15*, (Waco TX: Word Books) Vol. 1 p. 49).

2:4 *This is the history of the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that Yahweh God made the earth and the heavens*- "The history of the generations" is often interpreted as meaning 'This is the account of…'. But the phrase is used in Genesis many times, and it means just that- an outline of the generations of people. The term refers to people, not material things. This adds weight to the impression that the creation record is an account of the preparation of *eretz* Israel for God's people within it, and that the heavenly "hosts" created (see on Gen. 2:1) are to be understood as representing God's people, His hosts, who were to be the spiritual light of the *eretz*. The focus of the account is upon people- and the whole structure of the account reflects that, beginning with an almost casual statement about the creation of all things, then focusing upon the *eretz* Israel, and then focusing upon Adam. Then the creation record of Genesis 2 repeats the creation story but is totally focused upon Adam and Eve.

2:5 *No plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up*- The AV appears more faithful to the Hebrew here: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew". This seems to confirm the suggestion made that the creation record is not speaking of origins, but rather of the

preparation of the *eretz* for the habitation of God's created people. The plants and herbs were created before they were placed in the *eretz*. They are part of the general creation which is briefly spoken of in Gen. 1:1. The rest of the record in Genesis 1-3 speaks of how those things were ordered and prepared in relation to *eretz* Israel. And here we have that pretty much stated- those things were created before they were placed in the earth / *eretz*. 2:5 says that *every* plant and herb was created "before it was in the earth". The definition of "every" is therefore 'every plant and herb in the *eretz*'. What is in view is every plant or herb known to *eretz* Israel. If we insist on reading 2:5 as a literal record of creation, then we have the prospect of every herb and plant being created and kept somewhere and then placed on planet earth. Even the most ingenious redneck creationists would be hard put to come up some scientific explanation of that, seeing that plants and herbs depend upon each other and the environment of planet earth in order to live. I suggest that my idea that the record is a Divine slideshow or drama, observed by someone in *eretz* Israel, makes far better sense.

Quite simply, the plants Israel knew had been made by God and somehow transplanted or moved into the land, just as one does when developing a garden. It was Moses' understanding that on entering the land, God would be planting Israel there (Ex. 15:17; Num. 24:6), just as God had planted in Eden (Gen. 2:8 s.w.).

The early chapters of Genesis were intended as the seed bed from which Israel would understand that they had grown. The nature of the record of creation was therefore primarily for their benefit. The lesson for us likewise must be- that what God did at creation, He can in essence do in our lives and experiences too. The record of Gen. 1-3 especially opens up in a new way when viewed from this angle. Difficult parts of the account seem to fall into place. Gen. 2:5 says that the creation account explains how God created "every plant of the field before it was in the earth / *eretz* / land [promised to Abraham]". Quite simply, the plants Israel knew had been made by God and somehow transplanted or moved into the land, just as one does when developing a garden. It was Moses' understanding that on entering the land, God would be planting Israel there (Ex. 15:17; Num. 24:6), just as God had planted in Eden (Gen. 2:8 s.w.).

For Yahweh God had not caused it to rain on the earth. There was not a man to cultivate the ground- This doesn't have to mean that there had never been rain on the planet. It's saying that there was no rain on the *eretz*. There is no statement that there never had been rain on the *eretz*. If that was the intention, surely other language would have been chosen. But the idea of *God not causing rain to fall on the land* [of Israel] is quite common in the later Scriptures. We think of the situation at the time of Ahab. God not causing rain on the *eretz* is a result of His judgment. The *eretz* had been judged, in terms of the record in Genesis 1, it was formless and made empty, covered in the waters of judgment. "There was not a man" is likewise an idea later used in the Bible concerning how *eretz* Israel would be left without a man to cultivate its ground- as a result of Divine judgment (Jer. 4:29; Ez. 14:15; Zech. 1:21; 7:14). So we are being told that the plants were outside the *eretz* because it had been judged and was empty and dry; but now they are to be brought into the *eretz* because a river was now providing water. This was exactly the situation with Elijah- there was no rain on the *eretz* as it was under judgment, but he was kept alive by a Divinely provided river.

Mist came out of the land, there was no rain on the land [there may have been on the rest of the planet], it was watered by a canopy over the land. Now this would have had tremendous significance for Israel in the wilderness, likewise under a canopy of cloud each day.

The lack of "a man" is alluded to in the prophetic statements that there was "no man" on the *eretz* because of God's judgments upon it during the exile; and God's search for "a man" was met in Messiah (Is. 41:28; 50:2; 59:16; Jer. 4:25). Thus we are set up to expect the Lord Jesus to be just whom Paul later declares Him to be, the second Adam. His role was to cultivate the plants in order to bring forth fruit; and this indeed is the Lord's work with us through the Spirit. And the arena of our spiritual fruitfulness will be the Kingdom of God, the *eretz*.

The plants needed "a man to cultivate" them. Because there was no man in Eden, therefore the plants weren't put there. But the plants had been created before they were placed "in the *eretz*", i.e. Eden. This is what Genesis 1 is saying- the creation of all things is briefly mentioned in 1:1, and then the rest of Genesis 1 is about the arrangement and preparation of the *eretz* to receive those things after a time of Divine judgment had fallen upon it. The argument is that the *eretz* and man within it were intimately connected; without man upon it, there could be no creation or paradise as God intended. This was so relevant to the Jews in Babylon who were tempted to remain within Babylon and not return to their chosen *eretz* and re-create God's Kingdom there. It was likewise relevant to a displaced Israel tramping through the wilderness to enter that *eretz*, constantly tempted to quit the dream and return to Egypt. Israel and their land were inextricably linked from creation.

I recall as a young convert being deeply disturbed when I realized that there were many myths of creation existing in the peoples that surrounded the Israelites [the Sumerians, Babylonians, Canaanites, Egyptians, Hittites etc.] which were extremely similar in some aspects as the Genesis record of creation. Indeed, in a few places the correspondences are almost verbatim the same- "There was not yet rain…there was not yet a man to till the ground" (Gen. 2:5) reads very similarly to an Egyptian text that speaks of "When there was not yet rain…when there was not yet the fear that came to be…".

I assured myself that all those peoples must have copied their ideas from the Genesis record, rather than vice versa. But I was never totally comfortable with that view. Having now read through some of the myths and reflected upon the situation, and faced up to the fact that some of them were around well before Moses wrote Genesis, I've come to another view. It seems to me that the Genesis record, under inspiration, is a commentary upon those myths, telling Israel the truth, bringing out where they were wrong, and why. One Egyptian myth claimed that man was created from dust, and then the goddess Hat-Hor holds the symbol of life to the mouth and nose of the created body. You can see the similarities with the Genesis record. The Gilgamesh Epic also has a primeval man seeking to eat forbidden fruit. Many creation myths included the idea of the first woman having two sons, who then have conflict with each other and even commit fratricide. The tension between farmers and cattle raisers in southern Babylonia was at the root of a number of myths very similar to the Cain and Abel account. But Moses, under inspiration, is giving Israel the true account, after their long period under Egyptian influence. So Genesis may *allude* to the other stories closely- as they were myths and legends which would've been well known to Israel as they walked through the desert. They would've discussed them, and some probably believed them. And so Moses wrote Genesis to show them where the truth really was from God's viewpoint. This explains something which has been widely observed by students of the ancient Middle East: the Israelites had no myths in their culture. The surrounding nations [cp. the world around us] were full of poorly defined and contradictory myths relating to life's origin. But the Israelites were different. They had ultimate truth for them clearly laid down.

Genesis itself was part of a five volume, Divinely inspired masterpiece. The purpose of Genesis was to teach God's people something in their day, whenever and wherever that was or is experienced by the readers / hearers of the book. This is why so many parts of the Bible allude back to the Genesis record of creation, in seeking to inspire faith *now* that God will powerfully act creatively and dramatically in *our* lives today.

2:6 *But a mist went up from the earth, and watered the whole surface of the ground*- LXX "But there rose a fountain out of the earth, and watered the whole face of the earth". This would then be the river of Gen. 2:10 which went out of the garden. The idea of a fountain arising and watering the earth is the language of later Scripture, especially Revelation, about the fountain which shall flow from the new Jerusalem. The *eretz* is yet again associated with *eretz* Israel and the Jerusalem area particularly. The idea of an underground stream suggests a subterranean ocean of living water, and this is the basis of the prophetic pictures of a stream of living water issuing from the temple (Ez. 47:1-12). Again, the idea is that the fountain of Eden was located where the temple was and will be restored again there in the future when Eden is restored.

The argument could be that until there was a man to cultivate the land, there was a mist or fountain which watered the ground. This would explain why in John's Gospel, the second Adam, the Lord Jesus, likens Himself to a spring giving living water (Jn. 4,7). And all in Him likewise will have this same function (Jn. 7:38).

2:7 *Yahweh God formed man*- The Hebrew has the sense of forming as a potter, and the Hebrew translated "dust" can equally mean 'clay'. Later allusions to this state that God is the potter, and Israel the clay in His hand (Is. 64:8; Jer. 18:4-6; Rom. 9:21). Adam, the man of the *eretz* [see later] was to be seen as Israel, created to be in their land, just as all God's people were created to be in His Kingdom. This was of especial meaning to the first audience- Israel in the wilderness, travelling towards the promised land, and likewise to the later audience- Israel in captivity in Babylon awaiting restoration to the land. They had been created for a purpose- to inherit the land / Kingdom prepared for them, and all the power of creation was behind that intention. And this is no less powerful encouragement to we who also wonder, in our weakness, quite why we are here, and whether really there is a Kingdom ahead of us. There indeed is, and all the power of creation was to this end, and is behind us as we travel there. This would explain the frequent allusions to God's power in creation which we find in the restoration prophecies, as well as in Moses' encouragement of Israel to enter the land, particularly in Deuteronomy.

From the dust of the ground- "Ground" here is *adamah*. Adam effectively means 'dust'; a powerful statement that man is but dust. Gen. 3:19 will later comment that Adam was taken out of, or, 'from among' (Heb.), the ground / dust. He was an extension of it, just as the Lord Jesus, the ultimate Adam, was taken out from among the rest of the dust of the earth. And in Gen. 28:14 (cp. Dan. 12:2) we are to find Abraham's seed likened to the dust of the earth. Adam and later the Lord Jesus were taken out from among the dust, He was of the same nature as all the promised seed. A correct grasp of Genesis forbids all the low grade theology about the Trinity which later developed, leaving such theories stillborn.

But there is a parallel between *adamah* and *eretz*. Adam was made from the dust of the *eretz*- he was an Israelite, as it were, a man of the *eretz* or land. Just a few examples of the parallel will demonstrate the point:

"Every living substance was destroyed from the face of the earth [*adamah*]… they were destroyed from the earth [*eretz*]" (Gen. 7:23)

"Joseph bought all the land [*adamah*] of Egypt for Pharaoh… so the land [*eretz*] became Pharaoh's" (Gen. 47:20)

"You shall inherit their land [*adamah*]… a land [*eretz*] that flows with milk and honey" (Lev. 20:24)

"The land [*adamah*] which You have given us… a land [*eretz*] that flows with milk and honey" (Dt. 26:15).

Dt. 4:32 is significant: "For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and from the one end of the sky to the other…". Man, Adam, was created on the *eretz* of Israel, and this area is parallel with "the one end of the sky to the other". The sky, or "heavens", was considered to meet the land at its 'ends'. 'Heaven' was thought to touch the earth at its 'ends'. This is not how things are of course in scientific reality. But I suggest that instead of ridiculing the Bible as teaching a flat earth, we rather consider the possibility that the allusion to creation here is made with the understanding that the creation record specifically spoke of the preparation of the *eretz*; that land, the land promised to Abraham, did indeed have boundaries or 'ends', and in the dramatic slideshow of Genesis 1:2-2:4, it would be fair to say that the heavens did indeed meet the earth at the boundaries. This kind of language is very frequent. Babylon is spoken of in Dan. 4:11: "The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the ends of all the earth". The 'earth' clearly refers not to the whole planet, and likewise the 'heaven' which it touched is not to be read literally.

Critics often note that the creation record of Gen. 1:1-2:4 uses *elohim* and the record of the creation of man uses *Yahweh*. That is correct, but I think they are wrong to suggest that we therefore have here two different records which have been stuck together. It's all a question of focus. Gen. 1:1 gives the brief statement that God created all things, in the beginning. Then, the focus moves to *eretz* Israel, and then to man. The question of cosmic origins is dismissed, irrelevant compared to the wonder of God's focus upon His people and His land. And many believers need to likewise stop their obsession with origins, and refocus upon the wonder of the things of the Kingdom / *eretz* and the things of the Name of Jesus Christ, the second Adam. So we then in chapter 2 have the huge focus upon man intensified by more detail being provided about Adam, and the zoom of the screen moves in beyond the *eretz* to a particular part of it, the garden planted in the east of Eden, the Jerusalem area. "Yahweh" is now used because this is God's covenant name, the name He uses in relationship with man; He as *elohim*, the mighty One[s], created all the physical stuff; but He as Yahweh relates to man personally. The zoom of the camera progresses seamlessly once we perceive what is going on.

And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul- This is clearly alluded to in Ez. 37:9, where the Spirit / breath is breathed into the corpse of Israel to revive them. We are to see in Adam's creation the spiritual revival of all the true seed of the Kingdom. True life is only spiritual life; we are only truly alive when we have received the Spirit. All other forms of life are in fact not life at all. "Breath of life" is not *ruach* but *neshamah*; however the two words are paralleled, e.g. in Job 27:3; Job 32:8; Job 33:4; Job 34:14; Is. 42:5; Is. 57:16. In the latter two passages, the whole language of the gift of the breath of life is again applied to spiritual life being given to a recreated people of God.

As Gen. 2:7; Ecc. 12:7 make clear, the spirit / life is given by God to our bodies; it doesn't come from anywhere else. There is no reincarnation. And this is no painless Bible fact; it demands that we live lives that are *His*, and not lived out as if our spirit /

life / soul is *ours*. The fact that God “holdeth our soul in life”, a reference to Gen. 2:7, means that David wanted to “make the voice of his praise to be heard” (Ps. 66:8,9). This was the meaning of the basic facts of creation for David!

"Living soul" or creature is exactly the word used about the animals (Gen. 1:20,21,24,30). The animals also have a breath of life within them, given by God. In man's case, this looked ahead to how God's people can become spiritually alive by the gift of the Spirit. So often, having the breath of life in the nostrils becomes a Biblical idiom for 'being a live human being'. This must be given its full weight in the consideration of whether aborting a fetus, in whose nostrils there is no breath of life, is in fact murder.

2:8 *Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, in the east*- Eden is introduced without definition. It is a fair assumption that this is the *eretz* / earth which has just been "made". The very concept of "East" presupposes that a specific portion of territory on earth is being spoken about. Because looking at the globe as a sphere revolving upon its own axis, there is no 'eastern' part of a revolving sphere. Such points of the compass demand that a defined territory upon planet earth is being spoken of. The lack of introduction to this idea suggests that "Eden" is the "earth" we have just seen 'made' in chapter 1. Eden is portrayed as being surrounded by water- the rivers Euphrates, Tigris, Pison and “Gihon, the same river that flows through the whole land of Cush” (Gen. 2:13). Seeing that Gihon is also a river near Jerusalem, we wonder whether after the flood, the course of this river was changed to begin in the centre of the *eretz* (1 Kings 1:33; 2 Chron. 32:20). Cush is Egypt (Gen. 10:6). The *eretz* promised to Abraham was bounded by the same rivers- the Nile and Euphrates (Gen. 15:18). The course of rivers surely changed after the massive upheavals associated with the flood, but all the same, the impression is given in Genesis 1 that the *eretz* was a flat area bounded by waters. This is the picture of the promised land and the garden of Eden which we have later in Genesis. This would also explain why *eretz* Israel is often spoken of as again becoming like Eden- for the same geographical area is in view (Is. 51:3; Ez. 36:35; Joel 2:3), and Israel’s sin within their land is likened to Adam’s sin in Eden (Is. 66:17; Hos. 6:7). This also makes sense of the way that the prince of Tyre is spoken of as being in "Eden the garden of God" …"upon the holy mountain of God" (Ez. 28:13,14)-thus associating Mount Zion, the temple mount, with Eden. I have written more about the identity of Eden with Israel at http://www.aletheiacollege.net/ld/31.htm . This holy mountain may well be identifiable with Ararat, ‘holy hill’ (Gen. 8:4). The flood likewise destroyed the *eretz*, and a new beginning was made from Mount Zion. More thoughts about this at http://www.aletheiacollege.net/ld/d3.htm . Note too that Eden is presented as being a place of gold, silver and precious stones- all of which are associated with God’s sanctuary in Zion (Hag. 2:7,8; Rev. 21:18).

There are many references in later Scripture to God planting, and nearly always they refer to God planting Israel in their own land. This confirms us in understanding Eden as Israel. Some of the more significant references include:

- Ex. 15:17 “You shall bring them in, and *plant* them in the mountain of your inheritance, the place, Yahweh, which You have made for yourself”. This recalls the creation of Adam outside of Eden and then bringing him into it.
- Num. 24:6 Israel were “as gardens by the riverside, as aloes which Yahweh has planted, as cedar trees beside the waters”. Trees planted by God in an idyllic setting by water is exactly the language of Eden. The same figure of God planting Israel in their land as trees is to be found in Ps. 44:2; 80:8,15; Is. 5:2; Jer. 2:21; 12:2.

- Dt. 6:11 and other references speak of Israel being given a land full of trees which they had not planted- which was Adam and Eve's situation in Eden. Ps. 104:16 actually says that it was God who planted the trees in the *eretz* Israel.
- 2 Sam. 7:10 "I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more". "Appoint" translates the same Hebrew word used for God's 'putting' of Adam in Eden (Gen. 2:8).

And there He put the man whom He had formed- "Formed" is the word used of how the Divine potter "formed" clay into the people of Israel (Is. 43:1,7,21; 44:2,21; 45:9,11; 64:8; Jer. 18:6). Adam represented the people of God, who were to subdue the *eretz*. They were "put" into that land, just as we are all placed into a life situation which is optimally designed for us to be fruitful and useful in God's work. "Formed" is used of how David was "formed" in the womb (Ps. 139:16; as Jer. 1:5). The creation is therefore ongoing in every human life; "forming" is used also of the creation of a person's wiring or psychology, the formation of the spirit or heart of a man (Zech. 12:1; Ps. 33:15). And it is used of the "forming" of Messiah (Is. 49:5). The creation of humans therefore refers not simply to our physical body, but to our hearts. We are all given a unique personality type and psychology, which the Father works further upon through the Spirit.

2:9 *Out of the ground Yahweh God made every tree to grow*- As in the account in chapter 1, there is special emphasis upon the trees. Ez. 31:3-9 speak of Assyria [which was located within *eretz* Israel] as being a powerful tree in "the garden of God", with all the trees subject to him. "All the trees" surely refer to all the nations subject to Assyria, and they were all located within *eretz* Israel. "All trees" therefore do not refer to all trees / nations on a global level, but relative to the territory promised to Abraham. We can safely infer that Eden, the garden of God, refers to *eretz* Israel.

There is clearly a connection between how both man and vegetation are portrayed as formed out of the ground / dust. The trees were not made from pre-existent seeds, like Adam they are presented as special creations. The similarity serves to highlight the difference. Man alone is described as having the Spirit to enliven him, turning him into a living soul or creature. Unless we receive the Spirit, we are likewise existing merely on the level of animals and plants, made from dust, to return thereto. In this observation lies the need to carefully assess any denials of the Spirit's operation in our lives. For if we have not the spirit of Christ, we are none of His; for all our much vaunted Biblicism and good theology.

That is pleasant to the sight, and good for food- The text here suggests that every created tree was good for food and pleasant to the eyes. Not all trees are in these categories. So we have in view not a global creation, but a specific creation of a limited number of plants and animals- those found in Eden, the *eretz* / earth which is here the focus of all things. The fact other trees existed implies there may well have been the existence of other human beings outside of Eden; and that solves the question as to where Adam and Eve's children obtained their partners from. Adam was "the first man" as presented in the Bible, and in the sphere of the history of God's Kingdom which is what the Bible is all about. Just as Bible prophecy (in my view) has nothing much to say about the nations outside the *eretz*, likewise this creation narrative has little to say nor imply about other areas.

Again, similarity serves to highlight a difference. The fruit of the forbidden trees was "also" pleasant to the sight... but the difference is that it supposedly offered knowledge, and this appealed to Adam and Eve.

The description of the fruit as "pleasant to the sight" (Gen. 2:9) is found in the Gilgamesh epic about the trees in the garden of the gods. But that myth is alluded to, and Israel are told what *really* happened in the garden.

The tree of life also in the middle of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil- The Bible begins with the tree of the lives [Heb.], and concludes in Revelation with men eating of the tree and there appearing a forest of trees-of-life. Our experience of salvation will be the basis of our witness to men in the Millennium, just as it should be now. On the basis of our experience of reconciliation with God, we have been given "the ministry of reconciliation", in that God "hath put in us [Gk. settled deep within us] the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18,19). I have suggested that Eden is the land / *eretz*, and "the midst" of that *eretz* is the sanctuary, Jerusalem, Zion (the Hebrew term is thus used in 2 Chron. 32:4). Yahweh's voice and presence was found in the midst of (NEV "among") the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8); "middle" here is s.w. "among" in Gen. 3:8. The idea of Divine presence and word appearing between two things is very much that of Num. 7:89, where Yahweh's voice and presence issue from between [s.w. "in the middle of"] the two cherubim.

The Proverbs several times speak of our having some kind of experience of the "tree of life" now. And likewise the Lord offers "eternal life" to His followers as a present experience. In this we see how the curse has already begun to be lifted for those led of the Spirit.

The attraction of the trees was that they apparently offered eternity immediately, and the knowledge of things which were beyond the ability of Adam and Eve to cope with. These are the essence of so many temptations today, if not all of them.

2:10 *A river went out of Eden to water the garden*- The river "went out" or 'sprung up' out of Eden. Dt. 7:7-9 describes *eretz* Israel in the very language of the creation record, suggesting that it is the same territory, *eretz* Israel, which is in view: "Yahweh your God brings you into a good land [the same words used in 1:10 about the land being pronounced "good" by God], a land of brooks of water, of springs and underground water gushing [s.w. about the river which "went out" of Eden into the rest of *eretz* Israel] into valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, vines, fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and honey; a land in which you shall eat bread without scarcity. You shall not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you may dig copper". Eden is described likewise as full of precious stones.

"To water the garden" is alluded to in the idea of God watering Israel and its people (Is. 27:3; 43:20). This source of water is clearly behind the Lord's teaching that His Spirit is as living water, by which the new Israel are to live.

And from there it was parted, and became four headstreams- This is hard to translate or visualize, but I suggest the idea is that Eden was surrounded on each compass point by water. This is the equivalent of the *eretz* being presented in Gen. 1 as an area of land which appeared with the waters gathered around it. Remember that the Hebrew ideas of 'rivers' and 'waters' are similar. Eden, like *eretz* Israel, was surrounded by waters, and rivers / waters in the Bible usually represent the Gentile world. The flood doubtless changed the course of the rivers in the *eretz*, but the impression remains that the same basic rivers surrounded both Eden and *eretz* Israel according to the boundary definition of Gen. 15:18- because they refer to one and the same area. The "Gihon" of 2:13 flowed through Cush, i.e. Egypt (Gen. 10:6); and the boundaries of *eretz* Israel were from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt.

The parting of the one water source into four may mean that when the *eretz* was "divided" by the topographical changes wrought by the flood (Gen. 10:25), four

currently known rivers came from it. The water source became four rivers by which the *eretz* was to be defined. Note that on Gen. 2:13 I suggest that "Gihon" is a reference to the Nile. I have suggested that the creation narrative is effectively a vision from the viewpoint of a person within the *eretz*. It could be that visually we are being asked to envisage a fountain of water, which then divided into the four rivers which we are invited to see as the boundaries of that land.

2:11 *The name of the first is Pison: this is the one which flows through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold-* "Havilah" could refer to a person rather than a place (Gen. 10:7; 1 Chron. 1:9). The Hebrew means 'circular' and may suggest that the garden was encompassed by Havilah; in this context, see on Gen. 2:12 *Gold…*. The present tense suggests that the initial audience of Genesis knew the area. I suggested on :10 that the four rivers refer to four rivers by which the *eretz* came to be defined after the flood; the Nile (see on :13), the Tigris to the north and Euphrates to the East (:14). The southern border of the *eretz* is never clearly defined- unless we take this reference to the "Pison" as referring to a river or wadi, perhaps now dried up, which was to define the southern border. The reference to gold could connect with the Queen of the South, or Sheba, who brought gold to Solomon. This would then refer to some boundary in what is now Saudi Arabia.

2:12 *And the gold of that land is good. There is aromatic resin and the onyx stone-* Note that what men count as the most materially valuable things were outside the garden. What was in the garden was relationship with God and work for Him, not material ease and wealth.

2:13 *The name of the second river is Gihon: the same river that flows through the whole land of Cush-* See on Gen. 2:10. The land that borders (Heb.) Cush or Ethiopia is the Nile; the same Hebrew phrase is used for the "river of Ethiopia" in Is. 18:1 (where it is the border of Egypt) and Zeph. 3:10. The connection between Gihon, a water source in Jerusalem, and the Nile is in that the river which once flowed in Jerusalem before the flood is now the Nile, after the topographical changes in the *eretz*; but this is memorialized by the fact that there is still a Gihon in Zion.

2:14 *The name of the third river is Tigris: this is the one which flows east of Assyria. The fourth river is the Euphrates-* The present tenses may mean that this is now, after the flood and the remaking of the topography in the *eretz*, where these rivers flow. I suggested on :10 and :11 that the rivers are being used to define the borders of the *eretz* after the topographical changes brought about by the flood.

2:15 *Yahweh God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden-* Adam was a man of the *eretz* and the *eretz* was effectively Eden. The Hebrew need not mean that Adam was created outside of Eden. He was taken in the sense of commissioned, and placed in Eden to keep it. "Garden" can imply a walled area; the idea is that this was a separate area to be kept as paradise.

To cultivate it and to keep it- Note that there was work before the fall, just as there will be when Eden is restored. The Kingdom of God is no tropical holiday. Laziness is not at all what God is about. And our eternal future with Him will be of active, working service. "Keep" could well imply 'protect', and this has various implications which are beyond us in that it is unclear what it need protecting from; perhaps from influences and even people from outside of the *eretz*, just as Israel were to keep His Kingdom pure from defiling influences. Clearly all was not ultimately perfect- it was "good". If the garden required such care, it follows that vegetation there was not as it were self-caring; the *eretz* was created in need of man, reflecting how in a sense, God is in need of man. Israel needed to be in their land, they needed the land and the land needed them. The decorum and appropriacy of the language

surely suggests that Adam's mission to care for the *eretz* was of a local, manageable scale. See too on Gen. 2:19. He surely wasn't required to tend every plant or animal on the planet, but within a more local territory. The command here in 2:15 surely repeats that of Gen. 1:28 "fill the earth and subdue it". The subduing of the *eretz* was his mission; but this is defined here in 2:15 as working and keeping the land in the garden of Eden, again supporting my suggestion that the *eretz* was Eden.

We can easily imagine how the people of Israel were prone to be confused by all the mythology they had encountered in their surrounding world. Being illiterate and having no inspired record from their God as to how to understand the past, they relied on dimly recalled traditions passed down. Hence Moses was inspired to write the Pentateuch. It is full- as so much of Scripture is- of allusion to the surrounding religious ideas- not because it in any sense depends upon them, but because it seeks to allude to and correct them. And further, the Torah labours how the one true God is so far superior to all the other gods whom Israel were tempted to believe in. In contrast with Near Eastern mythology, which had men as the lackeys of the gods to keep them supplied with food, the God of Genesis makes man and woman in His own image and gives them responsibility for His creation.

2:16 *Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat*- Literally: 'Eat! Eat!'. This was a command to eat from every tree of the garden. They were all fruit trees, therefore. This is the equivalent to Gen. 1:29 in the creation narrative: "God said, Behold, I have given you… every tree, which bears fruit yielding seed. It will be your food". Note the repetition of "every tree", confirming that the arrangement of the *eretz* in chapter 1 is being explained from a different perspective in the Eden account of chapter 2. But the geographical territories concerned are one and the same.

2:17 *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it*- Adam alone had been commanded not to eat the tree of knowledge. Yet when Eve speaks to the serpent, it is evident that Adam had told her about it, but not very deeply. She speaks of "the tree that is in the midst of the garden" rather than " the tree of knowledge". She had been told by Adam that they must not even touch it, even though this is not what God had told Adam (Gen. 2:16,17 cp. 3:2,3). So we are left with the idea that Adam turned to Eve and as it were wagged his finger at her and said 'Now you see that tree over there in the middle, *don't you even touch it* or else there'll be trouble, O.K.'. She didn't *understand*, he didn't *explain* that it was forbidden because it was the tree of knowledge, and so she was deceived into eating it- unlike Adam, who understood what he was doing (1 Tim. 2:14). Adam's emphasis was on not *committing* the sin of eating the fruit; he said nothing to her about the need to multiply and subdue the earth. The next we know, Adam and Eve have separated, she is talking to the snake, apparently indifferent to the command to *subdue* the animals, to be their superiors, rather than listen to them as if they actually had superior knowledge. When the snake questioned: "Yea, *hath* God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree..." (Gen. 3:1), Eve was in a weak position because Adam hadn't fully told her what God had said. Hence she was deceived, but Adam wasn't. So, *why* didn't Adam tell her more clearly what God had said? I would suggest that he was disillusioned with the wife God gave him; he didn't have intercourse with her as he had been asked, he separated from her so that she was alone with the snake. "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree..." (Gen. 3:12) seems to reflect more than a hint of resentment against Eve and God's provision of her.

The lack of reference to the tree of life may be because it only bore its fruit every month, according to Revelation. This would suggest that the potential for eternity was there, but not immediately available; and that they sinned within the first month. "Knowledge" in Hebrew thought doesn't usually mean theoretical, academic knowledge; but rather experience or relationship. The desire to experience good and evil is at the root of all sin and temptation. The desire for the apparent 'goodness' of sexual experience would be the classic example; and the desire to vicariously experience good and evil from the comfort of our screens would be another. Adam was being asked instead to focus on doing God's work. The Father was to guide Adam to the experience of good and evil in His own way according to His program; and He knew that this must be developed in baby steps. But Adam, so typically human, wanted it all immediately, and on his own terms.

For in the day that you eat of it you will surely die- The Hebraism simply means 'You will really die'. Adam didn't die in the day he ate of it; and thus we are introduced to God's grace toward sinners, and what the reality of forgiveness means in practice. Attempts to make this text mean that he was given a mortal, sinful nature seem to me forced at the very best. Punishing a sinner by making him 'sinful by constitution' seem to me very far from what the text here is actually saying. And all we posit about human nature we are saying about the Lord Jesus, who had our nature and yet was "holy, harmless and undefiled". "You will surely die" is only one word in Hebrew, repeated twice: "Die, die!". It echoes the construction at the end of :16, "Eat, eat!" ("Freely eat", NEV). The choice was to "eat, eat!" or "die, die!". If he had got on with God's work and been satiated by His provision, he would have had no appetite for the forbidden fruit. And this is so true of us. We have been given talents and we are to trade them; to get on with our calling in the work of the Kingdom garden, and temptation will then seem the less attractive. This is the key to dealing with temptation, rather than trying to find the steel within our soul to resist what appears so overpoweringly attractive with our knuckles white from the stress. None of us have that kind of iron in the soul.

The punishment of death which is introduced in early Genesis was created and executed by the same one God who also created the world and the opportunity of eternal life. Gilgamesh and the pagan myths presented whole groups of gods as responsible for and presiding over death and the underworld, and another, separate, pantheon of gods as involved in creation. The Biblical emphasis upon one God is significant and unusual; it is Yahweh who sends man back to the dust from which He created him, and the same Yahweh who is in total control of *sheol* [the grave or underworld], and in a sense even present there (Dt. 32:22; Job 26:6; Ps. 139:7,8; Prov. 15:11; Am. 9:2). The state of the dead is defined in Genesis as a return to dust, and later Scripture emphasizes that this means unconsciousness, for the righteous merely a sleep in hope of bodily resurrection. This was radically different to the ideas espoused by the peoples amongst whom Israel travelled and lived. The dead dwell in silence (Ps. 94:17; 115:17) having returned to dust, and as such don't become disembodied spirit beings which were later understood as 'demons'. The whole concept of demons was in this sense not allowed to even develop in the minds of God's people by the definitions of death which Moses presented in the Pentateuch. The utter supremacy of God is taught in the Genesis record in a way it never is in any of the other myths.

2:18 *God said, It is not good that the man should be alone*- By the end of the sixth day, all had been pronounced "very good" (Gen. 1:31). So this is providing more detail regarding the creation account of chapter 1. The creation of woman was after

Adam had first interviewed the animals of the *eretz* and found them incompatible for helpers in his work. Woman was created on the sixth day. The decorum of the language surely requires that on the sixth day Adam met all the animals and named them. This would be appropriate for all the animals in the garden, but not for every animal on planet earth; see on 2:19.

I will make him a helper suitable for him- "Make" is the same Hebrew word used in chapter 1 for the making or creating of things. But here, the woman is made not *ex nihilo* but from pre-existing material, Adam's rib. And so likewise the 'creation' or 'making' language of chapter 1 doesn't have to mean *ex nihilo*. The role of both woman in marriage and the church / Israel of God is made clear here; we are the Lord's helpers in His work in the garden / Kingdom. We are "suitable", the Hebrew meaning to stand opposite, to be the equal complement. Her formation from His side rather than His feet likewise speaks of this equality, to the end Eve may assist Adam in his mission and calling in the things of the Kingdom.

2:19 *Out of the ground Yahweh God [had] formed every animal of the field, and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. Whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name*- This rather stretches credibility to imagine every species of animal and bird of the Amazon being brought to Adam in Eden for him to name, within the course of a day; for he found no appropriate helper, and so Eve was created for him on the sixth day. The more comfortable reading is to assume that every bird and animal known within *eretz* Israel, the garden, was named by Adam. See on 2:15 and Gen. 1:28 and 1:29. “God formed” can quite legitimately be translated “had formed”. The focus of Genesis 2 is upon the creation of Adam and Eve within Eden; it is not a literal attempt to explain creation in any scientific sense.

"To see what he would call them" in Hebrew means just this. God had granted Adam freewill, and He was waiting to see / understand / perceive what Adam would decide to name the animals. And His own language and purpose is able to absorb the freewill decisions of man; for whatever Adam called the animals of Eden, God accepted that as their name in His revealed language in the Bible. This little incident perhaps exercised Adam’s freewill in preparation for the test which was to come. In Hebrew thought, to name something was a statement of their subordinance to the one who names. God had commanded Adam to have dominion over the animal creation, and He encouraged his obedience by inviting him to name the animals. The Father likewise uses commandment and asks us to serve Him as part of a program which is intended to induce our spirituality.

The language also implies God was interested in the freewill decisions of Adam; He perhaps limited His omniscience as He limits His omnipotence, in order to "see" Adam, to get to know him, to see how his mind worked as reflected in what he named them.

2:20 *The man gave names to all livestock*- “In the ancient world, things did not exist until they were named… The name of a living being or an object was ... the very essence of what was defined, and the pronouncing of a name was to create what was spoken”. John H. Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011). This concept is being alluded to; but Adam of course was not thereby the creator of all the animals he named. And yet the idea is that all the animals in *eretz* Israel were named by Adam and were effectively ‘created’ or brought into known being by this naming process.

The pagan creation myths tend to leave man as created, as a servant to the gods. The implication is that the true meaning of life is the same as our mere existence. We are created to exist, so, we just exist. That’s what life is about. This isn’t existential,

philosophical nonsense. That's a sad, real, concrete fact of what this life is about for many people on the earth. They're just existing. The Genesis record, however, gives more purpose to life than just existing. Adam was created, and he started existing. But, as the account brings out, he couldn't find the meaning of life by merely existing in an ideal physical, material situation. Just like people today don't find satisfaction in that, either. He needed Eve; he needed some form of human community, of fellowship, of binding with others, in order to find fulfilment. And so it is with us, driven as we are towards isolationism and individualism by the abuses of society around us.

And to the birds of the sky, and to every animal of the field- The record invites us to see this process as happening the same day Adam was created; for the creation of man and woman is spoken of in chapter 1 as occurring on the same day. For him to name all the birds on the globe within one day is unrealistic. Surely we are being asked to deduce that the creation in view covers only a limited part of earth's surface; "the sky" in view is that over the *eretz* and not the entire sky above the earth. It could be argued that "the field" is put here for "the earth"; the enclosed territory in view, the "field", is Eden, the *eretz*, and not the entire planet.

But for man there was not found a helper suitable for him- this connects with the statement in Gen. 2:20, that God made Adam a helper, because no animal had been found appropriate for him and his work. The opposition of ideas is between him *seeking to find* a helper [which search failed], and God *making* a partner for him. And this is a profound commentary upon the union between man and woman in marriage. No amount of searching for a partner will be ultimately successful; the partner is made by God. Marriages truly are made in heaven, in this sense. This principle has profound relevance to the internet generation, who go out online to try to find a partner. An appropriate partner is ultimately of God's creation, rather than human searching.

2:21 *Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place*- The Hebrew for "rib" is often translated "side". This is replete with reference to the gash in the Lord's side at His crucifixion, through which His bride was created, from His water and blood. This may well have reference to the crucial role of water baptism in the creation of the Lord's bride, which is the church. The "deep sleep" speaks of the depth of the Lord's death, the hardest and most profound death died by any human. The same word is used in Gen. 15:12 of the "deep sleep" upon Abraham, prefiguring the Lord's death, through which the covenant of salvation was confirmed. The closing or shutting of the flesh may speak of the Divine victory against the flesh in His Son, on account of which we who are in Him shall be saved from our flesh.

2:22 *He made the rib, which Yahweh God had taken from the man, into a woman, and brought her to the man*- The implication is that the rib was taken away somewhere, worked upon, and then brought to Adam. This may look forward to our formation for the Lord, and then being presented to Him at the last day. We have been "reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreproveable before him" (Col. 1:22). We now are in process of being brought to the Lord Jesus.

2:23 *The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh!*- Clearly alluded to in Eph. 5:30 AV, confirming we are correct in seeing Eve as representative of the bride of Christ: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones". "Flesh" and "bones" are several times used together as an idiom for 'the whole person' (Ps. 38:3; Prov. 14:30; Mic. 3:3). Eve was totally like Adam; and in this we

see a visual demonstration of the unity of nature and purpose between the Lord Jesus and His people. Again, understanding Genesis would leave theories like the Trinity stillborn. The core attraction between Adam and Eve was that they were the same. Whilst opposites do indeed attract, that is but superficial. The essential attraction between the Lord Jesus and us, His attraction to us and ours to Him, is because of our commonality of nature and mission in this world. In this we see the huge practical import of understanding that the Lord was our representative, of our nature.

She will be called 'woman', because she was taken out of Man- As just noted, the mutual attraction between Adam and Eve, as between the Lord Jesus and ourselves, is because of our closeness of nature. The Hebrew words for "woman" and "man" are connected, just as they are in English. The woman was part of the man, and yet the male is born out of the female; thereby the man and woman need each other. 1 Cor. 11:11,12 is Paul's inspired reflection upon this verse: "Neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman". The same mutuality is therefore to be found between the Lord Jesus and His bride. He is in need of us. He is not indifferent, passing time in Heaven without emotions nor feelings, until the moment comes to return to earth. He is bound up with us, as we should be with Him.

Marriage as ordained by God was clearly intended to have a spiritual dimension, and marriage to an unbeliever nullifies or ignores this intention. God created Adam and gave him the command not to eat of the tree; He then created Eve because Adam alone was the only thing "not good" in an otherwise "very good" creation. It could be argued that the provision of Eve was in order to "help" Adam not only in God's work of tending the garden, but against temptation. The whole story of Eve's creation teaches that in Christian marriage, there is one specific woman intended for the believer. David Levin's translation brings this out:

"*This one* at last, bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh,
This one shall be called Woman,
For from man was *this one* taken".

This sense that 'this is the *one* for me' can only ultimately and lastingly be true in the context of Christian marriage. The creation record teaches that the bond between parents and children is somewhat temporary- for the children must leave them and cleave to their partner. But the bond between man and wife is to be permanent, and is an ever increasing process of being 'joined' to each other by God. Insofar as the man represents Christ and the woman represents the church, this speaks of how we are progressively bonded with Christ and feel a decreasing bond with our natural background.

2:24 *Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother, and will join with his wife, and they will be one flesh*- They initially disobeyed this. See on Gen. 1:28. As explained on :22 and :23, the nature of creation explains the attraction between male and female within the Divine sphere; it is because of this that "therefore" a man desires to join with his wife. This same natural attraction, to connect or re-connect with the opposite sex, is reflected in the natural attraction of the Lord Jesus toward us, and we toward Him. It is only human dysfunction which interferes with this; atheism and rejection of the claims of Jesus are in my view a psychological reaction against religion and those perceived as representing God on earth. "They will be one flesh" is "they two will be one" in the LXX, and the Lord Jesus and the New Testament prefer this reading. Two becoming one would axiomatically rule out polygamy; indeed, many relationships Biblically recorded, and currently experienced, amongst faithful

believers are in contradiction to the ideals laid down here. Failures to rise up to these ideals is therefore no basis for condemnation or rejection.

As a couple "cleave" or 'join' to one another, so they become one flesh (Gen. 2:24). But this becoming one flesh is interpreted by the Lord Jesus as meaning that God actively joins the couple together (Mt. 19:6); as *they* cleave to each other in the process of married life, so *God* joins them together. Clearly the Lord understood Gen. 2:24 as speaking of the process of marriage, rather than simply the ceremony of a wedding. In passing, note that the Hebrew idea of two becoming one has already been used in Genesis- the morning and evening, the day and night, were fused by God into one day (Gen. 1:5- the same Hebrew phrase is used). Similarly we read of the waters becoming, or being made one, by God (Gen. 1:9). It's as if the immense power of God in creation is unleashed in His bonding of man and wife together. To put that asunder is to fight against the very creative power of God. Mal. 2:15 comments that the purpose of the two becoming one was in order to produce a Godly seed.

The Genesis record describes how woman was taken out of man, and yet in marriage man and woman become "one flesh" again. A man will desire to "cleave" to his wife (Gen. 2:24), literally to chase, follow hard after. The desire to chase a woman and marry her is therefore a natural urge that will always play itself out. There is a natural desire within human beings to achieve this rejoining. The lonely world in which we live, with the breakdown of the extended family and local community, makes loneliness all the more poignant.

The earliest anticipation of the one body was the fact that man and woman become one flesh / body in the marriage process. If we are all members of the one body, this fact requires us to strive for unity with each other. We can't just sit back and think 'OK, so there's one body'; rather like a married couple can't just say they are one because they are " one flesh" . They must work on it if they want to be truly one. And likewise with the one body of Christ.

2:25 *They were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed*- The implication is that after the fall, they were ashamed and knew their nakedness. These two words are frequently used about Judah's judgment- they were made naked and ashamed by the exile from the *eretz*. Jer. 9:19 speaks of them being ashamed having forsaken the *eretz*- an allusion back here to Adam's exile from the same *eretz*. Hos. 13:15 speaks of Israel's spring and fountain being ashamed and no more- a reference to the spring of Gen. 2:6 LXX.

Eve was created from Adam and brought to him. I have explained above that on one level, this speaks of the bride of Christ taken from His pierced side, through the work of the blood and water. We are now before Him, naked, known completely by Him, and yet unashamed because of His love (Rom. 1:16; 5:5; 9:33; 10:11), just as the Lord is unashamed of us now (Heb. 2:11). But it's a case of now, but not yet. For the language of being presented without shame before our Lord is picked by the New Testament in describing our final union with Him at the last day (2 Cor. 11:2; Col. 1:22; 1 Jn. 2:28; Jude 24).

Ongoing Creation

There is no doubt in my mind that the six days of creation were six literal days of 24 hours. There is no suggestion in the way the Lord Jesus and Paul both quote from and allude to the Genesis record that it is to be taken figuratively. Israel were to keep the seventh day as Sabbath and creatively labour in the six other days (which was just as much a command as the keeping of Sabbath), because " in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day" (Ex. 20:11). Adam was the first man,

and Eve was the mother of all living human beings. >From one blood all were created (Acts 17:26). It is emphasized that God created through His word of command; He said, and it was done (Ps. 33:6,9; 148:5; Is. 40:26; Jn. 1:3; Heb. 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:5). God is outside the constraints of time, and outside the possibility of His word not being fulfilled. Therefore if He says something, it is as it is done, even if in human time His command is not immediately fulfilled. Thus He calls things which are not as though they are (Rom. 4:17). It is in this sense that the Lord Jesus and those in Him are spoken of as if we existed at the beginning; although we didn't physically. And so God spoke the words He did on six literal, consecutive days, and the orders ('fiats' is the word Bro. Hayward uses) were therefore, in this sense as good as done. But the actual time taken to carry them out by the Angels may have been very long. The Genesis record can then be understood as stating these commands, and then recording their fulfilment- although the fulfilment wasn't necessarily on that same day.

Indeed, it would seem from later Scripture that the orders and intentions outlined by God on the six literal days are *still* being fulfilled. Take the command for there to be light (Gen. 1:3.4). This is interpreted in 2 Cor. 4:6 as meaning that God shines in men's hearts in order to give them the knowledge of the light of Christ. The command was initially fulfilled by the Angels enabling the sun to shine through the thick darkness that shrouded the earth; but the deeper intention was to shine the spiritual light into the heart of earth-dwellers. And this is still being fulfilled. Likewise the resting of God on the seventh day was in fact a prophecy concerning how He and all His people will enter into the " rest" of the Kingdom. The Lord realized this when He said that even on Sabbath, God was still working (Jn. 5:17). The creation work had not *really* been completed in practice, although in prospect it had been. In this very context Paul comments that although we must still enter into that rest, " the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb. 4:3).

Another example is the command uttered on the sixth day to make man in God's image. The creation record in Genesis 2 is not about a different creation; it is a more detailed account of how the Angels went about fulfilling the command they were given on the sixth day. The process of bringing all the animals to Adam, him naming them, becoming disappointed with them, wishing for a true partner need not therefore be compressed into 24 hours. It could have taken a period of time. Yet the command to make man, male and female, was given on the sixth day. However, this may have taken far longer than 24 hours to complete. Indeed, the real intention of God to create man in His image was not finished even then; for Col. 1:15 interprets the creation of a man in God's image as a reference to the resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus. *This* was what the Angels had worked for millennia for, in order to fulfil the original fiat concerning the creation of man in God's image. Even now, we see not yet all things subdued under Him (Heb. 2:8); the intention that the man should have dominion over all creation as uttered *and apparently fulfilled* on the sixth day has yet to materially come to pass. The Angels are still working- with us. For 1 Cor. 15:49 teaches that *we* do not now fully have God's image, but we will receive it at the resurrection. Therefore we are driven to the conclusion that the outworking of the creation directives regarding man in God's image was not only in the 24 hours after it was given, but is still working itself out now. The new creation is therefore a continuation of and an essential part of the natural creation; not just a mirror of the natural in spiritual terms.

I can foresee that the objection to this thesis would be that God is spoken of as resting on the seventh day as if all creation has been finished. This is indeed what it

sounds like- and from God's perspective, it was true. He had spoken, and so it was done. *He* through His word had created. The Angels were now working it all out in practice, having 'set it up' in the six literal days. This view of the record explains two verses which would seem to defy any other sensible interpretation: " God blessed the seventh day...because that in it he had rested from all his work which God had created to make" (2:3 AVmg.). God " had created to make" by the seventh day. He had created, because His word was as good as executed; but the things were not all made. But He had " created to make" . Likewise Gen. 2:5 speaks of the day that the Lord " made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew" . Now this is saving the best for last. Here surely is concrete evidence for the thesis presented. The plants were made before they were actually in the earth. This doesn't mean that they were made in Heaven and then transplanted to earth. Surely it is to be read in the context of all the other hints that God stated His commands regarding creation, and this was as good as it all being made. But in material terms, it all appeared some time later.

And let's take deeply to ourselves the power of God's word as revealed here. He has spoken to us and of us, He has promised us His salvation and the inheritance of the earth. It is as good as done. Our difficulty in grasping this in the Genesis record of six literal days creation is continued in our hesitancy to apprehend the utter certainty of our promised salvation and the spiritual heights into which we have therefore already been translated.

GENESIS CHAPTER 3

3:1

The passage talks about “the serpent”. The words “satan” and “devil” do not occur in the whole book of Genesis. The serpent is never described as an angel. Therefore it is not surprising that there is no reference in Genesis to anyone being thrown out of heaven. Sin brings death (Rom. 6:23). Angels cannot die (Lk. 20:35-36) , therefore angels cannot sin. The reward of the righteous is to be made equal to the angels to die no more (Lk. 20:35-36). If angels can sin, then the righteous will also be able to sin and therefore will have the possibility of dying, which means they will not really have everlasting life. The characters involved in the Genesis record of the fall of man are: God, Adam, Eve and the serpent. Nobody else is mentioned. There is no evidence that anything got inside the serpent to make it do what it did. Paul says the serpent “beguiled Eve through his (own) subtilty” (2 Cor.11:3). God told the serpent: “Because thou hast done this...” (Gen.3:14). If “satan” used the serpent, why is he not mentioned and why was he not also punished? Adam blamed Eve for his sin: “She gave me of the tree” (Gen. 3:12). Eve blamed the serpent: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Gen. 3:13). The serpent did not blame the devil - he made no excuse. If it is argued that snakes today do not have the power of speech or reasoning as the serpent in Eden had, remember that a donkey was once made to speak and reason with a man (Balaam); “The (normally) dumb ass speaking with a man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet” (2 Pet. 2:16). And the serpent was one of the most intelligent *of all the animals* (Gen. 3:1). The curse upon it would have taken away the ability it had to speak with Adam and Eve. But it was an animal. God created the serpent (Gen. 3:1); another being called “satan” did not turn into the serpent; if we believe this, we are effectively saying that one person can enter the life of someone else and control it.

This is a pagan idea, not a Biblical one. If it is argued that God would not have created the serpent because of the great sin it enticed Adam and Eve to commit, remember that sin entered the world from man (Rom. 5:12); the serpent was therefore amoral, speaking from its own natural observations, and was not as such responsible to God and therefore did not commit sin. The serpent was a beast of the field which God had made (Gen 3:1). Yet out of the ground [Heb. *adamah*- earth, soil] God formed all the beasts of the field, including the serpent (Gen. 2:17). So the serpent was likewise created by God out of the ground- it wasn't a pre-existing agent of evil. Note the snake, as one of the beasts of the field, was "very good" (Gen. 1:31)- hardly how one would describe the serpent according to the orthodox reasoning. The Torah doesn't speak of purely symbolic, abstract concepts; there is always a literal reality, which may then be interpreted in a symbolic way. The serpent, therefore, begs to be understood in this context as just that- a serpent. The view has been pushed that the serpent is to be read as a symbol of our human or animal nature. This would mean that Eve's nature deceived Eve, and such a separation between a person and their nature is problematic to say the least. This view runs into huge difficulties- for how could Eve's nature be punished in a way separate to her punishment, in what way was her deceptive nature created by God like the animals, and how just was Eve's personal judgment in this case... and the questions go on, continuing to be begged the more we think about it. Some suggest that the serpent of Genesis 3 is related to the seraphim. However, the normal Hebrew word for “serpent”, which is used in Genesis 3, is totally unrelated to the word for “seraphim”. The Hebrew word translated “seraphim” basically means a “fiery one” and is translated “fiery serpent” in Numbers 21:8, but this is not the word translated “serpent” in Genesis 3. The Hebrew word for brass comes from the same root word for “serpent” in Genesis 3. Brass represents sin (Jud. 16:21; 2 Sam. 3:24; 2 Kings. 25:7; 2 Chron. 33:11; 36:6), thus the serpent may be connected with the idea of sin, but not a sinful angel. Note that the enmity, the conflict, is between the woman and the serpent, and their respective seed. The serpent is presented not so much as the foe of God, but the enemy of mankind. The promise that the seed of the woman would crush his head is echoed in the words to Cain in regard to sin: "Its desire is for you, but you will be able to master it" (Gen. 4:7). The snake is to be connected symbolically with human sin, not any superhuman Satan figure.

The entire Pentateuch is alluding to the various myths and legends of creation and origins, showing what the truth is. Moses was seeking to disabuse Israel of all the myths they'd heard in Egypt, to deconstruct the wrong views they'd grown up with- and so he wrote Genesis 1-3 to show the understanding of origins which God wished His people to have. The serpent had a major significance in the surrounding cultures. It was seen as a representative of the gods, a kind of demon, a genie. But the Genesis record is at pain to show that the serpent in Eden was none of those things- it was one of the "beasts of the field". No hidden identity is suggested for the serpent in Genesis. J.H. Walton comments: "The Israelites [made no] attempt to associate it [the serpent] with a being who was the ultimate source or cause of evil. In fact, it would appear that the author of Genesis is intentionally underplaying the role or identification of the serpent... In Canaanite literature the role of chaos was played by the serpentine Leviathan / Lotan. In contrast, the Biblical narrative states that the great sea creatures were simply beasts God created (Gen. 1:21). This demythologizing polemic may also be responsible for avoiding any theory of conspirational uprisings for the existence of evil... there is no hint in the OT that the serpent of Genesis 2-3 was either identified as Satan or was thought to be inspired by Satan. The earliest extant reference to any

association is found in Wisdom of Solomon 2:24 (first century BC)... the earliest reference to Satan as the tempter through the serpent is in *Apocalypse Of Moses* 16-19, contemporary to the NT... in the writings of the church fathers, one of the earliest to associate the serpent with Satan was Justin Martyr" (J.H. Walton, 'Serpent', in T.D. Alexander and D.W. Baker, eds, *Dictionary Of The Old Testament And Pentateuch* (Leicester: I.V.P., 2003) pp. 737/8). Even within Judaism, it is accepted that the idea that the serpent was Satan is not in the text itself, and arose only within later Rabbinic commentary: "The interpretation... according to which the serpent is none other than Satan... introduces into the text concepts that are foreign to it... the primeval serpent is just a species of animal... it is beyond doubt that the Bible refers to an ordinary, natural creature, for it is distinctly stated here: Beyond any best of the field that the Lord God had made" (Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary On The Book Of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998 ed.) Vol. 1, pp. 139,140).

Now the serpent- If the entire family or genus of snakes were intended, we would expect to read something like "the serpent and his kind". But the language here suggests we are reading of a specific singular animal, a unique creation. I suggest that "the serpent" was a specifically created animal, an "animal of the field" but a special creation, which died for all time as its punishment- thus looking forward to the final, eternal destruction of sin, all forms of temptation and death, as envisioned in Gen. 3:15. The serpent was real enough, but it also represented sin and temptation. But the symbolic must have a basis in the literal and historical. Paul alludes to the serpent as if it were literal (2 Cor. 11:3). The Hebrew word means literally to hiss or whisper, but it also has the idea of experience (s.w. Gen. 30:27 "I have learned *by experience*"). The root of temptation is the desire for experience, rather than accepting the experiences God plans for us.

Many of the creation myths feature some kind of serpent, but always as some entity far more than a literal animal. The Genesis record alludes to these myths, which Israel in Egypt would have been exposed to and probably accepted, in order to deconstruct them. This doesn't mean that Genesis is myth; the very opposite. It presents God's take on those myths. The myths tend to present the serpent as a dragon figure, similar in appearance to the Biblical cherubim. Some cherubim-like figures uncovered in Egypt are in fact winged cobras (Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon, Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1992) p. 60). But the Genesis record clearly differentiates between the serpent and the cherubim. "Serpents figure in various Ancient Near Eastern myths in a demonic way" (J. R. Porter, *The Illustrated Guide to the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 29). The Sumerian god Ningishzida [meaning 'Lord of the tree'] was portrayed as a serpent (John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews & Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary To The Old Testament* (Downers Gove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000) p. 32). But the Genesis record is insistent that the truth is different, and that for the Bible believer, the serpent was an animal, not a god, not a cosmic dragon nor a demon, but a literal "beast of the field" created by the one God just as all the other animals were created.

Let's ever remember that Genesis was initially produced by Moses in order to educate the Israelites in the wilderness. The Egyptians venerated the serpent and glorified death as a reward; Moses shows that it is to be abhorred as the symbol of sin, and death is a curse and the wages of sin.

Was more subtle- The great temptation for Israel in their *eretz* was Canaanite idolatry; the tribes of the land are described with the same word in Ps. 83:3 ["crafty counsel"]. Baal was seen as a god of wisdom; perhaps the literal serpent represented

all such idolatry, tempting Israel to ‘play God’, to assume His wisdom, which is the essence of every temptation. As there was a snake who was there in the 'land' of Eden, so there was the equivalent amongst Israel- the false teachers, the tribes who remained, etc., the "serpents of the dust" who would be the cause of Israel's destruction (Dt. 32:24- an evident allusion to the language of the snake in Eden).

Than any animal of the field which Yahweh God had made- This suggests the serpent was indeed an animal, created by God. The serpent was cursed more than the other beasts of the field (Gen. 3:14); the most superior animal was brought down beneath the others, by having to crawl on its belly. Those who argue for a non-literal serpent would presumably have to read this as meaning: 'The serpent was more subtle than any of the animals God had made [although it was not an animal]'. I suggest the more comfortable reading of the text is: 'The serpent was one of the animals but was the most subtle of them all'. The question of interpretation is hard to resolve by appeal to the original Hebrew alone. The preceding chapters 1 and 2 have stated that all things and all categories of things exist because they were created by God. So the serpent was a created being- in which category was it to be placed, if not as an "animal of the field"? If we are intended to see the serpent as not created by God, then surely that would be stated. The whole context is about creation or bringing into being by God. The implication is surely that the serpent was one of the animals God had made. We can break down the text like this: The serpent [A] was more [B] than [C]. The question is whether [A] is part of [C], i.e. was the serpent [A] one of the 'animals of the field' [C]. The same kind of Hebrew construction is found elsewhere. In each case, the idea would be that [A] is part of and included within the category of [C]. Thus Israel [A] were not more in number [B] than any other nation [C] (Dt. 7:7). But Israel were a nation, included within the [C] category. "I [A] am more foolish [B] than any man [C]" (Prov. 30:2). The writer was a man, he was a member of the category [C]. Likewise Is. 52:14 "His [Messiah's] [A] face was more marred [B] than any man [C]". Messiah was a man, He was part of the category of [C], but He had the most marred face. Ez. 15:2 might be the clearest: "What is the vine tree [A] more than [B] any tree [C]?". The vine tree is a tree, a member of the category [C]. And so the serpent [A] was more subtle [B] than any animal of the field [C]. The serpent was part of that category, it was an animal of the field made by God. Genesis 3 is right at the beginning of the Bible. It would seem to me inappropriate to begin the Biblical revelation with symbolic language. Symbol and figure don't function that way in literature. We begin with literal things, and then later in the literature, those literal things are employed as symbols. Thus Paul truly observed that "it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and only then the spiritual" (1 Cor. 15:46). When we read Revelation and encounter dragons and the like, the genre clearly demands we understand them as symbolic of other things. But we don't have that kind of genre at the start of the Bible. So whilst the serpent clearly is used to represent things later on in the Bible, I believe that here at the start, it is a literal serpent which is in view.

Sin entered the world by Adam, not by the serpent (Rom. 5:12). But see on Gen. 3:14 *eat dust*. If the serpent were purely figurative, then we would surely expect to find Paul giving the serpent a place in the entry of sin into the world. But he doesn't. I have suggested that the 'creation' account in Genesis 1 is a dramatic presentation explaining how *eretz* Israel was prepared for habitation. I then developed the similarities between that *eretz* and Eden. But Eden was a literal place; and Adam and Eve are understood in later Scripture as literal beings. And so I see no hint within the genre of Genesis 3 which suggests that the serpent is to be read purely symbolically. If Gen. 1:2-2:4 is poetic or dramatic, then there must come some point at which the

genre changes- for the rest of Genesis is not in that genre. I suggest that cut off point is at Gen. 2:4. The natural must come before the spiritual and allegorical interpretation of it. Just as Adam represented Israel, and his exile Eastward from the *eretz* looked ahead to Judah's exile to Babylon, so the creature known as the serpent represented that within the *eretz* which caused God's people to sin and be expelled from it. Just as Eden, Adam and Eve were literal, so was the "serpent". But as they each represented things, so the serpent did too. The besetting temptation of Israel was the cult of idols, Baal in particular, and this was represented by the creature known as "the serpent". Just as the serpent "deceived" Eve (Gen. 3:13), so the same word is used of how false teachers deceived Israel into idol worship (Jer. 29:8). The Hebrew for "serpent" has a wide range of associations, most of them connected with false worship. Just as Adam and Eve should have not meddled with the serpent and instead brought it under their dominion, likewise Israel were warned not to meddle with those who 'serpent' (AV "use enchantment", the verb form of the noun for "serpent"; Lev. 19:26; Dt. 18:10). The literal animal known as the serpent, which differed, I suggest, from snakes of today, represented various things- not least, the temptations which led to Israel, God's specially created people, being exiled from the *eretz*. It represents other things too. But this is not to say that "the serpent" is merely symbolic. To say this runs the risk of a serious [and common] error in reasoning, whereby something abstract is made symbolic of something else. 'Love', e.g., an abstract concept, cannot be symbolic of e.g. grace. So a symbolic entity, e.g. "the serpent", could not be itself symbolic of something else, e.g. sin or temptation. Literal things can represent abstract things or point forward to other things- the blood of the Mosaic sacrifices symbolized the atoning work of the Lord; the High Priest symbolized the Lord; the manna symbolized the word of God; the waters of the exodus symbolized the water of baptism, etc. But the symbolism functions because a literal thing or entity is used to represent something more abstract. If Adam, Eve and Eden were literal, and the creation or placement of animals and plants in Eden was literal, then it would seem gapingly inappropriate for a symbolic non literal "serpent" to appear in the record.

He said to the woman, Has God really said- We note he omits the covenant name of God, Yahweh. The Hebrew interpretted as "really" could mean to the effect that "Yes, although God has said". The AV fumbles towards this with "Yea, hath God said...". The idea would then be to imply 'Although God has surely said this, are you sure that the sentence will really be carried out?'. This would then pave the way for the serpent's lie in :4: "You *won't* surely die". The temptation here is set up as the archetype of all human temptation. The thought is presented, and the fantasy extends from that thought.

'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?'- This was intentionally misrepresenting the commandment. They had been told to "eat, eat!" of all the trees, with the exception of one. Misrepresentation of God's word, making God out to be unreasonable, is at the heart of all temptation. The Lord's wilderness temptations show the same process. God is not unreasonable, and He will not give us any temptation too great for us. Sin is not inevitable; and He doesn't wish us to be disobedient, but rather obedient. It is simply not so that the possession of human nature means that we shall inevitably sin; for the Lord had our same nature, but was undefiled.

3:2 *The woman said to the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat-* Eve knew the commandment, and that the serpent was either misrepresenting or misunderstanding it. She and Adam had been commanded to "eat, eat!" of all the trees. It was their lack of obedience to this which left them not satiated, not away from

the middle of the garden, and therefore prone to greater temptation. She interprets that command to "eat, eat!" as simply meaning that "we *may* eat". If she had more zealously perceived God's commandment to do positive things, she would not have struggled so much with the one negative commandment- to *not* eat of one tree.

Adam's sin is indeed everyman's. The account of Adam and Eve's sin is in essence the account of every sin and fall into temptation, and is alluded to on nearly every page of the Bible. God had told Adam to each *in abundance* from *all* the trees of the garden (Gen. 2:16,17). Eve tells the serpent that they can simply "eat" (she doesn't mention 'in abundance') from "the trees of the garden" (she doesn't mention 'from *all* of them'; Gen. 3:2,3). If Adam and Eve had enjoyed God's blessings as He intended, there would not have been such a pull into the temptation. Appreciating the blessings God has given us, with regular prayers of thankfulness throughout the day (meal times are a great opportunity to remember to do this) will likewise lead us away from temptation; minimizing His blessings propels us towards it. Each time we fail in this, we are repeating Eve's sin. Likewise we can discern a positive focus by Eve upon the object of temptation; God had told Adam and Eve to eat in abundance "from all trees of the garden" but not to eat "from the tree of knowledge". Eve repeats this to the serpent by inserting the word 'fruit': "From the *fruit* of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from *the fruit* of the tree that is in the middle of the garden…". Focusing on the forbidden fruit in such detail is a sure way to ultimately succumb to the temptation. Or again, the command to not eat of the tree was twisted by Eve into saying that God had commanded that they were to not even *touch* it. She put a fence around the law [or Adam did, in explaining it to her]- and it had the opposite effect. Paul alludes to this by saying that Jewish regulations such as "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch… are of no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh" (Col. 2:21-23). In all these things we find Adam to be everyman, to be me, to be you, to be us.

3:3 *But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die'*- The command to "eat, eat!" of all the other trees was intended to keep them away from the temptation which was in the midst of the garden. For they would have been moving elsewhere in the garden to all the various trees, to taste their fruits. And they would have had no appetite for anything else, if they were satiated by eating the other fruits. God's commandments are not mere tests of obedience; rather they are designed to elicit obedience, and to make the temptations less attractive. See on :2.

God had not told Adam not to touch the tree. The command not to eat the tree had been given to Adam alone, before the creation of Eve. He had relayed it to Eve, but had placed a fence around the law by telling her not to even touch the tree. He thus reveals a simple understanding of temptation and the need to try to ensure obedience to commandment. But he added to the commandment, rather than explaining to Eve and encouraging her to positively engage in the Lord's work elsewhere in the garden.

3:4 *The serpent said to the woman, You won't surely die*- The first lie, continued in various forms throughout all religions, not least in the false doctrine of the "immortal soul". The one true faith is unique in our belief in the mortality of man. And yet sin entered the world by Adam (Rom. 5:12), not by the serpent. The serpent was a special creation, set up and positioned by God as part of the environment required for the testing of Adam and Eve. John Thomas helpfully described the serpent as "amoral", reasoning from an animal viewpoint but not ultimately the first sinner. This torpedoes any idea that the serpent was some kind of sinful being cast out

of heaven onto earth. That whole fantasy is not only unBiblical, but is morally and logically as ridiculous as ordering a convicted pedophile and psychopath out of the courthouse into a school playground, with the judge arming him with a rifle.

The implication of the serpent was that God in fact didn't love Adam and Eve, and was trying to keep them from having some higher experience which He selfishly kept to Himself. Our temptations are likewise associated with a denial that "God is love". If we accept the love of God for us, His passionate desire to save us, so much temptation would be stillborn. The woman was under the impression that they would die if they ate or touched the tree. Perhaps the serpent was touching the tree- yet was not dead. Temptation becomes the stronger when we see others advertising the fact they have sinned and apparently avoided the consequences. Our world is full of this. And so this ancient record becomes timeless in its relevance.

3:5 *Rather God knows-*

The implication was that God is not love; He somehow wanted to hold humanity back from having the ideal experience. When of course the opposite is true; Yahweh is all about salvation, Yahoshua, and sharing His nature with us, in His love. All the temptations connected with doubting the love and saving purpose of God... are all seen in this first temptation. So much depression and addiction arises from this same disbelief in God's love.

That in the day you eat it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God-

The temptation to "be like God" was that which the Lord Jesus refused through submitting to the death of the cross (Phil. 2). We are tempted to "be like God" in that we all have a tendency to 'play God'; to assume we can judge [when we lack the ability to ultimately judge], to assume we know better than God, to refuse to accept His hand in our lives... The implication was that God unreasonably wanted to keep them in subjection, and that there was ultimate freedom to be had in rebellion against Him. Man to this day likes the idea of freedom, but seeks it in the wrong way; and actually if offered total freedom, doesn't really want it. The Lord promised that He could make us "free indeed". Through baptism we change masters; from service to sin, to serving God. And this is the path to true freedom, when we shall be given "that which is our own" (Lk. 16:12). Ultimate personal freedom and self determination is what God wishes to give us. But it is all the same a gift from Him, and cannot be arrived at by our own power grabbing.

Knowing good and evil- It has been suggested that there was a creation previous to our own, i.e. to that recorded in Gen. 1. It is also conceivable that the present angels came to have an awareness of “good and evil” (Gen. 3:5) through having been in a similar situation to what we are in this life. That some of the beings who lived in that age did sin is not to be ruled out; but all this is the kind of speculation which men love to indulge in. The Bible does not tell us of these things but tells us clearly what we need to know about the present situation, which is that there are no sinful angels; all angels are totally obedient to God.

The temptation here is set up as typical of every temptation. The essential desire is to play God, and to think that God somehow is holding cards close to His chest that He doesn't want us to see, that He is in a sense mean, trying to stop us enjoy ourselves. Perhaps all sin is a form of playing God, whereas Phil. 2 alludes here in saying that by contrast, the Lord Jesus did not even consider grasping such equality with God. The desire to experience "good and evil" is what makes so much fiction and entertainment so attractive to us; it is a vicarious experience ['knowledge'] of good and evil. "Knowing" is often a Hebraism for 'experience'. The idea is not that the woman would receive theoretical knowledge of what was right and wrong. She could

experience good and evil, so she thought, in a way which was forbidden. This desire for forbidden experience, or experience beyond our ability to cope with, is what drives so much human lust and misbehaviour. The experience we can cope with has been given to us by God. The serpent implied that by eating the fruit, they would know good and evil; whereas they didn't know good and evil. But they did know good and evil in the sense that they had been given a choice of obedience or disobedience. This confirms the suggestion that 'knowing' refers more to experience.

'God knows... that you will know good and evil' is a play upon the word "knows", twice repeated. The idea is that God doesn't want you to share His knowledge / experience. Again, God is presented as unreasonable. God does indeed want to share Himself and His nature with us; but we must be educated and prepared for this. The essence of all temptation is to want to snatch it right now, to take the crown without the race or the cross. Hence Phil. 2 alludes to all this, in saying that *instead* of grasping such equality with God, the Lord died on the cross. We all think we can handle such experience right now; the primitive and inappropriate desires of a child actually continue throughout human life, just in different forms.

3:6 *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes-*

This was true of all the trees; they were all "Pleasant to the sight, and good for food" (Gen. 2:9). Again we see an insight into human psychology- that which tempts us is in fact only so unique in our perception. More rationally observed, it is no better than anything else. A house, car, illicit relationship or gadget becomes obsessively attractive not because it is in fact unique, but because this is how we perceive it. They had been told to "eat, eat!" of the trees; had they obeyed this, then this particular tree would not have seemed so attractive. We note the reversal of the order from "pleasant to the sight, and good for food" to "good for food and a delight to the eyes". How did she realize the tree was good for food? Presumably because the serpent had eaten from it, yet had not died. Practicing sin without apparently experiencing consequences is one of the most powerful advertisments for sin.

And that the tree was to be desired to make one wise- We naturally enquire how she realized all this by merely looking at the tree. Surely there was no visual evidence of all these things. This leads to the suggestion that the serpent was implying that he had eaten of the tree, and had not died. The command not to eat of it was specifically to Adam and Eve.

Pride is the root of our desire for knowledge / experience. The later command not to covet what looks good is very much rooted in a warning not to commit Eve's sin of seeing the fruit and yielding to temptation (Ex. 20:17 = Gen. 3:6). 1 Jn. 2:16 surely alludes here, demonstrating again that this is the archetypical temptation, the essence of every human temptation; for like Eve, all men "would be wise" (Job 11:12): "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh ["good for food"] and the lust of the eyes ["a delight to the eyes"] and the vain glory of life ["to be desired to make one wise"], is not of the Father but is of the world". The last of the three parallels is especially instructive. Her desire to be wise was in fact the vain glory of life. Her desire for knowledge / experience was related to pride, "vain glory". Babylon and Tyre are presented as the corporate embodiment of all these things; their desire for wisdom and their pride are paralleled in the prophetic condemnations of them (Is. 47:10; Ez. 28:5,7,17).

We have here exhibited the simple fact that desire of itself may be natural; but it is not therefore acceptable to indulge the desire. It is axiomatic that desire is natural; but Eve was called to self control, to not simply do what was her desire. This may

sound obvious, but increasingly we are bombarded with the idea that whatever may feel natural is therefore legitimate to fulfil. But the Godly way of life is different, radically so.

It seems that God punishes sin in a way which is appropriate to the sin. Consider how David so often asks God to take the wicked in their own snare- and how often this happens. The punishment of Adam and Eve was appropriate to the sins they committed. What Adam wasn't bothered to do, i.e. have intercourse with his woman, became the very thing which now every fallen man will sell his soul for. They ate the tree of *knowledge*, they *knew* they were naked, and then Adam *knew* Eve (Gen. 4:1); this chain of connection certainly suggests that sexual desire, whilst not wrong in itself, was part of the result of eating the tree. There is an artless poetic justice and appropriacy in this which seems simply Divine. What they couldn't be bothered to do became the very thing which has probably generated more sin and desire to do than anything else. Adam was to rule over Eve as a result of the fall- the very thing he wasn't bothered to do. Eve's punishment was that her desire was for her husband- perhaps suggesting that she too had no desire for Adam sexually, and therefore was willing to delay obedience to the command to multiply. They were both driven out of the garden- perhaps reflecting how they should have left the garden in obedience to God's command to go out and subdue the natural creation to themselves. Because Adam wasn't bothered to do this, even when it was within his power, therefore nature was given a special power against man which he would never be able to overcome, and which would eventually defeat him (Gen. 3:17-19). This all shows the logic of obedience; we will be made to pay the price of obedience even if we disobey- therefore it is logical to obey. Note in this context that the Hebrew behind "Desirable to gain understanding" in Gen. 3:6 "can also be translated, without notable alteration, as "desirable in order to become childless"" (H. Reckons, *Israel's Concept of the Beginning: The Theology of Genesis 1-3* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964) p. 270)- suggesting they didn't want to have children, they didn't want to obey the command to multiply. And therefore the curse was that they would indeed have children and suffer in doing so.

The frequent command "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17 etc.) uses the same Hebrew word translated "desire" when we read of how Eve "desired" the fruit (Gen. 3:6); yet Israel "desired" the wrong fruit (Is. 1:29). As Eve saw the fruit and fell for it, so the people of Reuben and Gad saw the land East of Jordan and imagined how good it would be to have it, despite having been given 'all the land' West of Jordan to enjoy [cp. Adam and Eve's dominion in Eden] (Num. 32:1,2,7). In all these allusions [and they exist in almost every chapter of the Bible] we are being shown how human sin is a repetition in essence of that of our first parents. The insistent emphasis is that we should rise above and *not* be like them. And yet this call for personal effort and struggle with ourselves in order to overcome sin is muted and misplaced by all the stress upon a supposed Devil tempting Eve, pushing the blame onto him, and thereby de-emphasizing our role in overcoming sin within ourselves. And so we see so many loud-mouthed condemners of the Devil totally not 'getting it' about the need for personal self-control and spiritual mindedness in daily life and private character.

What were the motives of Adam and Eve for sinning, for accepting the serpent's suggestion? Considering this can help open a window onto the question of the *origin* of Adam's sin. They were attracted by the idea of "knowing good and evil". But this phrase is elsewhere used in the Bible about how an adult 'knows good and evil', but a child can't (Dt. 1:39; 2 Sam. 19:35; Is. 7:16). Adam and Eve were immature; like children, they wished to 'grow up', they resented the restraints which their immaturity

required them to be under; they wanted, just as children want, to be the all-knowing adults / mature people whom they had seen the Elohim as. As children long to escape from what they see as meaningless and onerous restrictions, whilst having no idea what this would really mean in practice and how un-free it would really be- so Adam and Eve were attracted by the idea of having the knowledge of good and evil just for the bite of the forbidden fruit. I find this a perfectly understandable explanation of the *motive* for Adam and Eve's sin. It seems a quite imaginable exercise of the freedom of choice and behaviour which God had given them. There is no hint that 'Satan made them do it', or that they were 'possessed' by some sinful spirit. They did just what we so often do- misused, wrongly exercised, their freewill and desired that which was inappropriate. Simple as that. There's no need to bring in an external Satan figure to explain what happened.

She took of its fruit, and ate; and she gave some to her husband with her, and he ate- The focus of the camera is zoomed in close up upon the couple and their eating. This sin is that of every man. In this sense, we all sinned "in Adam" (Rom. 5:12 Gk.) and therefore "in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). We are not unjustly suffering; for each of our sins was a result of succumbing to the same essential temptations as Adam did. Even if we didn't sin "after the similitude" of Adam's sin, we have done so in essence (Rom. 5:14). We would have done the same if we were there; as our own history of sin and weakness makes clear. Eve was deceived; but Adam was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14); yet they both suffered punishment. This opens a window onto the question of whether people are innocent before God if they sin as a result of having been deceived. Sin is sin, and therefore sins of ignorance had to be repented of and atoned for under the Mosaic law. Adam put up no resistance; he didn't remind Eve of the law. Eve believed the lies of the serpent; Adam just "did it". Both received appropriate judgment. Adam may have reasoned that Eve had eaten the fruit and not died; therefore God's word was not sure. In this case, he would have failed to give due weight and detailed reflection to God's word; for the death penalty was to be in the day they ate of it. Perhaps his conception of days was limited, if this happened on the first day of the new world.

The beast systems, as Babylon and Assyria before them, were false Kingdoms of God. The beast has the power to give *pneuma* to the image / body of the first beast (Rev. 13:15)- an evident mimicry of God's creation of Adam. They appear to offer, here and now, the things of the Kingdom, and the fleshly-minded are persuaded by them. This is all playing out the drama of Eden again; the serpent offered equality with God, the wisdom of God, when it was actually the wisdom of the serpent. Adam and Eve grasped for what was offered, unlike the Lord Jesus, who refused to grasp at equality with God (Phil. 2 is full of allusion to the events of Gen. 3). What happened in Eden is in essence the epitome, the prototype of all temptation and sin (1 Jn. 2:16 = Gen. 3:6). Every one of our temptations has an element of this; we are tempted to grasp for what looks like the Kingdom here and now. Pentecostals are an evident example of this; they think they can obtain the full healing and physical ecstasy of the future Kingdom here and now. And on a more common level, there are many of us who reach out for the supposed fulfilment of hobbies, the supposed peace and 'security' of a nice home and bank balance, when these things are actually a false fulfilment, peace and security, the peace and security of Satan's Kingdom which is a counterfeit of the spiritual fulfilment, peace and security of Christ's Kingdom.

I suggested that the serpent had eaten of the tree and thus became an encouragement to Eve to sin without apparent consequence. Eve's eating of the fruit was therefore likewise a great temptation to Adam to do so. This is how sin spreads in

society, and how individuals give in to temptation. They see others giving in, and apparently not experiencing bad consequence but rather enjoyment. All of this should remind us that we are called in Christ to the most extreme individualism known to man; to stand with our backs to the world, if need be. To remember that the wages of sin really will be death. Because they are doing it, we must not. Because of our loyalty and relationship to the Father and Son. Yet we go astray "like sheep"; the Lord's death on the cross was neccessary to get us forgiveness for this "iniquity" of going astray like sheep (Is. 53:6). The herd instinct is so powerful within us. It is only utterly personal relationship with the Father and Son, in the power of the Spirit, that will empower us to bee the individuals we are intended to be.

3:7 *The eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves loincloths*- Adam and Eve were "made naked" in the sense that they now realized their nakedness. The idea is alluded to in Ex. 32:25 and Mic. 1:11, where we read that Israel were "made naked to their shame" by their idolatry. Again we see Adam's sin as being presented as Israel's sin; the punishment of being cast out of the *eretz* precisely matches that of Israel, who were cast out from the same geographical area. Is. 32:11 also alludes here- Judah are as a naked woman revealed as naked, who makes a loincloth for herself in shame. The fig being a symbol of Israel, we have here the hint that the religion of Israel alone could not cover sin; the blood of the lamb provided by God was needed.

Nakedness being revealed is a figure of judgment (Ez. 16:36,37). And yet we can pass beyond condemnation, through accepting the Divinely provided covering. The images here are used elsewhere of how nakedness can now be covered even in this life; Ex. 20:26; 28:42 has the priests covering their nakedness, Ez. 16:8; Hos. 2:9 speak of God covering Israel's nakedness; and we can now cover our nakedness and be unashamed before God (Rev. 3:18). The idea seems to be that in this life, we can be covered in Christ and therefore be unashamed before God; but ultimately we shall return to the situation in Eden, naked before God and unashamed. We will really believe that our sin is no longer a barrier between God and man; we can be ourselves, unashamedly so. And in Christ we know something of that even in this life.

3:8 *They heard the voice of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God among the trees of the garden*- For *Presence,* see on Is. 63:9. Strictly, "the face". The idea is surely that they spoke with God face to face before the fall. Revelation concludes the Bible with the promise that we shall [again] see Him face to face when Eden is restored on earth. The cool or evening of the day could well mean that this was the first day of their lives. If the fall happened soon after creation, this would explain why there was no fruit on the tree of life, which according to Revelation bore its fruit every month; and also why Adam and Eve had not yet gone forth and multiplied.

We note that God's presence or face is parallel with His voice. This continues a theme of the narrative; creation was by a word, and God's face is manifest in His word. It is before this that man experiences shame at his disobedience. This is not to elevate Bible study to the point of justification by intellectual prowess. But in our age, God's word and voice is in the Bible, as articulated through the word made flesh, His Son.

The frequent statements that God will hide Himself from Israel as a result of their condemnation (Dt. 31:17,18; Dt. 32:20; Is. 1:15 etc.) must be balanced against the fact that in reality, it is sinful man who hides himself from God (Is. 29:15; Jer. 23:24; Rev. 6:16). And here in Eden, in wrath God remembered mercy. He didn't hide Himself;

instead He went out to encounter those who had hid themselves from Him. David complained that God was hiding His face from him (Ps. 13:1; Ps. 27:9; 30:7 etc.), which suggests that there is an element to which God's face is not now generally hidden from those who live the spiritual life before Him. He hides His face from our sins (Ps. 51:9) if we are justified / counted right in His presence by faith. Part of the new covenant we have entered is that God will not hide His face from us *because* He has poured out His Spirit upon us (Ez. 39:29). The effects of the fall are being gradually undone in the lives of the believer, through the work of the Spirit. As God walked in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8), so He would walk in the midst of the camp of Israel in the wilderness (Dt. 23:15). Again we see the effects of Adam's personal fall being undone in the experience of God's faithful people, even in this life.

There are many allusions to Adam in the book of Job- Zophar in chapters 11 and 20 accuses Job of being as Adam, and Job denies this by way of allusion and specifically at Job 31:33. But then the whirlwind comes, and God speaks out of it to convict Job that he is indeed as Adam. The translation of *ruach hayom* in Gen. 3:8-11 as God walking "in the wind of the day" totally misses the point- the idea is of a theophany of *ruach*, Spirit wind, and Adam trying to hide and shelter among the trees from the blast of the wind. And out of that wind, God speaks and convicts him of his sin. This is what happened to Job as the wind approaches throughout Elihu's speeches, and then he is called to account and recognition that he is as Adam. The description of Behemoth in Job 40:15 is relevant, for this is the term used for the "cattle" above which the serpent was cursed (Gen. 3:14).

3:9 *But Yahweh God called to the man-*

The gathering is both then and now; our gathering into the net, our first response to the Gospel, is a gathering unto judgment. The Hebrew idea of 'calling' very often implies a calling to give account- e.g. God calling Adam to account (Gen. 3:9), Pharaoh calling Abram to account (Gen. 12:18), and Abimelech likewise (Gen. 20:9- other examples in Gen. 26:9,10; Dt. 25:8). Our calling to the Kingdom is effectively also a calling to give account. The point is, we must act now as men and women will do so on their way to judgment and the meeting with their ultimate destiny. Then we will not be bickering amongst ourselves or worrying about our worldly advantage; then, only one thing will matter. And so now, only one thing matters.

And said to him, Where are you?- This and the questions in Gen. 3:11 and Gen. 4:9 are obviously rhetorical; God knew the answers, but was seeking to elicit something from the couple through His questions. And that "something" was repentance; and it could be that we are invited to judge to what extent their repentance was complete. What score would we give them out of ten? What God wanted them to ask themselves was "What have I done?". But He asks Adam "*Where* are you?". We too need to stop and let ourselves be asked this question in the midst of life. For where we are is effectively who we are, and a function of what we have done. This is why the Hebrew word translated "where" is also rendered "how"- e.g. "*How* shall I pardon you for this?" (Jer. 5:7). God uses such rhetorical questions to try to elicit repentance: where / what / who are you... (Gen. 4:9; Num. 22:9; Is. 39:3). And He arranges circumstance so that He asks us similar questions in the midst of life.

3:10 *The man said, I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked-*

The admission he was naked was tantamount to accepting that their fig leaf covering was inadequate, and that God's gaze saw through it. He had of course been naked

before; even a blind man knows when he is naked. But Adam now felt that nakedness because he was ashamed of himself and his body.

And I hid myself- The rejected one talent man says 'I was afraid, and so I hid *my talent*'. Adam said: 'I was afraid, and I hid *myself*'. The talent God gave that man was therefore himself, his real self. To not use our talent, to not blossom from the experience of God's love and grace, is to not use ourselves, is to not be ourselves, the *real* self as God intended. Adam's fear and sense of shame is presented as being because of hearing God's voice, rather than simply at the physical presence of God. Again we see the supreme status of God's word. But like us so often, Adam laments and admits the consequence of his sin, rather than immediately confessing. In all this we see the frequent pattern of all sin and the slow, Divinely guided struggle towards repentance.

The Assyrians led Israel away into captivity [s.w. to make naked], "they discovered her nakedness" (Ez. 23:10), and yet in their sin Israel made themselves naked (2 Chron. 28:19 cp. Ex. 32:25; Gen. 3:10).

So many commentators have noted that Gen. 1-3 is one of the most misused and misunderstood sections of the whole Bible. But why? They give no significant explanation. I'd suggest it's because humanity [and that includes theologians and formulators of church doctrine] squirms awkwardly under the glaring beam of the simple record of human guilt. And therefore the serpent has been turned into a superhuman being that gets all the blame; and human sin has been minimized, at the expense of the plain meaning of the text. The whole structure of the Biblical narrative is concerned with the guilt and sin of the man and the woman; the snake isn't where the focus is. Von Rad, in one of the 20th century's most seminal commentaries on Genesis, understood this clearly: "In the narrator's mind, [the serpent] is scarcely an embodiment of a 'demonic' power and certainly not of Satan... the mention of the snake is almost secondary; in the 'temptation' by it the concern is with a completely unmythical process, presented in such a way because the narrator is obviously anxious to shift the problem as little as possible from man" (Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (London: S.C.M., 1966) p. 85). The record keeps using personal pronouns to lay the blame squarely with Adam: "*I* heard... *I* was afraid... *I* was naked; *I* hid... *I* ate... *I* ate" (Gen. 3:10-13; and compare Jonah's similar confession of sin in Jonah 4:1-3- Jonah appears to allude to Adam here). Nobody reading the Genesis record with an open mind would surely see anything else but the blame being placed on humanity; as I have repeatedly stressed, the words 'Satan', 'Lucifer' and the idea of the serpent as a fallen Angel are simply not there in Genesis. They have to be 'read in' from presuppositions, which ultimately have their root in pagan myths.

3:11 *God said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?*- As noted on :9, these rhetorical questions were not for God's benefit. They were designed to elicit fuller repentance from Adam. The answer to "Who told you...?" was "I myself, because I ate the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". But Adam didn't give this answer, although God was seeking to elicit it. It was not the serpent who had told Adam that he was naked. It was Adam's own conscience, enlivened by the forbidden fruit. And so the loving Father's question pierced right through to Adam's conscience and innermost being. He works according to the same pattern in our lives too, arranging situations which elicit such questions and realizations within us. The required answer to the second question was obviously "Yes, and I am very sorry". We are surely being invited to grade the extent of Adam's repentance, in order to more quickly, openly, transparently and fully accept our own failures, and repent as required.

3:12 *The man said, The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate*- See on Gen. 2:17. As noted on :11, the man did not immediately come to total repentance. He states mitigating factors first, with the implication that God was somehow responsible for his sin because He had given Eve to Adam- and she had led him astray. We are left to conclude that we cannot blame sin on situation, nor on others. Ultimately, there is no situational ethic. We stand responsible for our sins before God, and we need to simply accept that. God makes no comment upon Adam's words; exactly because we are invited by the narrative to assess them. The Lord alludes to Adam's words in Jn. 17:11,24, where He describes His bride likewise as those whom God gave Him- but He died for her, the very opposite of what Adam did, allowing her to lead him to death.

3:13 *Yahweh God said to the woman, What is this you have done?*- The question is broad, rather than a specific questioning as to whether the woman had eaten the fruit. What she had "done" was not only to eat the fruit, but to give it to Adam. But she at this stage doesn't respond to that aspect of the question; she wishes to blame everything on the serpent. The question was rhetorical, a cue for her repentance. Her repentance, as it stands at this point, is evidently incomplete; the narrative encourages us to imagine her later reflections and fuller repentance.

The woman said, The serpent deceived me, and I ate- As noted on :12, we are invited to assess the level of repentance here. Like Adam, the woman blames her sin on mitigating factors, rather than simply accepting it and repenting. She blames circumstance, as we all often do; with the implication that it's God's fault as He allowed the circumstance. Whereas in the parable of the vineyard in Is. 5, God teaches that He has done all that is possible in order to give us the ideal environment in which to bring forth spiritual fruit. We are left to assume they repented more fully in due course; the question is left open ended in order to elicit our own reflections and introspection about the nature and extent of our own repentance. For their sin is that of every man and woman. Paul in Rom. 7:11 speaking of how sin "deceived me… slew me" is alluding here: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate". In Romans chapter 5 (and see on Rom. 3:23), Paul has repeatedly taught that Adam is everyman. And now he includes himself in this, by applying the language of the failure in Eden to himself. Likewise his finding the commandment ordained to life becoming the means of death (Rom. 7:10,13) may reference Gen. 2:16,17. Yet whilst Adam is indeed everyman to Paul, Adam was perceived as Israel in much Rabbinic writing; and Paul saw himself as the personification and epitome of Israel (see on Rom. 7:9,10). The Greek translated "deceived" really means to seduce. How did sin seduce Paul through or by means of the Law of Moses? Surely in the sense that Paul fell for the temptation to justify himself by means of obedience to that Law. The false prophets of Judaism deceived the people as the serpent did to Eve (s.w. Jer. 29:8; 37:9). But because he didn't keep the Law perfectly, he was therefore condemned to death, and in a sense, received the sentence- and in that sense sin by means of the Law "slew" Paul. The only other time the word for 'deceived / seduced' occurs in Romans is in the practical section, which in this case again alludes to this doctrinal section: "[the Judaizers] by fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple", as the serpent deceived Eve (2 Cor. 11:3 s.w.). Just as Paul deceived himself, fell to the seductive idea that we can be justified by works of obedience to the Law, so the Judaizers were teaching the same. By so doing, they were sin personified- they were doing the work of "sin"- using the attraction of obedience to a legal code to seduce believers into a position where they were in fact going to be condemned to death- because under that sphere, there can be no justification, no declaring right, for those who have in even one sense infringed

Divine law. It's all a complicated yet powerful way of saying that we simply must not and cannot be in the sphere of relying upon works; which means we have to just accept the gift of salvation by grace, much as all within us cries out against it.

Paul's autobiographical passage in Romans 7, where he describes his sinfulness and the results of it, is actually expressed in terms of Adam's fall in Eden. So many phrases which he uses are lifted out of the LXX of Genesis 3. The evident examples are: "I would never have known what it is to covet, if the Law had not said, You must not covet [cp. Eve coveting the fruit]... when the command came... sin [cp. the serpent] beguiled me... to kill me... sin resulted in death for me by making use of this good thing... who will rescue me now from the body of death?". Adam is presented to us as 'every man'; and so Paul applies this to himself, and yet through the allusion to 'every man' in Adam, he sets himself up also as our example.

2 Cor.11:2 shows Paul likening Corinth ecclesia to the guileless Eve in Eden, not yet having sinned, all innocence and uncorrupted beauty. And yet he saw himself as the Eve who had been deceived and punished by death (Rom. 7:11,13 = Gen. 2:17; 3:13); but he saw them as the Eve who had not yet sinned. This was no literary trick of the tail; he genuinely felt and saw them as better than himself to be- such was the depth of his appreciation of his own failures.

The Hebrew for "serpent" can suggest 'a whisperer'. It was the whisper of suggestion which was the deceit; and such whispering, within our minds, is the basis for our own temptations.

3:14 *Yahweh God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, you are cursed above all livestock, and above every animal of the field. On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life*- There were no rhetorical questions to the serpent, because God was not seeking to lead the serpent to repentance; it was an amoral creature. The Hebrew *min* translated "above" is also translated "among"; the radical idea is "a part of... out of". The same word is found in Ex. 9:20: "He that feared Yahweh *among* the servants of Pharaoh"; Ex. 28:1 "Take Aaron and his sons... from *among* the children of Israel"; Lev. 19:8:"That person shall be cut off from *among* his people". Both context and the meaning of the word surely require that the serpent was one of, amongst, the livestock and animals of the field- it was an animal. Snakes today can hardly be described as "livestock"- suggesting that the serpent was not a snake as we now know the species.

It's tempting to think that there must be a connection between the serpent and snakes we see today. But snakes do not eat dust; and in any case, there are many varieties of snake. Yet Genesis 3 speaks of a specific creature. My suggestion therefore is that the serpent was a literal animal, on legs, which could speak, or was given the power of speech, like Balaam's donkey. Its punishment was to crawl on its belly and eat dust. It's hard to describe snakes as 'crawling', which implies legs or paws; and they don't eat dust. The serpent was part of the environment required to bring about the testing of Adam and Eve. But its punishment was to crawl and eat dust- and then, this creature died and is now extinct. That is why we continue to read of the man and woman in the record, but nothing more is said about the creature known as the serpent. It died and was never any more, foretelling how the final conflict with the serpent's "seed" or spiritual descendant would likewise end in total and permanent destruction. In the description of Eden restored in Isaiah 65, we encounter the cryptic comment: "And dust shall be the serpent's food" (Is. 65:25), as if to say that although Eden will be restored, the judgment upon the serpent was permanent, and there will be no serpent in the restored Eden. It did not reproduce, in contrast to the curse on the woman, which allowed for reproduction. The comment

that he was to eat dust "all the days of your life" could suggest that this creature would eat dust and then die- and never reproduce. The "seed" of the serpent refers to those having the characteristics of the historical serpent.

Phil. 3:19 has a number of allusions to the serpent, the conflict predicted in Gen. 3:15 and the fall of Adam in Eden: "*Enemies* [cp. 'enmity'] of the cross of Christ. Their end is *destruction*, their god is the *belly* (s.w. Gen. 3:14 LXX), they glory in their *shame*". The context speaks of the Judaizers- they are presented, by way of allusion, as the serpent.

3:15 *I will put enmity between you and the woman*- In contrast to the friendship between Eve and the serpent. I have argued that whilst the serpent in Eden was a literal serpent, it represents the conflict within the *eretz* between God's people and sin / temptation / idol worship etc. Ez. 25:15 and Ez. 35:5 use the same word to speak of "the old enmity" between Israel and the other inhabitants of the land. This old enmity continues to this day. The 'oldness' of it refers surely to the enmity in Eden, between the serpent and the children of God. In the first instance, we can imagine some undefined particular conflict between the serpent and Eve. Perhaps she particularly hated the creature, and fought with it until she killed it by a blow to the head, after it had initially wounded her heal. This scenario would be absolutely psychologically likely; and the serpent would likewise have hated Eve. In the bigger picture, Eve's conflict with the serpent speaks of the struggle unto death between her great descendant, the Lord Jesus, and all the things represented by the serpent- the temptations, sins, wicked persons, deceivers who have all the family likeness of that creature.

Gen. 3:15 prophesies that God *will* put hostility between the serpent and the woman. This is not what we would expect to hear if this were indeed speaking of a pre-existent Christ and Satan. According to the orthodox understanding, the enmity between them occurred in Heaven *before* Satan supposedly came down to earth. Notice, too, that according to the Biblical record in Gen. 3:15 it is God who created this hostility, whereas the common view implies it was Satan's hatred of God which was the original enmity.

And between your offspring and her offspring- Most usages of *zera*, "offspring" or "seed", when referring to a singular individual, refer to an immediate offspring rather than to some far off descendant. Perhaps the promise of salvation could have potentially been fulfilled in a son of Eve, but this didn't happen, the required conditions weren't met [whatever they were], and so the fulfilment of the promise was deferred until the Lord Jesus. This kind of promise and then deferment and reapplication of fulfilment is common in the Bible's prophecies. In Hebrew thought, to be "a son of" something or someone means to be identified with that entity, and to have its characteristics. If indeed the offspring of the woman is the Lord Jesus, we are surely to read Eve ultimately in a positive light; despite her sin and the slowness we have noted in her repentance. That initial inadequacy in repentance was presumably replaced by not only full repentance, but also a spiritually minded desire to put right the damage she had done; not least by perhaps literally fighting the serpent unto its death. It was this characteristic which was seen so fully in the Lord Jesus.

He will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel- There's something of a wager here. Either the man kills the snake by hitting it on the head, or the snake will bite the man's heel. He has to kill it outright, first time. See article "David and Goliath" in 1 Sam. 17. Rom. 16:20 implies that all Christian believers have a part in this victory bruise over the serpent, in finality at the last day. In the Lord's death, we see Judaism as the "generation of vipers" (Mt. 23:33), and the Lord as the offspring of

the woman overcoming them and their particular manifestation of the serpent. "His heel" and not "their heel" suggests that the offspring of the woman refers to a singular individual, the Lord Jesus. It refers to all believers insofar as they are in Him.

The statement here is that the serpent's head would be bruised, whilst he would bruise the heel of the male seed of the woman. This is part of the curse upon the serpent. The serpent is different from "snakes" generally. It was a specifically created being, which could talk and which stood on legs. It was now cursed to crawl on its belly and eat dust [something snakes don't do]. It would only be able to bruise the heel of the man who crushed its head. It was not able to stand up higher to attack any other part of the man's body. The serpent came to an end; because a son of the woman, perhaps literally Abel, crushed it to death with a blow to its head. In the fight, the serpent bruised his heel, but with no fatal effect. The idea was that man would finally overcome sin. And this is the good news. Hence Abel is warned that sin was crouching at the door, but he could have mastery over it, as Abel had done (Gen. 4:9). The seed of the woman was the Lord Jesus, and that of the serpent is sin. He won the victory at the cross, with His death being only a temporary wound. And through this, all the descendants of the woman would win the fight. In this life, we fail-temporarily. As Paul laments in Rom. 7. But the comfort is that man shall ultimately win the battle against sin. But what's important is to be part of the fight, to struggle against sin, to feel the conflict. Rather than to be like the unspiritual mass of humanity who have no sense of personal struggle against sin.

The Lord was beaten up at least three times: by the Jewish guards, by Herod's men and by the Roman soldiers. In a literal sense He was bruised for our iniquities, and chastised for us to obtain the peace of sin forgiven (Is. 53:5). And the Father surely foresaw all this back in Gen. 3:15, where the promised seed was to be *bruised*.

We have so often over-reacted against others' error to the extent that we ourselves almost fall into error. A classic example of this is in our perception of Mary. We all tend to be children, and therefore victims, of reaction. Our recoil so often blinds us to some aspects of value in the things we reject. Over reaction against Roman Catholic abuses can lead us to almost overlook the woman who was and is to be blessed and honoured above all women; the woman whose genes and parenting contributed to the sinless Son of God. Gen. 3:15, the classic prophecy of the birth of Jesus, is actually a specific prophecy of Mary *the* woman who would give birth to the Lord. It was not to be merely " *a* woman" but the seed of a specific woman, the Hebrew implies- *the* woman, i.e. Mary. Her spiritual perception is really something to be marvelled at, bearing in mind it was developed and articulated in a teenager who was likely illiterate. All this said, Elisabeth Fiorenza sums up the other side of the reality of Mary: "The [correct image of the] young woman and teenage mother Miriam of Nazareth, probably not more than twelve or thirteen years old, pregnant, frightened and single… can subvert the tales of mariological fantasy and cultural femininity. In the center of the Christian story stands not the lovely 'white lady' of artistic and popular imagination, kneeling in adoration before her son. Rather it is the young pregnant woman living in occupied territory and struggling against victimization and for survival and dignity. It is she who holds out the offer of untold possibilities for… christology and theology" (Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Jesus-Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues In Feminist Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1994) p. 187).

The mutual antagonism between the two groups of travellers in Proverbs is rooted in the opposition between snake and woman in Gen. 3:15: "He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked" (Proverbs 29:27).

Gen. 3:15 clearly prophesies the hope of redemption from human sin, through the descendant of the woman [the Lord Jesus Christ]. The pagan myths had no such concept of salvation from sin. Sin against the gods could hasten death and obedience to them could prolong life, but there was no hope of real forgiveness of sin. And therefore there was no hope of eternity in a promised land such as was preached to Abraham in later sections of Genesis and which was developed as a golden thread throughout the entire Bible, namely the good news of the future Kingdom of God on earth. Even a superman like Gilgamesh had to face the day of death, "the unsparing death". The hope of the resurrection of the human body implied in the promises to the Jewish patriarchs in Genesis and made explicit in later Scripture was simply unknown in the pagan myths. It should be noted too that obedience to Yahweh wasn't seen as always, in every case, extending mortal life now; because from Genesis onwards, the Bible presents the perspective of God's future, eternal Kingdom as the time for reward and immortality. There are times when God takes away the righteous from the evil of this life (Is. 57:1- probably alluding to what God did to Joash, 2 Kings 22:20 cp. 23:29). There are other Biblical instances where the wicked have long life and prosperity in this world. This is because the Bible presents the ultimate judgment and reward of human life and faith as being at the last day, and not right now. In Gilgamesh and the pagan myths, only some of the gods had hope of resurrection, e.g. Marduk (as mentioned in the Enuma Elish, Tablet 6:153,154). But humans certainly didn't. The implication of resurrection in the promises to Abraham, and the specific statements about it in the later Old Testament (e.g. Job 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2), thereby reflects a colossal value and importance attached by God to the human person. What the pagan myths reserved only for a few gods, Yahweh offers to every human being who believes in His promises.

It's noteworthy that the prophecy of Christ's crucifixion in Is. 53:10 underlines that it was *God* who 'bruised' Christ there. Gen. 3:15 says it was the seed of the serpent who bruised Christ. Conclusion: God worked through the seed of the serpent, God was [and is] totally in control. The serpent is therefore not a symbol of radical, free flying evil which is somehow outside of God's control, and which 'bruised' God's Son whilst God was powerless to stop His Son being bruised. Not at all. God was in control, even of the seed of the serpent. However we finally wish to interpret "the seed of the serpent", the simple fact is that God was in powerful control of it / him. Walter Brueggemann summarizes the situation: "The Old Testament itself offers none of the material through which Satan emerges as the popular figure of tempter and devil. The propensity of Christians to reach such a role in Genesis 3 is to project backward into the text from later texts" (Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 188).

3:16 *To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you will bear children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you*- All judgment is appropriate to the sin which it is a response to. Perhaps Eve ought to have concentrated upon obeying the commandment to multiply, and she could have done so before the fall without pain. She likewise ought to have had more desire to support Adam in his mission and work in God's garden; but instead she desired the serpent's rulership rather than her husband's. And so she was punished by losing the psychological independence which she had previously had. Childbirth had been possible before the fall; that was not the punishment. It was pain therein which was the punishment. Her husband was to have ruled over her in that she was designed

to support him in her work; but now she was to have a desire towards him which would effectively rob her of the independence she had once enjoyed and abused. "Desire" is literally a reaching out towards; instead of putting forth her hand to reach out to the forbidden fruit, she would instead reach out towards getting a husband, which would result in him ruling over her.

The same Hebrew words for "desire" and "rule" occur in Gen. 4:16: "And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (AV). The referent in the context is unclear; it could be sin, or it could refer to Abel, whom Cain was jealous of. But the idea is that whatever or whoever we desire ends up effectively ruling over us. Whatever is desired comes to dominate the desirer. This is not therefore a command for men to rule over their wives; rather is it an observation on the nature of things, stating that by reason of having a desire for a man, the woman thereby allows the man to ruler over her. And this is part of the curse.

3:17 *To Adam He said, Because you have listened to your wife's voice*- Eve is not recorded as having spoken. Our example is our voice; just as Peter says that the Christian wife can convert her unbelieving husband by her example, "without the word" (1 Pet. 3:1). The same phrase 'listen to... voice' is used in Gen. 3:10 "I heard Your voice". Maybe the emphasis is on "your wife's voice", rather than God's voice. Romans 5 describes Adam's failure in a number of parallel ways: transgression... sin... offence... *disobedience"* (Rom. 5:19). "Disobedience" translates a Greek word which is uncommon. Strong defines it as meaning 'inattention', coming from a root meaning 'to mishear'. It is the same word translated "neglect to hear" in Mt. 18:17. Adam's sin, his transgression, his offence was therefore not eating the fruit in itself; it was disobedience, neglecting to hear. That this neglecting to hear God's word seriously was at the root of his sin is perhaps reflected in God's judgment on him.

We note that the reasons given for judgment avoid stating the obvious: "Because you ate the fruit"

And have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it'- There is so often a connection between sin and its punishment. The sin of eating (3:6,12) called forth a judgment which five times uses the word 'to eat' in 3:17-19. Clearly judgment is appropriate to the nature of the sin; the judgment is often to actually do the forbidden action.

Cursed is the ground for your sake- The same words are used about the cursing of the ground of *eretz* Israel because of Israel's disobedience, with associated cursing of the animal creation there (Dt. 28:18). This yet again confirms that the *eretz* in view is that of Israel rather than the whole planet. So we are not to imagine the Angels as it were smashing up the whole planet because Adam sinned. Rather, the paradise in Eden, the *eretz* whose preparation was described in Genesis 1, was again overrun by the vegetation and beasts of the surrounding world; just as happened in a moral sense when God's people went into captivity.

The classical view of the fall supposes that as Eve's teeth sunk into the fruit, the first sin was committed, and soon afterwards Adam followed suite, resulting in the curse falling upon humanity. But was the eating of the fruit in fact the first sin? If it was, then Eve sinned first. Straight away, the Bible-minded believer comes up with a problem: the New Testament unmistakably highlights Adam as the first sinner; by *his* transgression sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12). So sin was not in the world before *his* transgression. The ground was cursed for the sake of *Adam's* sin (Gen. 3:17). This all suggests that Eve wasn't the first sinner. The fact Eve was deceived into sinning doesn't mean she didn't sin (1 Tim. 2:14). She was punished for her sin; and in any case, ignorance doesn't mean that sin doesn't count as sin (consider the need for

offerings of ignorance under the Law). So, Eve sinned; but Adam was the first sinner, before *his* sin, sin had not entered the world. We must also remember that Eve was deceived by the serpent, and on account of this was "(implicated / involved) in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). "The transgression" . Which transgression? Surely Adam's (Rom. 5:14); by listening to the snake she became implicated in Adam's sin. The implication is that "the transgression" was already there for her to become implicated in it by listening to the serpent. This is the very opposite to the idea of *Adam* being implicated in *Eve's* sin.

The record of Adam's sin and the resulting curse can seem simplistic; the punishment seems to far outweigh the crime, the colossal penalty appears out of proportion to the sin. And yet in that apparent lack of proportion is the very essence of the message- that sin, any sin, is really that serious. There can never again in our understanding be any such thing as a little sin, a breaking of God's law which is inconsequential. The more we reflect upon the deceptively simple record of Adam's sin, the more we perceive how Adam's choice is that of everyman in every sin; it was a choice between a total "yes" or a total "no" to God. The desire was to know "good and evil"; and this term is used as an idiom for "everything" (Gen. 24:50; 2 Sam. 14:17,20), the whole area in between good and evil is in this sense "everything" (cp. Gen. 31:24; 2 Sam. 13:22). Adam and Eve were attracted by the possibility of experiencing everything, of having the total knowledge, the omniscience, which is with God alone. Their failure was more than simply eating a fruit; it involved rebellion and pride, a desire to be equal with God. It was *human* pride which clearly lead to the greatest fall imaginable; it was *man* who wanted to rise up to be like God. To fantasize about *Satan's* pride and fall is to tragically miss the entire point of the narrative. It seems that human religions have struggled by any means to wriggle out of the simple message- that human sin brought about the fall.

In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life- God had stated that Adam would surely die in *the day* he ate the fruit. He is made to suffer consequences for his sin, but God forgave him and did not slay him that day. He was told he must till the ground "all the *days*" [plural] of his life (Gen. 3:17)- reflecting how in wrath God remembered mercy and gave Adam many more days.

3:18 *It will yield thorns and thistles to you*- The terms occur together only in Hos. 10:8, speaking of judgment to come upon *eretz* Israel. Is. 32:13 speaks of thorns and briers coming upon the *eretz* of Israel. Again I suggest we are to see this curse as a de-creation of the paradise prepared within *eretz* Israel, rather than a global, blanket statement about changed conditions throughout the planet. As thorns and thistles came up in the land [and those plants are unknown in some parts of the planet], so they did again when Israel were driven from their land (Gen. 3:18; Hos. 10:8). As Adam was punished by returning to dust, so Israel would be destroyed by dust (Dt. 28:24). The judgments on the *eretz* are therefore appropriate to *Israel* and do not, I suggest, generally describe things on a global scale. Literal thorns and thistles only afflict parts of the planet- they are appropriate to the land promised to Abraham but not to the tundra or the Polar regions.

Prov. 24:30,31 envisage a field overgrown with thorns and thistles as a result of a man's lack of wisdom and hard work. The way of wisdom is to accept the parameters within which we must now live; 2 Thess. 3:10 seems to argue that those who deny these parameters, not working yet expecting to eat, are not to be assisted. We are to work by wisdom to live as far as we can beyond the curse rather than glorifying it.

And you will eat the plants of the field- The command had been to "eat, eat!" of all the trees of the garden. Adam and Eve had presumably not been obedient to this,

and therefore were attracted to the forbidden fruit. As noted on :17, the judgment was appropriate to the sin being judged, in this case, the sin of omission in not eating all the fruits of the trees. Now, they were to have to eat the fruit of the earth, in order to survive. Instead of eating the fruits of the trees within Eden, they were to eat the plants of "the field", the area outside Eden.

3:19 *By the sweat of your face will you eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For you are dust, and to dust you shall return*- The picture is of a man sweating even as he eats his food. The command to cultivate the earth is therefore an invitation to working on ourselves to bring forth fruit. The simple truths taught here are resisted by almost every culture and religion; there is always the idea of conscious survival of death, and that somehow we are more than dust. It's possible to argue that many aspects of the judgments were specifically relevant to Adam and not necessarily to his posterity; for unlike Adam, we are not taken out of the earth at our conception or birth, we are not built from literal dust. And not all men work in agriculture for a living. And some "eat bread" without labouring for it (2 Thess. 3:10 alludes here), and many do not go on working their fields literally right up to their deaths, as implied here.

The Hebrew for "ground" is also translated "land". The idea of returning to the land is therefore laced with hope; the same words are used in Gen. 28:15 of Jacob returning to the land promised to Abraham. Likewise of "returning to the land You gave to their fathers" (1 Kings 8:34; Jer. 16:15; Jer. 42:12). It was to therefore be through death and resurrection that we can return to the ultimate land. In wrath He remembers mercy; throughout these judgments there is laced the hope and language of redemption. And in any situation we too are called to discipline others, there must be this same hope and working towards redemption.

The punishment of death which is introduced in early Genesis was created and executed by the same one God who also created the world and the opportunity of eternal life. Gilgamesh and the pagan myths presented whole groups of gods as responsible for and presiding over death and the underworld, and another, separate, pantheon of gods as involved in creation. The Biblical emphasis upon one God is significant and unusual; it is Yahweh who sends man back to the dust from which He created him, and the same Yahweh who is in total control of *sheol* [the grave or underworld], and in a sense even present there (Dt. 32:22; Job 26:6; Ps. 139:7,8; Prov. 15:11; Am. 9:2). The state of the dead is defined in Genesis as a return to dust, and later Scripture emphasizes that this means unconsciousness, for the righteous merely a sleep in hope of bodily resurrection. This was radically different to the ideas espoused by the peoples amongst whom Israel travelled and lived. The dead dwell in silence (Ps. 94:17; 115:17) having returned to dust, and as such don't become disembodied spirit beings which were later understood as 'demons'. The whole concept of demons was in this sense not allowed to even develop in the minds of God's people by the definitions of death which Moses presented in the Pentateuch. The utter supremacy of God is taught in the Genesis record in a way it never is in any of the other myths.

Moses speaks of how God says to each dying man "Return, you children of men" (Ps. 90:3)- as if Moses understood to speak the words of Gen. 3:19 to every man who dies. Likewise the Lord spoke as if the Jews of His day ought to be *hearing* Moses and the prophets speaking to them in urgent warning (Lk. 16:31); yet despite studying their words syallable by syllable, the Jews didn't in fact perceive it was a living word speaking to them directly and urgently.

3:20 *The man called his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living*- If Adam only named his wife after the fall, we find yet another reason for thinking that

the fall occurred very soon after creation. Everything in the surrounding context here is negative, and this probably is too. Adam first called his wife "woman", but after the fall he called her "Eve" because he recognized she was the mother of living ones. By doing so he seems to be recognizing his failure of not reproducing through her as God had originally asked him. The way they immediately produce a child after the fall is surely an expression of their repentance. The curse upon them involved bringing forth children, and this is effectively Adam's curse of Eve. Similarly he names his son "Abel", the Hebrew word usually translated "vanity", also in allusion to the curse. Read this way, we can more comfortably understand "the mother of all living" as not necessarily meaning that all human beings descended from Eve. For I have demonstrated at length that the focus of the Genesis creation is upon the situation in *eretz* Israel, and there is no attempt at explaining the origins of things on the level of the cosmos or the planet earth. When we read that Eve was "the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20), this was in its primary application explaining to the Israelites in the wilderness where they ultimately originated from. Israel were to trace their first origins and parents back not merely to Abraham, but to Adam and Eve. Num. 35:3 [Heb.] uses the term to describe the "all living" of the congregation of Israel; indeed, that Hebrew word translated "living" is translated "congregation", with reference to the congregation of Israel (Ps. 68:10; 74:19). Note how the Hebrew idea of 'all living' repeatedly occurs in the account of the flood (Gen. 6:19; 8:1,17 etc.)- which we will later suggest was a flood local to the area which the Israelites knew and which had been ultimately promised to Abraham. "All living" things which were taken into the ark therefore needn't refer to literally every living thing which lives upon the planet, but rather to those species which lived in the flooded area, the earth / land / *eretz* promised to Abraham. I've explained elsewhere that the garden of Eden can be understood as the land promised to Abraham, perhaps specifically being located around Jerusalem, the intended geographical focus for God's people; and that the term *eretz* can be used to describe the land promised to Abraham rather than the whole planet.

I suggested on :15 that there was a literal conflict between the woman and the serpent after the sin. This may have resulted in Eve hating the serpent and killing it. Adam maybe named her "life" or "mother of life" in recognition of how this had opened the way to restored life with God in the end.

3:21 *Yahweh God made coats of skins for Adam and for his wife, and clothed them*- Adam sinned, and God responded to that ineffable tragedy by giving him a "coat" of skin. The same Hebrew word is used concerning the priestly robe. Here we see again the positive nature of our God. There was Adam, pining away in the shame of his sin; and God dresses him up like a priest, to go forward to gain forgiveness for him and his wife; and perhaps later on he used that same coat in coming to God to obtain further forgiveness for others through sacrifice. Rev. 13:8 speaks of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world; so presumably a lamb was slain, setting up the principle that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. And here we meet the idea of the imputed righteousness of the slain lamb (the Christ) being imputed to us. Note that "made" is the same word used of God's 'making' of things in the creation record of chapter 1. That creation was a 'making' from pre-existing material, rather than *ex nihilo*.

3:22 - see on Gen. 1:7,8

Yahweh God said, Behold, the man has become like one of us- One of a number of examples in Genesis of God being in internal dialogue and almost struggle towards

a decision (Gen. 1:26; Gen. 6:3,7; Gen. 8:21,22; Gen. 11:6,7). It could refer to Angels, but it could equally be the Hebrew plural of majesty, whereby a plural is used for a singular being. In a sense, God allowed man to become like Him. This is a guarantee that He is just as capable of allowing us to be coming fully like Him in the promised transformation to the Divine nature at the last day.

Knowing good and evil- The Hebrew idea of 'knowing' effectively speaks of experience or relationship. The idea here is not so much that Adam and Eve now knew how to tell good from evil in moral terms, but rather that they would now experience good and evil. One simple implication is that God almighty has experience of evil; He is not separate from our sufferings nor is He unable to enter into them. And that feature of God was expressed in its ultimate term in His begetting a Son, who would suffer across the entire physical and psychological spectrum of human experience.

If we insist that the "us" refers to Angels, then we reflect that it was presumably in one of the previous creations that the Angels were developed. They have knowledge of good and evil, just as fallen man has. This could suggest that they too had the experience of temptation and choice between sin and obedience. Job speaks of the angels who were charged with folly as if this fact was well known (Job 4:18). John Thomas suggests that the "angels that sinned" in 2 Pet. 2:4 lived at this time. There is no doubt that this passage in Peter, and the parallel in Jude, has some reference to Korah's rebellion. However, there are many such warnings to God's people which combine reference to more than one historical event, and it could be the same here: as if to say, 'History repeats itself. The angels that sinned so long ago went through in principle the same process of apostasy as Korah's company, and you too are capable of falling from grace in the same basic way'.

Now, lest he reach out his hand, and also take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever…- Here again in wrath God remembered mercy. To allow fallen humans to live eternally in that state would have been cruel. Again, judgment for sin still expresses God's grace and sensitivity toward the human condition.

3:23 *Therefore Yahweh God sent him out from the garden of Eden*- As noted on :22, the "therefore" means that the sending of Adam out of Eden was an act of grace, albeit shrouded in the experience of judgment. We note that the couple are addressed in Adam; "him" and not "them". This may explain why Adam is spoken of in Rom. 5:12 as the "one man" by whom sin entered the world, when in fact it was Eve who appears to have sinned first in chronological terms.

To cultivate the ground from which he was taken- Adam was made from that "ground" and was to return to it. But in his lifetime, he was "to cultivate" that ground. This suggests that human life is lived within the parameters of the curse, but throughout it, we are to cultivate that condition to produce fruit. Solomon makes the point that he who cultivates his ground shall have blessing, and this is the way of wisdom (Prov. 12:11; Prov. 28:19). Again we have the hint that accepting the parameters of our fallen condition, but working within them for fruit, is the way of wisdom and blessing. Indeed Jer. 27:11 speaks of cultivating the ground [the same words are used] within the *eretz* as the sign of blessing.

3:24 *So He drove out the man*- Just as Adam and Eve were exiled to the East, so Judah fled East of Jerusalem (Jer. 52:12-16) and then further East, to Babylon. Babylon [which is Babel] was built by men travelling East from Eden (Gen. 11:2). Again we see an identity between Eden and the land of Israel. The garden is not spoken of as being destroyed, suggesting that the hope of returning to Eden was always the ultimate plan God worked towards. The Hebrew for "drove out" is used of

the Canaanite nations being driven out of the *eretz* (Ex. 23:28-31) by an Angel (Ex. 33:2; 34:11), and of Israel too being driven out of the same area (Ez. 36:5; Hos. 9:15). The language of driving out suggests reluctance on Adam's part; another indication that his response to his sin was not initially of an ideal quality. He excused himself, and then resisted the judgment which came. Instead of dying the very day he sinned, Adam was instead driven out of Eden. This seems to be an example of where God can change His mind and ameliorate His judgments, by grace alone, as He did with Nineveh. And He does so even when His grace isn't appreciated by those like Adam who are experiencing it.

And He placed Cherubs at the east of the garden of Eden, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life- Eden, the trees of life and knowledge and the Cherubs are no longer around, and there is no record of their removal. We are therefore encouraged to see this entire situation as the creation account of chapter 1- a kind of vision, which is all the same to be treated as real and literal enough, and yet which cannot be pushed to its final term as literalism. That is not the genre of the material.

It could be argued that the Cherubs were not Angels but some visual representation of Divine entities; on the basis that there was to be no image made of anything in heaven, and yet the pattern of cherubim are found in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:20) and the temple, and here we have what appear to be literal visual replicas, as were the winged figures over the mercy seat. But it has to be said that the visions of the cherubim and living creatures all seem to have Angelic associations. One of the clearest is that the cherubim were to keep "the way" to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24), whereas the keeping of the way is later said to be in the control of Angels- e.g. in Gen. 18:19 the Angels decide Abraham will keep "the way of the Lord", implying they were the ones guarding it; and in Ex. 32:8 the Angel talking with Moses on Sinai comments "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them" (see too Dt. 9:10,12). But this is not to say the cherubim were themselves Angels. They appear to be identified here with the flaming sword, and we recall Ps. 104:4 "Who makes His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire".

Umberto Cassuto, as one of Judaism's most painstakingly detailed expositors of the Torah, has observed that the entities referred to in Genesis 1-3, such as the serpent, the cherubim etc., are spoken of in such a way that implies that Israel were familiar with the ideas. Cassuto notes the use of the definite article- *the* cherubim, *the* flaming sword- when talking about things which have not been mentioned earlier in the record. He concludes that therefore these things "were already known to the Israelites. The implies that their story had been recounted in some ancient composition current among the people . The intention of Genesis was therefore to define these ideas correctly, to explain to Israel the truth about the things of which they had heard in very rambling and incorrect form in the various legends and epic stories they had encountered in Egypt and amongst the Canaanite tribes.

The Hebrew idea of 'placing' has the sense of tabernacling. Hence Vine: "At the east of the Garden of Eden, He caused to dwell in a tabernacle the Cherubim and the flaming sword". Both the wilderness tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple faced east. The idea was that Adam was being taught that there was a way back to Eden although in this life, Eden was unobtainable in its full sense. And by offering sacrifice and worshipping East of Eden, he was as we are- on the very brink of eternity and direct face to face fellowship with God. Perhaps the fire from the flaming sword devoured the sacrifices as a sign of acceptance. According to Ez. 1:10, the cherubim had faces, and this would explain why Cain lamented that he had been driven out from the faces

[plural] (Gen. 4:14 Heb.). In our days we have no such visible sanctuary; but we can in Christ partake in some sense of the tree of life (Prov. 3:18), so certain is the offer and experience of the life eternal for the believer today. We stand both in the tabernacle, and in some hazy sense even beyond it- in Christ.

According to Lk. 19:23, the Lord will shew the unworthy how they could have entered the Kingdom. This is after the pattern of rejected Adam and Eve having the way to the tree of life clearly shown to them after their rejection (Gen. 3:23,24). Again, notice how the judgment is for the education of those judged and those who witness it. He will shew them how they should have given their talent, the basic Gospel, to others, and therefore gained some interest.

Adam: The First Sinner

The classical view of the fall supposes that as Eve's teeth sunk into the fruit, the first sin was committed, and soon afterwards Adam followed suite, resulting in the curse falling upon humanity. What I want to discuss is whether the eating of the fruit was in fact the first sin. If it was, then Eve sinned first. Straight away, the Bible-minded believer comes up with a problem: the New Testament unmistakably highlights Adam as the first sinner; by *his* transgression sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12). So sin was not in the world before *his* transgression. The ground was cursed for the sake of *Adam's* sin (Gen. 3:17). This all suggests that Eve wasn't the first sinner. The fact Eve was deceived into sinning doesn't mean she didn't sin (1 Tim. 2:14). She was punished for her sin; and in any case, ignorance doesn't mean that sin doesn't count as sin (consider the need for offerings of ignorance under the Law). So, Eve sinned; but Adam was the first sinner, before *his* sin, sin had not entered the world. We must also remember that Eve was deceived by the snake, and on account of this was "(implicated / involved) in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). "The transgression". Which transgression? Surely Adam's (Rom. 5:14); by listening to the snake she became implicated in Adam's sin. The implication is that "the transgression" was already there for her to become implicated in it by listening to the serpent. This is the very opposite to the idea of *Adam* being implicated in *Eve's* sin.

So I want to suggest that in fact the eating of the fruit was not the first sin; it was the final physical consequence of a series of sins, spiritual weakness and sinful attitudes on Adam's part. They were mainly sins of omission rather than commission, and for this reason we tend to not notice them; just as we tend to treat our own sins of omission far less seriously than our sins of commission. What happened in Eden was that the garden was planted, Adam was placed in it, and commanded not to eat of the tree of knowledge. The animals are then brought before him for naming; then he is put into a deep sleep, and Eve is created. *Then* the very first command Adam and Eve jointly received was to have children, and go out into the whole earth (i.e. out of the Garden of Eden) and subdue it to themselves (Gen. 1:28). The implication is that this command was given as soon as Eve was created. There he was, lying down, with his wife beside him, "a help meet"; literally, 'an opposite one'. And they were commanded to produce seed, and then go out of the garden and subdue the earth. It would have been obvious to him from his observation of the animals that his wife was physiologically and emotionally designed for him to produce seed by. She was designed to be his 'opposite one', and there she was, lying next to him. Gen. 2:24 implies that he should have cleaved to her and become one flesh by reason of the very way in which she was created out of him. And yet he evidently did not have intercourse with her, seeing that they failed to produce children until after the fall. If he had consummated his marriage with her, presumably she would have produced

children (this deals a death blow to the fantasies of Adam and Eve having an idyllic sexual relationship in Eden before the fall). Paul saw Eve at the time of her temptation as a virgin (2 Cor. 11:2,3). Instead, Adam put off obedience to the command to multiply. There seems an allusion to this in 1 Cor. 7:5, where Paul says that married couples should come together in intercourse "lest Satan (cp. the serpent) tempt you for your incontinency". Depending how closely one reads Scripture, there may be here the suggestion that Paul saw Adam's mistake in Eden as not 'coming together' with his wife.

But Adam said something to Eve (as they lay there?). He alone had been commanded not to eat the tree of knowledge. Yet when Eve speaks to the serpent, it is evident that Adam had told her about it, but not very deeply. She speaks of "the tree that is in the midst of the garden" rather than "the tree of knowledge". She had been told by Adam that they must not even touch it, even though this is not what God had told Adam (Gen. 2:16,17 cp. 3:2,3). So we are left with the idea that Adam turned to Eve and as it were wagged his finger at her and said 'Now you see that tree over there in the middle, *don't you even touch it* or else there'll be trouble, O.K.'. She didn't *understand*, he didn't *explain* that it was forbidden because it was the tree of knowledge, and so she was deceived into eating it- unlike Adam, who understood what he was doing (1 Tim. 2:14) (1). Adam's emphasis was on not *committing* the sin of eating the fruit; he said nothing to her about the need to multiply and subdue the earth.

The next we know, Adam and Eve have separated, she is talking to the snake, apparently indifferent to the command to *subdue* the animals, to be their superiors, rather than listen to them as if they actually had superior knowledge. When the snake questioned: "Yea, *hath* God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree..." (Gen. 3:1), Eve was in a weak position because Adam hadn't fully told her what God had said. Hence she was deceived, but Adam wasn't.

So, *why* didn't Adam tell her more clearly what God had said? I would suggest that he was disillusioned with the wife God gave him; he didn't have intercourse with her as he had been asked, he separated from her so that she was alone with the snake. "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree..." (Gen. 3:12) seems to reflect more than a hint of resentment against Eve and God's provision of her. Not only was Adam disillusioned with Eve, but he failed to really take God's word seriously. Romans 5 describes Adam's failure in a number of parallel ways: "transgression... sin... offence... *disobedience* (Rom. 5:19)". "Disobedience" translates a Greek word which is uncommon. Strong defines it as meaning 'inattention', coming from a root meaning 'to mishear'. It is the same word translated "neglect to hear" in Mt. 18:17. Adam's sin, his transgression, his offence was therefore not eating the fruit in itself; it was disobedience, neglecting to hear. That this neglecting to hear God's word seriously was at the root of his sin is perhaps reflected in God's judgment on him: "Because thou hast hearkened unto *the voice of thy wife*..." rather than *God's* voice (Gen. 3:17).

Adam's sin was therefore a neglecting to seriously hear God's word, a dissatisfaction with and effective rejection of his God-given wife, a selfish unwillingness to leave the garden of Eden and go out and subdue the earth (cp. our natural instincts), and a neglection of his duty to multiply children in God's image (cp. preaching and pastoral work). All these things were sins of omission; he may well have reasoned that he would get round to them later. All these wrong attitudes and sins of omission, apparently unnoticed and uncondemned, led to the final folly of eating the fruit: the first sin of commission. And how many of our more public sins

are prefaced by a similar process? Truly Adam's sin was the epitome of all our sins. Romans 5 points an antithesis between Adam and Christ. Adam's one act of disobedience which cursed us is set off against Christ's one act of righteousness which blessed us. Yet Christ's one act was not just His death; we are saved by His life too (Rom. 5:10). Christ lived a life of many acts of righteousness and refusal to omit any part of His duty, and crowned it with one public act of righteousness in His death. The implication is that Adam committed a series of disobediences which culminated in one public act of commission: he ate the fruit.

There are three lines of argument which confirm this picture of what happened in Eden which we have presented. Firstly, Adam and Eve were ashamed at their nakedness. Perhaps this was because they realized what they should have used their sexuality for. Eating the tree of knowledge gave them knowledge of good (i.e. they realized the good they should have done in having children) and also evil (the capacities of their sexual desire?). Adam first called his wife "woman", but after the fall he called her "Eve" because he recognized she was the mother of living ones (Gen. 3:20). By doing so he seems to be recognizing his failure of not reproducing through her as God had originally asked him. The way they immediately produce a child after the fall is surely an expression of their repentance.

Secondly, it seems that God punishes sin in a way which is appropriate to the sin. Consider how David so often asks God to take the wicked in their own snare- and how often this happens. The punishment of Adam and Eve was appropriate to the sins they committed. What Adam wasn't bothered to do, i.e. have intercourse with his woman, became the very thing which now every fallen man will sell his soul for. They ate the tree of *knowledge*, they *knew* they were naked, and then Adam *knew* Eve (Gen. 4:1); this chain of connection certainly suggests that sexual desire, whilst not wrong in itself, was part of the result of eating the tree. There is an artless poetic justice and appropriacy in this which seems simply Divine. What they couldn't be bothered to do became the very thing which has probably generated more sin and desire to do than anything else. Adam was to rule over Eve as a result of the fall- the very thing he wasn't bothered to do. Eve's punishment was that her desire was for her husband- perhaps suggesting that she too had no desire for Adam sexually, and therefore was willing to delay obedience to the command to multiply. They were both driven out of the garden- perhaps reflecting how they should have left the garden in obedience to God's command to go out and subdue the natural creation to themselves. Because Adam wasn't bothered to do this, even when it was within his power, therefore nature was given a special power against man which he would never be able to overcome, and which would eventually defeat him (Gen. 3:17-19). This all shows the logic of obedience; we will be made to pay the price of obedience even if we disobey- therefore it is logical to obey.

Thirdly, there seems evidence that the eating of the fruit happened very soon after their creation. Eve hadn't seen the tree before the serpent pointed it out to her (Gen. 3:6); and consider that they could eat of all the trees, but not of the tree of knowledge. But what about the tree of life? This wasn't forbidden, and yet had they eaten of it, they would have lived for ever. We are told that this tree brings forth fruit every month (Rev. 22:2); so presumably it had not fruited, implying the fall was within the first month after creation.

The practical outcome of what happened in Eden is that we are to see in Adam's sin an epitome of our essential weaknesses. And how accurate it is. His failure was principally due to sins of omission, of delaying to do God's will because it didn't take his fancy. Time and again Biblical history demonstrates that sins of silence and

omission are just as fatal as sins of public, physical commission (e.g. Gen. 20:16; 38:10). To omit to hate evil is the same as to commit it (Ps. 36:4). Because David omitted to enforce the Law's requirements concerning the transport of the tabernacle, a man died. His commission of good didn't outweigh his omission here (1 Chron. 15:13). The Jews were condemned by the Lord for building the sepulchers of the prophets without erecting a placard stating that their fathers had killed them. We have a debt to preach to the world; we are their debtors, and yet this isn't how we often see it (Rom. 1:14). Israel sinned not only by worshipping idols but by thereby omitting to worship God as He required (1 Sam. 8:8). Adam stayed in the garden rather than go out to subdue the earth. Our equivalent is our spiritual selfishness, our refusal to look outside of ourselves into the world of others. Because things like disinterest in preaching or inattention to subduing our animal instincts are sins of *omission* rather than commission, we too tend to overlook them. We effectively neglect to hear God's word, although like Adam we may make an appearance of half-heartedly teaching it to others. And even when we do this, like Adam we tend to focus on *avoidal of committing sin* rather than examining ourselves for the likelihood of *omission*, not least in our lack of spiritual *responsibility* for others. Because of his spiritual laziness, Adam's sin led Eve into deception and thereby sin, and brought suffering on untold billions. His sin is the epitome of ours. So let us really realize: none of us sins or is righteous unto ourselves. There are colossal ramifications of our every sin and our every act of righteousness on others.

Notes

(1) There are similarities in more conservative Christian groups; e.g. the father or husband who lays the law down about the need for wearing head coverings without *explaining* to his wife or daughter *why*.

GENESIS CHAPTER 4

4:1 *The man knew Eve his wife*- See on Gen. 3:6 *To be desired to make one wise*. The couple had been commanded to have children before the fall. Perhaps their sin of omission was appropriately judged by humanity being given such a strong desire for sexual experience, which is designed for procreation. What they couldn't be bothered to do now became the very thing humans are crazy to do at all costs. Or it could be that they sinned on their first day of life in the garden. For Adam only got around to naming Eve after the fall; and there was apparently no fruit on the tree of life, which according to Revelation bore its fruits every month.

She conceived, and gave birth to Cain- Think of what the Hebrew word "Cain" means- for he is alluded to by the Lord as the epitome of the "devil", the "murderer from the beginning", the archetypical sinner (Jn. 8:44- perhaps because Adam and Eve's sin was forgiven, whereas Cain was the first impenitent sinner). "Cain is defined on the basis of a double Hebrew etymology, as 'possession' (from *qana* = acquire) and 'envy' (from *qana* = be envious)" (Martin Hengel, *Property And Riches In The Early Church* (London: S.C.M., 1974) p. 1). Personal possession is almost- almost- inextricably linked with envy, and led to the lies and murder for which Cain was noted by the Lord. To have a strong sense of our personal 'possessions' will lead us into the same sins. Indeed, it's the

epitome of ‘the devil’. The naming of Cain would suggest a cynicism in Adam and Eve, although Eve is set up as the prototype for the Lord Jesus [as the seed of the woman] and Adam is the basis for the second Adam, the Lord Jesus. This could all suggest that they later repented more fully.

There is no direct linguistic connection between 'Cain' and 'Canaan', but there may well be a word play, as they sound similar. In this case, the Canaanites with whom Israel were to struggle were to be seen as the spiritual descendants of Cain. But Moses wrote Genesis, presumably during the 40 years wandering. He therefore wrote it in a context- of explaining things to Israel as they stumbled through that wilderness, wondering who they were, where they came from, where they were headed- and which of the myths about 'beginnings' they heard from the surrounding peoples were in fact true. The Israelites, for example, encountered the Kenites [Heb. *Qeni*], a wandering, nomadic tribe whom nobody wanted much to do with as they were perceived to be cursed (Gen. 15:19; Num. 24:21,22). Gen. 4 explains *why* they were like this- they were the descendants of Cain [Heb. *Qayin*], who was punished with an unsettled existence because of his sin.

And said, I have gotten a man with Yahweh’s help- "Gotten" is really 'redeemed' or 'purchased', and is a play on the word 'Cain'. It could be that Eve hoped that their redemption was to be achieved through this child. Her disappointment in Cain would therefore look ahead to the failure of Israel and the Jewish system to bring about redemption, even if it were in some ways potentially possible through them. It has been suggested that the Hebrew here could be translated "A man, the Yahweh", Rotherham "I have gotten a man even Yahweh", as if she hoped to see Yahweh manifest in this man child. In this case, we would have another indication that Cain could have potentially been the Divinely provided seed and Saviour- but he messed up, because he failed to perceive the need for blood sacrifice to atone for sin. This again would confirm how Jn. 8:44 reads him as a prototype of Israel gone wrong. It could be that we see similar Messianic hopes in the naming of Seth, and also of Noah, whom it was hoped would remove the curse upon the earth (Gen. 5:29 LXX). These early people clearly expected the coming of a Messianic man child, born of their seed. But they were disappointed at every turn- sharpening their need for the Son of God.

4:2 *Again she gave birth, to Cain’s brother Abel. Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a cultivator of the ground*- Adam's curse had been to cultivate the ground; but Abel evidently saw beyond the parameters of the curse, and kept sheep instead. Just as we too can see and act beyond the parameters of our fallen condition, whilst still subject to it. Or this could be another evidence that the judgments pronounced upon Adam were directed at him personally, and not all his descendants were to experience every aspect of them. For not all get their living from the soil. Perhaps we can see in Cain's love of the ground a glorification of the curse; for "cultivator" translates a Hebrew word more

commonly translated "servant" or "worshipper". It was by their choice of employment that the brothers were demonstrating their thinking about God. They knew animal sacrifice was required; and Abel concerned himself with this as a means of daily livelihood.

4:3 *As time passed-* This could refer to some appointed feast or sacrifice day approaching.

It happened that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh from the fruit of the ground- The fact his offering wasn't accepted suggests that animal sacrifice had already been instituted, and Cain was not simply judged as having offered a second best, but rather as having offered something distinctly unacceptable. He failed to perceive that he too was a sinner, needing remission of sins connected with the shedding of blood (Heb. 9:22). Perhaps he like many today chose to blame his weaknesses on his parents and environment, rather than taking personal responsibility. Perhaps he lacked the humility to ask his brother for an animal.

4:4 *Abel also brought-* The Hebrew can mean that he also brought an animal, as if he also brought fruits of the earth as Cain had done. In this case, we see Cain representing the Judaist attitude of justification by works; whereas Abel recognized his sin, and the need for atonement through blood shedding. The works of his hands were offered as gratitude for that gracious forgiveness; whereas Cain thought that his own works alone were the basis for acceptability with God. This same difference in motivation for works is alive and well today.

Some of the firstborn of his flock and of its fat. Yahweh respected Abel and his offering- Many connections are visible in early Genesis to the later law of Moses (here to Num. 18:15-17). There were elements of that law in existence from these early days onwards. The respect of Yahweh was presumably shown by the fire from the cherubim / flaming sword consuming the sacrifice, as happened when Samson's parents offered (also Lev. 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38; 2 Chron. 7:1) . Yahweh's respect was to "Abel [personally] and his offering", as if a person's sacrifice is "them". We are not simply acceptable to God by making a few cursor movements on a screen, by purely internal ideas. There has to be sacrifice in some form. Heb. 11:4 says that God testified to Abel's sacrifices, because he was "righteous". But his shedding of blood was a recognition of his own unrighteousness. Belief in forgiveness therefore of itself makes us "righteous" in that if sin is forgiven, then righteousness is imputed to us.

4:5 *But He didn't respect Cain and his offering. Cain was very angry, and the expression on his face fell-* The 'faces' of the cherubim and flaming sword did not accept Cain's offering, God did not "look" ["respect"] toward it, and so Cain's face also fell. 1 Jn. 3:12 explains that Cain slew Abel because his own works were "evil" and his brother's "righteous". To trust in our own works is "evil", and to confess our sin and throw

ourselves in faith upon the Lord's shed blood is "righteous". We have here presented for all time the root of jealousy- a sense that another is closer to God than ourselves. This has been the deep motive for so much tension and evil between brethren. And we are warned against it right at the beginning of the Biblical record.

4:6 *Yahweh said to Cain, Why are you angry? Why has the expression of your face fallen?*- Another example of the questions in early Genesis being rhetorical. God was as ever, seeking repentance and reformation; and He provokes questions in our consciences for the same reason. We too need to probe the reasons for our anger. The question "Why are you angry?" often reveals our own inadequacies and depth failings. The instinctive reply is "Because he / she / you... did this or that". But the ultimate reason is because we have sinned or failed. All through these early chapters we see God's earnest passion for human repentance in the light of human sin, rather than judging or rejecting immediately.

4:7 *If you do well, will it not be lifted up?*- The Hebrew in this verse is hard to conclusively translate. I have earlier suggested that Cain assumed he was 'doing well', was justified by his own works, and had no sin to be atoned for. In this case, the idea would be: 'If you really are righteous by your own works, would your sacrifice not have been accepted?'. And so the paradox is that by confession of sin and recognition of weakness, we are righteous before God. Acceptable sacrifice, in whatever form, is based around recognition of sin and a rejection of all works-based thinking.

The LXX here is worthy of consideration. Due weight must be given to the fact that the New Testament nearly always quotes from the LXX rather than the Masoretic text [the Hebrew Old Testament]; and when there is a difference between the two texts, the New Testament often quotes the LXX rather than the MT. The LXX here suggests what I have developed elsewhere in this exposition- that the sin of Cain was not in offering non-blood offerings, but in his attitude to his brother Abel: "Hast thou not sinned if thou hast brought it rightly, but not rightly divided it?". His offering was "right", but his attitude to his brother was wrong. It could even be that the Lord alludes here in saying that if we bring our gift to the altar and *there* remember that we have some issue with our brother- we are to sort that out first, as a priority, otherwise we will be offering unacceptably (Mt. 5:23,24).

If you don't do well, sin crouches at the door. Its desire is for you, but you are to rule over it- "Sin" could here be read as referring to a sin offering, an animal which God had sent to the door of the sanctuary, providing Cain with every opportunity now to do what was right. Likewise, the sacrificial lamb has been conveniently provided for all sinners and all those who think they can be justified by works. Just as the animal was made to come

and crouch down at the entrance to the sanctuary, so God really does all possible to provide us with the way to acceptable fellowship with Him. Cain as the firstborn was the family priest. He apparently lost credibility when the fire came down and consumed Abel's offering, but not his. Immediately it seemed that Abel was going to usurp Cain as the family priest. Therefore he was told to offer the animal that was 'crouching' at the door of the meeting place, and then "unto thee shall be his [Abel's] desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. 4:7 AV). Surely this means that if Cain had openly recognized his mistake and then done the right thing, he would have risen to even higher levels of spiritual credibility with his younger brother.

The language of desire and rulership is taken directly from the curse upon Eve in relation to her desire for Adam.

"Sin" however can be read literally, as sin. There is a doctrine of a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), whereby we really can be made new people. This is a ladder to reach to the stars. We can overcome sin, bad habits and thought patterns; sin may seek to get us, but we can rule over it. We may well think that we can't; the way was set, the die cast, the destiny mapped out, the genes determined; our background, upbringing, life path was as it was, and so we are as we are. But we *can* be made new. Sin need no longer have dominion over us, as Paul says in Romans 6; or as early Genesis puts it here, "you shall rule over [sin]". We are not debtors to sin (Rom. 8:12)- sin is not inevitable. But most people fail to see beyond the very limited horizons of both their nature and their immediate life. Earth's curvature means that we can't see beyond horizons; but we can, if we wish, *know* what is there.

John Steinbeck, who was hardly a Biblical Christian, was fascinated by the early chapters of Genesis, and his 1952 novel *East Of Eden* is evidently his commentary upon them. And he finds no place for a 'Satan' figure. Instead, he is struck by the comment to Cain that although sin crouches at the door, "do thou / thou mayest rule over him". Steinbeck concluded from this that victory over sin and the effects of Adam's sin is possible; and therefore we're not bound by some superhuman Satan figure, nor by an over-controlling Divine predestination to sin and failure. There's a passage in chapter 24 of the novel that bears quoting; I find it deeply inspirational, and another example of the practical import of the correct understanding of early Genesis: "It is easy out of laziness, out of weakness, to throw oneself onto the lap of the deity, saying, "I couldn't help it; the way was set". But think of the glory of the choice! That makes a man a man. A cat has no choice; a bee must make honey. There's no godliness there... these verses are a history of mankind in any age or culture or race... this is a ladder to climb to the stars... it cuts the feet from under weakness and cowardliness and laziness... because "thou mayest" rule over sin". The practical inspiration ought to be evident; all further commentary is bathos.

4:8 *Cain said to Abel, his brother, Let's go into the field*- This may simply mean that they exited the sanctuary together. The whole record here is replete with connection to the sin of Adam and Eve, Divine questioning, and the subsequent punishment and banishment expressed in very similar terms. At this point, the parallel is that as the serpent "talked" to Eve, so Cain "said" or 'talked' with Abel- the same word is used (Gen. 3:1). We could therefore infer that perhaps the 'going into the field' was a going away from the sanctuary of God, and the talking together was about some form of rebellion against Divine commandment; to which Abel, unlike Adam and Eve, refused to listen.

It happened when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and killed him- The reason is supplied in 1 Jn. 3:12: "And why did he kill him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous". Spiritual jealousy is the root of murder, literal and symbolic. Jealousy of this sort is indeed as cruel as death. John's argument continues, presenting Cain as representative of "the world", the Jewish world in John's immediate context, and "whoever hates his brother" within the ecclesia.

4:9 *Yahweh said to Cain, Where is Abel, your brother? He said, I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?*- Again, the questions in early Genesis are rhetorical, and this interrogation of Cain matches that of Adam and Eve ("Where are you?", Gen. 3:9); see on :8. Cain, the epitome of 'the devil' (Jn. 8:44), was characterized by the attitude that he was not his brother's keeper. It was for this reason that his sacrifice wasn't accepted; it was not impossible for God to accept non-blood sacrifices (Num. 15:17-21; 18:12,13; Dt. 26:1-4). But the Lord Jesus perhaps offered a commentary on the incident when he said that our offering can only be accepted if we are first reconciled to our brother (Mt. 5:24). Cain's insistent lack of responsibility for his brother was the real sin, and therefore his sacrifice wasn't accepted by God. He wanted to serve God his own way, disregard his brother, justify his jealousy and disagreement with him... to be a private person. But this was the basis of his rejection.

"I don't know" may effectively mean "I know [him] not". Not recognizing our brethren as brethren is an age old sin. Cain as the older brother was indeed his brother's "keeper". Here we see another connection with the sin of Adam and Eve, noted on :8. They were to "keep" the garden (s.w., Gen. 2:15); and they didn't, instead they lusted after the forbidden fruit and Eve chatted with the serpent. We could infer that keeping his brother had been a commandment to Cain; it is this lack of responsibility which is the root of all hatred of our brethren. If care for them is paramount, then hatred is excluded. If they offer better than we do, then our basic sense of care for them will preclude all jealousy complexes.

4:10 *Yahweh said, What have you done?*- The Hebrew can as well be translated "Why" or "How". Again, God was seeking to probe Cain's conscience, to lead him to repentance. Mary's words to the Lord Jesus "Why have you done this to us?" are a rebuke- as if she implied that Jesus had sinned / done wrong by what He had done? Surely her faith in a

sinless Messiah was now put to a brutal test by a domestic upset; just as, in barest essence, ours is too by such things. Yet notice that she frames those words in the LXX language of Gen. 3:14; 4:10; 1 Sam. 13:11. Those allusions would imply that she felt Jesus had sinned; and yet at the same time as revealing that gross lack of perception, another part of her mind is still back in Scripture.

The voice of your brother's blood cries to Me from the ground- Perhaps the implication is that Cain had covered Abel's body and blood with soil, thinking God wouldn't notice it. The same idea is found in the souls beneath the altar, where the blood drained down to, crying for vengeance (Rev. 6:9). This again makes Cain the prototype of all persecutors of the Lord's true people, represented by Abel. Whilst there is no conscious survival of death, these metaphors indicate the degree to which the lives [blood] and record of dead believers live on within God. And their lives as it were cry to God for response from Him. The teaching of Rev. 6:9 is that this response will ultimately be at the Lord's return and the final judgment. The phrase 'crying unto the Lord' is frequently used for prayer. But prayer is perceived by God as far more than words verbalized; our life situation, our essential spirit, is read by Him as prayer. It matters not how good we are at verbalizing things; He reads our lives and spirits as a prayer to Him. And so God read the blood of Abel; and that of the Lord "speaks better things than that of Abel" (Heb. 12:24).

The blood of Christ is personified as a voice that speaks to us, a better word than the voice of Abel's blood which *cried out* it's message (Heb. 12:24 NIV; Gen. 4:10). This is after the pattern of how the commanding voice of Yahweh was heard above the blood sprinkled on "the atonement cover of the ark of the Testimony" (Num. 7:89 NIV). The blood of both old and new covenants enjoined the obedience of God's *word* upon those sprinkled with it (Heb. 9:19,20). The blood and God's word were linked. The blood of the dead believers in Christ likewise cries out from under the altar, demanding vengeance on this world: on the Catholic, Protestant, Babylonian, Roman, Nazi, Soviet systems that slew them for their faith (Rev. 6:9). To God, their blood is a voice, just as real as the voice of Abel, which cried out (in a figure) for judgment against Cain (Gen. 4:10).

4:11 *Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand*- The idea may be that the ground cursed Cain by becoming barren for him (:12); and he was a cultivator of the ground. Hence the Amplified Version: "You are cursed by reason of the earth". Earth opening its mouth may suggest there was an earthquake, as in Num. 16:32; Num. 26:10; Dt. 11:6. The blood was "received"; and the words for receiving blood are used multiple times of how the priests took or received the blood of the sacrifices, reflecting God's acceptance of them. Abel's death was therefore accepted by God; and Cain's evil hand in it was actually part of Abel's final acceptance with God. Truly no weapon formed against us can ultimately prosper, even if it leads to our death.

4:12 *From now on, when you cultivate the ground, it won't yield its strength to you*- Again, judgment was appropriate to the sinner. For Cain had cultivated the ground and had thought that the fruits of such labour would be acceptable with God. Perhaps again we see God remembering mercy in this judgment; for cutting off Cain's ability to do his preferred works, of producing agricultural produce, might have led him to subsequently throw himself upon God's grace. And as noted on :8, this is another link with the judgment of Adam. We note that the land not 'yielding her strength' is a term used of how God would judge Israel within the same *eretz* if they sinned (Lev. 26:20; Dt. 8:18 Heb.). As with the judgment upon Adam, I am inclined to see the judgment as specifically upon Cain, as it was specifically and uniquely upon Adam. We die in that we sinned in Adam, we would have done what he did, and we in essence have done the same (Rom. 5:12). But all the details of his specific judgments are not necessarily true for all men. Likewise, the land would yield its strength to the obedient, and would not do so for the disobedient.

You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the land- Again, it appears that a particular area is in view rather than the entire planet. Such wandering until death is the language of the condemnation at the last day, "wandering stars" (Jude 13), dogs wandering rejected outside the city (Ps. 59:15 s.w.). "Fugitive" implies he was being hunted, and that there was some concept at this stage of the Mosaic "avenger of blood" in such cases. Who would have persecuted him? Presumably the other, unrecorded, children of Adam and Eve. Or if indeed Genesis 1 and 2 speak specifically of a creation within the *eretz*, there would have been other people around. "Fugitive" is the same word used of Israel's condemnation in the wilderness, wandering in rejection (Num. 32:13), and "wanderer" of their wandering in the Gentile world under Divine condemnation (2 Kings 21:8; Jer. 4:1).

4:13 *Cain said to Yahweh, My sin*- He puts "sin" for "condemnation for sin". In this sense the Lord bore our sins; He was not a personal sinner, but He died the death of a condemned sinner.

Is greater than I can bear- Put together two Bible passages: Cain felt that his condemnation was greater *than he could bear*, and so God put a mark upon him so he wouldn't be slain (Gen. 4:13,15). Now 1 Cor. 10:13: God will not allow us to be tested *more than we can bear*, but will make a way of escape so we can bear it. I take this as meaning that if God is even sensitive to the feelings of a condemned man like Cain, rather like putting an animal to sleep in a humane way... then we who are saved in Christ can take comfort that even in this life, we will not be asked to bear the unbearable, and yet we have the prospect of eternity in front of us when this life is through. And in a very quiet, sober way, we have to respond with gratitude: 'Wow'. God will not even punish the rejected more than they can bear. This reflects His ultimate grace.

Recognition of personal sinfulness will finally swamp the rejected, as it should have done in their day of opportunity. There may be with some a desperate further appeal for mercy, after the pattern of Cain, who tried to desperately reason with God: "My punishment (220 times rendered "iniquity") is greater than I can bear" (Gen. 4:13 AV). "Bear" is the Hebrew word usually used for bearing away of sin. Cain finally recognized his own sin, and the need for atonement. Adam likewise confessed his sin as a result of God's questioning (Gen. 3:10). Realization of sin will finally be elicited (Num. 32:23 LXX; Ez. 6:9; Jude 15). Cain saw that he couldn't carry away his own sin. His words are surely a reference to the Lord's invitation to take hold of the animal sin offering that was crouching at the door (Gen. 4:7 Heb.). The Lord had offered Cain a way of escape through the blood of the lamb, a recognition that his own works couldn't save him. But he refused that knowledge; only to be finally and unalterably condemned, and thereby taught his desperate need to resign his own works and trust in the blood of the lamb. And so it will be at the last day. If men refuse to know their own desperation and need for the Lord's sacrifice now, then they will be made to realize it all too late. Zedekiah likewise wept in his condemnation (Ez. 7:27), knowing that he could have taken hold of God's offer through Jeremiah. Note how Cain is "cursed from this land" (Gen. 4:11 LXX)- the land / earth of Israel, the area of Eden before the flood. Being expelled from the land was his condemnation; just as Israel were later cast out of their land in condemnation. He left God's land and lived in the land of Nod / wandering, at the entrance to Eden (4:16). According to the RV margin of Gen. 4:16, Cain lived "in front of Eden"- he didn't go far away from it, he set himself as near to the entrance as he could. Likewise Israel chose to stay "many days" in Kadesh (Dt. 1:46), on the very border of the promised land, after their rejection from inheriting it. It is significant that Israel and Judah were taken into captivity in areas on the edge of the land promised to Abraham- Babylon, just the other side of the Euphrates, and to Egypt, just the other side of the Nile. The point simply is that the rejected will so want to get back into the land / Kingdom. Like Israel, hanging their harps on the trees by the rivers of Babylon, pining for the land they had been rejected from.

Ps. 112:10 speaks of the wicked gnashing with their teeth and melting away, suggesting that the slinking away process goes on even in the outer darkness; they wander, but in their aimless wandering they slowly slink yet further away from their Lord- the one who once fain would have carried them on His shoulders, gathered them under His wings. It's a terrible picture. Cain, in typifying all the rejected, felt that his condemnation was something greater than he could bear (Gen. 4:13). This is alluded to in a telling way in 1 Cor. 10:13: for the righteous, they will never be tested more than they can bear, but a way of escape will always be made possible. But for the rejected, there will be no escape. It will be something too great to bear, and somehow they have to go on existing in that state. Thus the rejected will seek death and not find it (Rev. 9:6), after the pattern of Judas bungling his own suicide after realising his condemnation [thus his bowels

gushed, although he was attempting to hang himself]; they will also seek the Lord, all too late, and not find Him either (Prov. 1:28; Jn. 7:34).

4:14 *Behold, you have driven me out this day from the surface of the ground*- Cain reasons against God's judgment of him; and to some extent he is successful. The judgment is ameliorated. On :8-12 I have suggested that Cain's sin and judgment is based upon that of Adam and Eve. And likewise, the judgment that they would die in the day they sinned was ameliorated. And so for all time we have established God's openness to dialogue, His grace, His willingness to change His judgments, as Israel so often experienced.

Being driven out from the literal ground of the *eretz* was what happened to Israel when they were taken away from their land into captivity. Thus again we see Cain set up as representative of rejected Israel, which is how John's gospel and letters likewise understand him.

I will be hidden from your face, and I will be a fugitive and a wanderer in the land. It will happen that whoever finds me will kill me- "Face" can be "faces", and may refer to his expulsion from the sanctuary where the cherubim stood, between man and Eden. There was clearly some kind of vengeance for blood system, as we find later in the Mosaic law. The people he feared would presumably have been his own brethren. Cain seemed to assume that if he was near the sanctuary, he would not be killed; and we see this idea perpetuated in 1 Kings 1:50,51; 1 Kings 2:28. To be sent away from the faces / presence / sanctuary of Yahweh was a tragedy for him; likewise the rejected in the last day will not shrug it off, they will desperately wish to abide in His presence whom they didn't care for in their lives. We today are to love the Lord's presence, and rejoice in it, as David often does in the Psalms.

After the pattern of Cain and Adam (Gen. 3:24; 4:14), and also the idea of the wicked being *cast* into the darkness of condemnation, it seems that the rejected will be forcibly driven away. Cain was driven out from the faces, the presence of the land of Eden, where the Lord's presence was (Gen. 4:14). Presumably this driving out was done by the Angels. We are left to imagine the ultimate tragedy of Cain going forth from the presence of the Lord (Gen. 4:16 s.w. "face" 4:14), and the rejected 'going away into...' (Mt. 25:46). The tragedy of rejection is well reflected in the way the Lord speaks of how "great was the fall" of the poorly built house (Mt. 7:27).

4:15 *Yahweh said to him, Therefore whoever slays Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold. Yahweh appointed a sign for Cain, lest any finding him should strike him*- There is no promise that Cain will not be killed, but rather some kind of sign was placed upon him, warning of sevenfold vengeance for taking his life. And this apparently worked, for we will not read of Cain's death at the hands of men, and indeed he went on to have his own children. Again we see God's gentleness even to the condemned; He

didn't wish Cain to suffer unbearably, and modified the judgment to that end. And this God is our God. He was open to dialogue even with the rejected Cain; how much more to us.

4:16 *Cain went out from Yahweh's presence*- This interview between God and Cain therefore occurred in the sanctuary, with Eden just the other side of it.

And lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden- "Nod" is literally "exile". But he chose to live East of Eden, as near to the sanctuary as he possibly could. Again, we see how the rejected do not just shrug and run away from it all. They will desperately seek acceptance, until the second death takes them. And we too should earnestly seek His sanctuary now, and do nothing at all which might exclude or discourage others from it.

4:17 *Cain knew his wife*- She could have been his sister. But if we understand the record in early Genesis as only concerning the *eretz*, the land later promised to Abraham, then she may have been a woman from outside that area.

She conceived, and gave birth to Enoch. He built a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch- Cain's judgment to wander and be a fugitive was therefore mitigated in response to his wishes; for he became a settled urban dweller. We marvel at God's consideration even to the rejected. Such is His grace and gentleness. "The way of Cain" is associated in Jude 11 with rampant materialism which replaces God, and also with false religion. "Enoch" means 'dedicated' or 'initiated'; "the way of Cain" was of false religion. Having been expelled from Yahweh's sanctuary, he built a city and dedicated his son as the priest- all east of Eden, as if he liked to think that his city and priest could become the way back into Eden. The city was "dedicated" or "initiated"; it was a city which was identified with a person, namely his son Enoch. All this suggests a religious element to the settlement. Rome likewise was a city founded upon the murder of the founder's brother. "He built" is rendered "he was building" by Keil, as if building the city was what consumed the rest of Cain's life. He spent his lifetime trying to prove the curses upon him as untrue- and yet all the same he died, separated from the sanctuary. And this in essence has been the pattern in so many sad lives.

4:18 *To Enoch was born Irad*- According to some (H.P. Mansfield, Basil Atkinson), "Irad" means 'urban dweller', and as noted on :17, the idea of urban dwelling had become an obsession with Cain and his family, as if to try to prove wrong God's judgment that he would wander and be a fugitive. All men try to act outside of the parameters of our own judgment for sin, effectively denying their humanity; but unless we throw ourselves upon God's grace, as Cain failed to, then we shall likewise eternally perish. But "Irad"

can also mean "fugitive". In this case we would see evidence of the failure of Cain's attempt to stop the curse of being a fugitive, through setting up a walled urban environment for his family. Ultimately, the parameters set by Divine judgment cannot be slid beyond, even though many devote their lives to trying.

Irad became the father of Mehujael- "Formed of God". This might suggest some re-thinking, a recognition that human beings are not brought into being solely by the power of the flesh. But the problem with Hebrew names is that they are capable of a very wide semantic range- Mehujael can also mean "smitten of God", as if God judged him. The same root word for "Mehuja" is soon to be used of how God "destroyed" the earth through the flood (Gen. 6:7; Gen. 7:4,23).

Mehujael became the father of Methushael- "Strengthened man of God". If names are indeed significant, then we may be justified in hoping that for these two generations, of Methushael and Mehujael, there was some revival of spirituality, which came to an end in Lamech. This is typical of human families- generations of unbelief interspersed with occasional generations of belief.

Methushael became the father of Lamech- "Strong youth" or "striker down", as if he rejoiced in his own strength.

4:19 *Lamech took two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah*- Polygamy is mentioned here along with a number of other things which whilst not sinful in themselves at the time, were all indulged in to a point where finally the earth was full of wickedness and needed judgment. Their names also suggest an emphasis upon the cosmetic and superficial; "Adah" = "ornament", "Zillah" = "shadow".

4:20 *Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock*- "Jabal" means "wanderer". As noted on :17 and :18, Cain had spent his life trying to ensure that the curse of being a nomad would not pass upon him and his descendants. But God's judgment will finally come true, as we see here. The tent dwellers were not a reference to all nomadic peoples on the face of the planet; clearly the reference is to a limited group of people, presumably in the area of the *eretz,* the land promised to Abraham.

4:21 *His brother's name was Jubal, who was the father of all who handle the harp and pipe*- "Jubal" can mean "jubilant". The impression given is of a family who were intelligent, resourceful and given to worldly pleasures. But "Jabal" can also be defined as "pleasure". The picture presented is of a family devoted to their own pleasures and profit.

4:22 *Zillah also gave birth to Tubal Cain, the forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron*- "The lance forger", according to some readings. The idea is of weapons. Lamech not only alludes to Cain (see on :23,24), but includes the name of Cain in his own son. Lamech clearly was the seed of Cain and glorified the fact.

Tubal Cain's sister was Naamah- "Pleasant / sweet". Her name may be mentioned because of her significance; perhaps she was one of the daughters of men whom the sons of God, the righteous line, intermarried with and were caused to fall away by (Gen. 6:2).

4:23 *Lamech said to his wives, Adah and Zillah, hear my voice. You wives of Lamech, listen to my speech, for I have slain a man for wounding me, a young man for bruising me. If Cain will be avenged seven times, truly Lamech seventy-seven times*-

4:24 *If Cain will be avenged seven times, truly Lamech seventy-seven times*- This proud boast was effectively playing God. For it was God who pronounced seven fold vengeance upon any who touched Cain; and Lamech with no justification simply appropriates such protection to himself, and declares the vengeance even greater. He twisted God's words in order to justify killing a man who touched him in some way (:23). So often this happens; God's words of judgment against a person or His promise of protection for them are twisted around in order to justify human pride and vengefulness. The way the Lamech of Seth's line dies at 777 (Gen. 5:31) might suggest that his proud boast came to an end in death, as does every form of pride.

The Lord in turn switches Lamech's words around when He urges us to *forgive* seventy times seven each day (Mt. 18:22), i.e. even when repentance appears insincere. In the Lord's book, forgiving is the opposite to the desire for vengeance; our unforgiveness can therefore be traced to a mistaken, misplaced desire to take vengeance ourselves.

4:25 *Adam knew his wife again. She gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for God has appointed me another child instead of Abel, for Cain killed him*- Here we see yet another hope for a Messiah, a Saviour figure who would be appointed [= "Seth"] by God as the seed of the woman. All these hopes didn't come to anything; perhaps they potentially could have done, and were only ruined by human dysfunction. The whole experience was used to deepen an understanding and desire for the Lord Jesus. "Appointed" can also mean "substituted", which is the more exact meaning of "Seth". He was hoped to be a substitute for Abel, a kind of resurrected form of Abel; but in the end, death is death, and there can be no substitute; only a representative sacrifice which we identify with in faith.

4:26 *There was also a son born to Seth, and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call themselves by Yahweh's name*- "Enosh" is the usual Hebrew word for "man" in the sense of a mortal, coming from the root meaning frail or feeble. Perhaps it was this recognition of weakness and mortality which led men at that time to call themselves by God's Name; and the same principle is to be seen today. It is those who perceive their own frailty who call upon themselves the Lord's Name in baptism into Jesus (Acts 2:21). "Call... by" can as well mean to call out to, or to name. The idea may be that the believers now began to call God by His Name Yahweh, although Gen. 4:1 could imply that Name was always known from the beginning. Calling upon His Name may suggest that there developed a conscious division between those following "the way of Cain", and those who identified with Yahweh. To call Yahweh's Name upon you was another way of saying that you had entered covenant relationship with Him (Dt. 26:17,18; Is. 44:5; Is. 63:19; Zeph. 3:9), just as believers do so today through the conscious act of baptism. So maybe this was part of the conscious division developed between the "way of Cain" and that of Yahweh.

GENESIS CHAPTER 5

5:1 *This is the book of the generations of Adam*- A Hebraism for "an account of the story of...". This phrase is found throughout Genesis, introducing the various sections: Gen. 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12, 19; 36:1; 37:2. The focus of the material reduces each time; from the heavens and earth, to Adam, to the faithful line through Seth, to Noah, to Abraham, to Jacob, to Joseph.

In the day that God created man, He made him in God's likeness- This is to be connected with how Adam had a son "in his own likeness" (:3), as if to imply that the Divine likeness is passed on through procreation. This "likeness" therefore refers to something physical rather than spiritual or mental; for His ways are far above ours, and we are to take on His mind through wilfully being open to His Spirit. The word is used of how Ahab had an image made in the likeness of a god in Damascus. The word definitely has 'physical' suggestions. These reflections are hard evidence that God is not totally immaterial, but exists as an actual entity. Admittedly all terms such as corporeal, physical, material etc. leave us beneath "the tyranny of words"; but all the same God is real and actual, creating a man after His likeness, in the same way as that man then procreated according to his likeness, which was God's.

The common view of the times was that only the ruling classes were created in the image of God. The Ancient Near East was full of images to rulers which were called "images of God". The Caesar cult continued this. Only the supreme ruler was the image of God. But Genesis deconstructs this, and states that each and every man is in the image of God. The prophets lament how Israel worshipped images which had no breath

/ spirit in them (Hab. 2:19; Jer. 10:14; 51:17). Rather than perceive that they were each living images of God, filled with His Spirit, Israel preferred to avoid such personal responsibility by instead creating and worshipping another image of God. Perceiving we ourselves are in the image of God inspires responsibility. And we would rather avoid that and try to claim that God's image is not in me, but in something else. The Ancient Near East considered priests to be men in the image of God who had His Spirit in them. Genesis is saying that every man has this; we are all priests. It was God's intention that Israel should be a nation of priests, as the new Israel are to be a "royal priesthood". But both natural and spiritual Israel have largely shrunk from this responsibility, and preferred to see the image and spirit of God in others or elsewhere, anywhere, apart from in themselves.

Egyptian inscriptions show that the Pharaohs were considered to be made in the image of God, unlike the mass of society who were supposedly not in God's image and could therefore be abused as animals through heavy taxation etc.. For humanity were seen as born into slavery. The name of the Pharaoh Tutankhamen means the “Living image of Amun”. Later, the Assyrian king Esarhaddon was described as "the very image of Bel" the god of Assyria. The theology of Yahweh directly challenges this. All men are in His image, and there is no two or multi tier view of society, whereby just the ruling caste was in God's image. And this has meaning for today, where effectively a hyper wealthy class has emerged sitting on the backs of a vast majority of minimum wage labour. And indeed there is developing a servile, standardised mass mentality. Man is becoming dehumanized, personality is becoming bleached to conformity, strong characters are fewer, as society drowns in depression and nihilism. All because we resist the call of our own bodies and natures, to understand that we are in God's image and can rise above to something infinitely more noble and worthy.

We see the Ancient Near Eastern view of these things challenged again when the Torah declares that all land belongs to Yahweh and shall be the eternal possession of His people. Not some propertied class. There are many Egyptian references to the Pharaohs being begotten in the image of the gods; the Biblical record states that we are created in His image *and likeness*. I suggest the "likeness" is an invitation to see that we have the potential to "be like Him" in a mental and spiritual way; a dimension quite missing in the Egyptian theology which Moses is here deconstructing. "We shall be like *Him* / Oh how rich the promise". Creation has indeed been made subject to vanity, but for the believer, it has been "subjected in hope" (Rom. 8:19-21).

Another aspect of the Egyptian / pagan idea which is deconstructed is the idea that gods only beget gods in their image. Thus the *Enuma Elish* 1:16, “Anu begot Nudimmud in his likeness". But in reality, God begets children in His image who are all of humanity; for Gen. 5 is a genealogy of men. And they are in the image of man as well as in God's image. We see here the value and dignity attached to the human person, reflected in our

respect for all persons, including our enemies. To treat others as made in the image of God is so difficult when they are the brutal, cruel, foolish, dogmatic, judgmental, unkind... but they are still in the image of God, no matter how marred and distorted, and we are to treat them accordingly.

5:2 *He created them male and female, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created*- The record intentionally confuses the singular "Adam" with the married couple. This may explain why Rom. 5:12 speaks of sin entering the world by one man, Adam- when Eve was equally part of the transgression. We also see a reflection of the unity God perceives between married couples whom He joins together. Here and in :1, we are reading of the events of "the day when they were created". The fall of Adam and Eve and the issues with Cain and Abel are overlooked; because this account is focusing upon the development of the more spiritual line which emerged through Seth, culminating in Noah; whereas chapter 4 has given us the line of evildoers through Cain, and this will climax in the way that the sons of God [the righteous] intermarried with the daughters of men [the line of Cain] until only Noah was left righteous.

5:3 *Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth*- As noted on :1, this begettal of a son after his own image and likeness is to be connected with how he had been created in God's image and likeness; which surely refers to the physical rather than the moral. Much is therefore implied here about the nature of God Himself. This is why Israel were not to make any physical form or image of God; because it would take them away from appreciating that they themselves as persons were the image of God. God has a form, for we are made in His form and likeness; but Israel didn't see that form and were not to make any image of it (Dt. 4:12,15). And as the Lord reasons, what has God's image on it must be given to God. We are His, wholly and totally, by reason of the image we bear. As noted on Gen. 4:25, here we see yet another hope for a Messiah, a Saviour figure who would be appointed [= "Seth"] by God as the seed of the woman. All these hopes didn't come to anything; perhaps they potentially could have done, and were only ruined by human dysfunction. The whole experience was used to deepen an understanding and desire for the Lord Jesus. "Appointed" can also mean "substituted", which is the more exact meaning of "Seth". He was hoped to be a substitute for Abel, a kind of resurrected form of Abel; but in the end, death is death, and there can be no substitute; only a representative sacrifice which we identify with in faith.

We naturally enquire of the connection between the statements that God created man after His own image and likeness, and that then man begat children after *his* own image and likeness. There is a correspondence between father and son, clearly seen between Adam and Seth. And we are being told that this reflects the correspondence between

Adam [and every man] and God. Adam was in this the sense "the son of God" as Luke 3 states. This is why God describes Himself as our "kinsman redeemer" (Ps. 9:11-13; 2 Chron. 24:22). Man is therefore God's nearest kin, because the avenger of blood was the nearest kin to the man slain. In the context of Genesis, God has just now shown in Gen. 4 that He is the avenger of Abel's blood. Genesis 1 repeatedly states that everything in creation was created "according to its kind", its own distinctive type or class. But when we come to the account of man's creation, we read that he was made in God's image and likeness. After His, Divine, kind. This gives yet more dimension to the simple invitation to view God as our Heavenly Father.

We could read :1 as implying that Adam was created after God's image and likeness in the day that he was created [otherwise that phrase is somewhat redundant], but that image was marred as a result of the fall. And over the generations, that image becomes progressively less as men beget their children after *their* image and likeness. Or we can take this :3 as explaining to us in what sense we are created after God's image and likeness. We are to Him as a child is to its human father. We have the father's image, but somewhat uniquely refracted in a way that means we are not the splitting image of our fathers, but yet our image and likeness is related to them in a distorted, diluted sense. It is emphasized twice in :1,2 that God made man in His image "in the day that God created him". This phrase would appear redundant, especially as it is stated twice, unless we understand it to mean that before he sinned, Adam [which was the name for 'Adam and Eve'] was in God's image. But man is still in that image, although not completely. This is why the genealogy of Genesis 5 starts with God. "The book of the generations of Adam" begins not with Adam, but with God begetting Adam. In this sense Adam was the son of God (Lk. 3:38). He is the Father, and we are a family begotten in His likeness. But that family is all humanity. "We are indeed His offspring" (Acts 17:28). And so all men are to be respected; James says we should not curse men because they are made in God's image. This likely interprets Gen. 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, his blood will be shed by man, for God made man in His own image".

In this sense, God's creation of Adam was a begettal of a son. And thereby we are empowered to understand the new creation of a spiritual man within us as being also a kind of begettal by the Spirit. In this sense, the virgin birth of God's Son the Lord Jesus doesn't unduly set Him apart from the rest of us who have been begotten by the Spirit, as John's writings make clear. So whilst we are physically in God's image and likeness, the degree of likeness is at times obscure, and at best diluted, distorted and only a refraction of the original light. But in the Lord Jesus at the time of His death, in the mind and character He had there, we see "the form of God"; and we are invited to let that mind be in us which was in Him there (Phil. 2). He there was the supreme manifestation or image and likeness of God, in human flesh. He was a man amongst men, man as God intended man to be, and as we shall finally be. And that mind, image and likeness is to be allowed in us ["let this mind be in you..."]. Just as Adam was in God's image 'in the

day that he was created', so we can return to that image and even fuller, through the Lord Jesus who is the image of God, and His exact likeness (Col. 1:15). As Alan Hayward put it, He was "the man with the face of God". The Lord Jesus in His time of dying reached the exact image and likeness of God, although He was in the form / image of a servant as well as being in the form / image of God. The Father's side was refracted through His humanity, being "found in fashion as a man". And through the work of the Spirit, we are being conformed and transformed into that same image (2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:9,10 "Do not lie to each other, seeing you have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator"). For "He shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). And we are not to turn away from that face, but to let it transform us through allowing the work of His Spirit in the new creation of men and women after His image and likeness, which is that of God: "Now the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there the heart is free. But we each, with an unveiled face and reflecting the glory of the Lord [Jesus], are all transformed into *his likeness* from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17,18).

We don't fully get there in this life, but the joy of resurrection is that we will: "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:49). Paul there alludes to Gen. 5:3 LXX , where Adam produces a son who bears his image, just as God made Adam in *His* image. Paul sees this as coming true at resurrection, but of course right now the Lord is a "life giving spirit" in our new creation and new birth of water and spirit. We are now being progressively changed into His image, from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). We as believers were predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29); a process that starts now and comes to final conclusion at the day of judgment. Then, God's desire to have children in His image and likeness shall be finally fulfilled.

And so by following this theme through the Bible, we come to understand ourselves, who we are. We are shown what it is, to be human; how high we are rather than how low we are, and what great potential there is in being human. Every man being in the image of God, there are no 'mere mortals', no 'ordinary people', 'standard blokes', produced by some random evolutionary process. Recall how in the account of creation, everything was brought into being by the statement "Let there *be*...", but man is different: "Let us *make* man after our likeness". God will finally make a man more precious than fine gold, even the gold of Ophir (Is. 13:12). The Lord had totally our nature, and showed us what was possible. We see that we were born for great things, we see how high is our potential, and so we are inspired to rise above our human side. For we are made in the image and likeness of God, but also in human image and likeness. The teaching of Gen. 5:1,3 can perhaps be seen as a balancing out of the dimension presented in Gen. 3 and Gen. 4- that we are indeed fallen and sinful. But that does not consign us to inevitable failure. And if we are in Christ and open to His transforming Spirit, we shall progressively

be changed [back, or more fully] into the Divine image as it is in Him; and then be physically and totally changed into it at His return, although the Father's image and likeness will be refracted through us each in a unique way, just as Adam's image and likeness was in his children. Man was born to respond to God; He is not far from any one of us, because we are made in His image and there is something intuitive about relationship with Him. Altheism is therefore an unnatural denial of our own Father- usually because of false images of Him. As made in God's image, we are half way there as it were.

But so many don't want it, or pull out of the formation process, declining the new creation. Ps. 82:6,7 implies Israel were given that option, but instead they allowed the side of being in their father's image and likeness to dominate: "I had taken you for divine beings [I said 'You are gods']... but you shall die as humans / men". And their father was "the devil", the flesh, the Lord commented. This is why He quoted these words to them when they wrongly accused Him of pretending to be God. The Lord's quotation was therefore saying that yes, He was indeed in His Father's image and likeness- but that was possible for them also. But they were allowing the side of "their father the devil" to dominate. Perceiving these things provides the pastoral answer to our complaints about our sins. People tell us they are having an affair, are secretly addicted to alcohol, or whatever. And we point out to ourselves our own failures. And what are we to say, to ourselves and to others? "You can do better than that. You were born to better things". For we are in the image of God, and can be transformed into it far more. And so it can help at times to reposition our understanding of sin, in terms of failure and immaturity in rising up to reflecting the glory of God as we have seen it in the face of Jesus Christ.

The connection between :1 and :3 further shows that we have the image of God and also the image of our earthly father. Adam's son was both the image of God and of Adam. We are mixed, mongrels between flesh and Spirit. Which is why all bad men have some good in them, something of the Divine; and all good men are never completely good but have the human image and likeness as well in some points. But we are offered the opportunity to be reborn, reformed, recreated, after God's image and likeness which was seen perfectly in the Lord; to become the image of the Heavenly just as surely as we bore the image of the earthly.

Time and again, the Torah told Israel to live justly in things great and small, because "I am Yahweh your God". We are made in His image, and should live like Him in respect of all men who are all also in His image. To be like Him becomes our passion; to be holy "because I am holy". As the old hymn says,

"Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;

Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art".

Who He is, His image, "That Thou art", is to be all for me, our vision and our heart's sole desire. To be like Him.

"Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;

Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art.

Thou my best thought, by day or by night

Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Riches I need not, nor vain empty praise;

Thou mine inheritance, now and always.

Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,

Great God of Heaven, my treasure Thou art.

Be Thou my wisdom and Thou my true word.

I ever with Thee and Thou with me Lord.

Heart of my own heart, whatever befalls.

Still be my vision, O Ruler of all

Be Thou my battle shield, sword for the fight,

Be Thou my dignity, Thou my delight.

Thou my soul's shelter, Thou my high tower

Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Thou my great Fatherand I Thy true son,

Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

5:4 *The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he became the father of sons and daughters*- We can assume that he had many. But the faithful line was through only one of them, Seth; and that too had all but spiritually died out by the time of Noah. It must've been hard for Adam and Eve to see their scores of children and thousands of grandchildren, great grandchildren etc. all fall away from the faith; for there were none righteous by the time of Noah. We can assume that they

themselves kept the faith; for Eve's later hatred of the serpent and struggle with it until she killed it became programmatic for the true "seed of the woman" subsequently. The line of Seth alone were the only "seed of the woman" whilst Cain's line, and presumably the rest of the children, were the seed of the serpent.

5:5 *All the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, then he died*- The genealogies emphasize "death", a reminder that indeed death passed upon all men (Rom. 5:12). The longer lifespans could be explained by the different environment and climate before the flood; there had been no rain before the flood, and the canopy of water came down to earth at the deluge. This canopy may have shielded people from harmful radiation.

5:6 *Seth lived one hundred and five years, and became the father of Enosh*- There is an Enoch around the same time in the line of Cain, as listed in Gen. 4. And there are several similar names at the same points in the genealogies through both Seth and Cain. I have suggested above that these two lines are effectively the seeds of the serpent and the woman developing, although by chapter 6 they have intermarried until Noah alone is left faithful. Why the similarities, and at the same time? Perhaps we are to conclude that the seed of the serpent appears similar to the seed of the woman and even imitates her, externally. Just as the Assyrians offered life in their kingdom to Judah in the language of the Kingdom of God on earth- sitting under their own vine and fig tree etc. Likewise the antiChrist is a fake Christ, an imitation of the true.

5:7 *Seth lived after he became the father of Enosh eight hundred and seven years, and became the father of sons and daughters*- The ages recorded here differ markedly between the Masoretic [i.e. Hebrew] text, the various versions of the LXX, and Josephus. The New Testament, under inspiration, repeatedly quotes the LXX in preference over the MT [Hebrew text]. Luke's genealogy of Christ only makes sense when compared against the LXX rather than the MT. It is worth noting that if the LXX genealogies and ages are followed, and the manner of New Testament quotation encourages us to follow them, then the Lord was not born at 4000 years after Adam, and so 2000 AD was not 6000 years after creation. This has drastic implications for the "6000 year plan" theory, with the Millennium anticipated as the seventh day "sabbath of rest".

5:8 *All the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, then he died*- "He died" runs as a refrain here (Gen. 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27,31). The reality of the curse upon Adam, of paradise lost, is being brought home.

5:9 *Enosh lived ninety years, and became the father of Kenan*- The longer lifespans would imply a far stronger race than we now experience. Each woman may well have had a few hundred children. Coupled with the long lifespans and healthy environment, there would have been a few million people alive by the time of the flood. And out of all

of them, only Noah was found righteous. This mass population explosion is another connection between our last days and "the days of Noah".

5:10 *Enosh lived after he became the father of Kenan, eight hundred and fifteen years, and became the father of sons and daughters*- Perhaps this was from whom the faithful Heber the Kenite was descended (Jud. 4:11,17; Jud. 5:24).

5:11 *All the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, then he died*- "Enosh" is translated "mortal man" in Job 4:17, and is used in the sense of man in his humanity and weakness. And so man dies.

5:12 *Kenan lived seventy years, and became the father of Mahalalel*- "Praise of God". It's questionable how much significance we should attach to the meaning of names; but this meaning would encourage us to again see some spirituality in the line of Seth.

5:13 *Kenan lived after he became the father of Mahalalel eight hundred and forty years, and became the father of sons and daughters*- We may enquire as to why one son is chosen for mention, when that son may not have been the firstborn, and then this point is made a measuring point in the life of the person. Perhaps the idea is that the birth and raising of the faithful seed who would continue the line of the seed of the woman was the most significant point in their long lives. And so in many ways it is with believing parents and family lines today.

5:14 *And all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, then he died*- "All the days" is a metaphor meaning "the length of the life". Our lives are counted in days by God; for each day ought to be significant.

5:15 *Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Jared*- The rubric in the genealogies is clear- how long a person lived before they had a significant child, how long they lived afterwards, and then a note that they died and their final age on death. This is exactly the style of the king lists found amongst the Egyptians and Sumerians. We must ever remember that the Pentateuch was originally produced for the Israelites in Egypt. The idea would have been that this line of the seed of the woman were actually kings; such rubric was only used for the kings. That might have been literally true, but I suggest the idea is that ordinary faithful people within the seed of the woman were kings in God's eyes. Indeed all the faithful shall be king-priests (Rev. 5:10).

5:16 *Mahalalel lived after he became the father of Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and became the father of sons and daughters*- The mention of other sons and daughters may be to highlight the significance of the one who was faithful and through whom the line of the seed of the woman continued. In some genealogies, being the father of a person may simply mean that you were their ancestor. Generations were skipped. But giving the ages of the person when they had a child was perhaps to flag that this is not

the style here. The genealogy of Cain in chapter 4 isn't recorded in this way; no time periods are mentioned.

5:17 *All the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, then he died*- There appears to be an intended contrast with the line of Cain, the seed of the serpent, recorded in Gen. 4. Cain's children have a note made of their secular achievements; nothing like that is mentioned in the line of Seth, the seed of the woman. Worldly advantage and achievement mean nothing for those whose focus is upon being the seed of the woman. Worldly achievement and contribution to society is of absolutely no moment in the eternal record.

5:18 *Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch*- Jared had this child somewhat later in life. Perhaps this reflects a lengthy search for a Godly wife; or perhaps his earlier children were spiritual failures and weren't therefore the ones through whom the seed was to be preserved.

5:19 *Jared lived after he became the father of Enoch eight hundred years, and became the father of sons and daughters*- The genealogy will conclude with Noah being the only faithful believer even in the line of Seth. This means that his contemporaries had rejected the faith; the reality is that the vast majority of the children of these faithful men didn't remain in the faith. It would have been a most depressing and disappointing environment for those who were spiritually minded.

5:20 *All the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, then he died*- The genealogy through Cain in chapter 4 doesn't mention this repeated note that "he died" which we have here in the genealogy of the faithful. Perhaps we are to conclude that for the seed of the serpent and those "in the way of Cain", death is something they can't cope with and act as if it doesn't happen to them- although it does. The seed of the woman fully accept death, it is part of their necessary path towards eternal salvation.

5:21 *Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Methuselah*- Adam Clarke and others see "Methuselah" as meaning something to the effect of "When he dies, it [or judgment] shall come". And he died in the year the flood came. Jude 14 mentions that Enoch prophesied of judgment to come upon the world of his day. This would suggest that there had been a revelation about the flood before Noah received the command to build the ark. He would've obeyed, encouraged by Methuselah. The threat of judgment was therefore hanging over the earth for many centuries before the flood came; they were a society without excuse, and the gradual falling away of the faithful until only Noah was left would've been an awful period to live through. And the days of Noah are as our last days.

5:22 *Enoch walked with God after he became the father of Methuselah for three hundred years, and became the father of sons and daughters*- Walking with God in a Genesis context reminds us of how God walked in the Garden of Eden, and

fellowshipped with Adam and Eve before their sin. This may be another hint in early Genesis that the effects of the "fall" could in essence and principle be overcome in the lives of the Godly; just as John's gospel records the Lord offering "eternal life" right now, presenting Himself as the tree of life. The Kingdom is both now and not yet.

5:23 *All the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years*- This presents Enoch as ending his mortal life much earlier than the others mentioned in this genealogy.

5:24 *Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God snatched him away*- This may well imply a snatching away from persecution. The Hebrew is used for taking away from something to something else, but not necessarily death, in Gen. 2:15; Dt. 30:4; 2 Kings 2:1-18; Ez. 3:14; Ps. 49:16; 73:24. Although he was snatched away from some form of persecution, he still died. Both Enoch and Noah are described as "walking with God" and both were saved from destruction / judgment upon the wicked; but they both still died eventually. The seed of the serpent and that of the woman have always been in conflict, and so it would be no surprise if Enoch was persecuted by the line of Cain recorded in Gen. 4. But the standard rubric here in chapter 5 concludes each account with "and he died". That is notably absent here. But immortality was first granted to the Lord Jesus, who thus became the firstfruits of the redeemed. Enoch all the same had sinned and surely had to taste of death. The Bible knows nothing of immortal souls living in heaven after death; and even that approach fails to make sense of the pointed omission of the standard note that "he died". For immortal soulism claims that *on death* the supposed immortal soul goes to heaven. So the problem of his death being unrecorded remains. Heb. 11:5 says that Enoch "was not found", he was not grabbed as others intended, because God "removed" him (Gk.) so that he should not see death- i.e. the death that others intended, at that point. And yet he surely died, for Hebrews 11 says that all those mentioned in that chapter, including Enoch, "died", in sure hope of reward at the last day (Heb. 11:39,40). He died, because God removed him from the death others intended; rather like Moses was effectively taken away to death by an Angel. Paul likewise seems to suggest that he was given the opportunity to die, but he chose to remain (Phil. 1:23,24). I suggest the "and he died..." was omitted in order to continue the idea that for the seed of the woman, even if they remain within the physical parameters of the curse, they are in another sense free from it. God in grace gradually reduced some aspects of the curse in the lives of His children, the seed of the woman. We see this likewise in how the Law of Moses, which was likewise "added because of transgression" (Gal. 3:19), was amended and ameliorated as time went on. I have demonstrated elsewhere that Gentiles were initially forbidden to eat of the Passover, but this was amended later. Sinners were to have their children punished for some generations (Ex. 34:7), but by the time of Ezekiel 18 this had been ameliorated.

5:25 *Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and became the father of Lamech*- The righteous seed was not born to Methuselah early in his life. Perhaps he

had to search long to find a Godly wife; or maybe his other children slid away into the mass apostacy of that period.

5:26 *Methuselah lived after he became the father of Lamech seven hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of sons and daughters*- We wonder why Lamech was not saved in the ark, and why he died relatively young. We can assume that he fell away from the faith, whilst his father and son [Noah] remained faithful. To hold to the faith amidst such mass apostacy, including amongst your immediate family, is notable indeed. Or it could simply be that he died younger than the others because of persecution or natural causes.

5:27 *All the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, then he died*- Methuselah lived longer than any other recorded man, dying in the year the flood came; see on Gen. 5:21. Perhaps his longevity was a reflection of God's blessing upon him. A more negative reading would be that Methuselah fell away from the faith and perished in the flood.

5:28 *Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son*- As noted on :26, we are left to assume that Lamech fell away from the faith, or died relatively young. His faithful father Methuselah outlived him. Lamech was the sixth from Adam in this list, just as there was a Lamech the sixth from Adam in the line of Cain (Gen. 4:16-24). This highlights how the two lines were parallel, with the seed of the serpent being but a mimic of that of the woman; just as the antiChrist is a fake, imitation Christ, and this world, the kingdom of men with its offers and claims, is but a fake Kingdom of God.

5:29 *And he named him Noah, saying, This same will comfort us in our work and in the toil of our hands, because of the ground which Yahweh has cursed*-

Perhaps they hoped that this would be the seed of the woman who would bring the curse on the ground to an end. Clearly this hope for a Messiah figure would have been significant in the thinking of the faithful. Or did Noah's parents expect Noah to be the child who would do all the hard menial work for them, so that they would suffer less from the curse placed upon the ground in Eden? This might explain why Noah had children when he was 500, far older than others of his time (Gen. 5:32- Noah's father had had his first children at 182, Gen. 5:28; Seth had his first child at 105, Gen. 5:6; Enos at 95, Gen. 5:9; Cainan at 70, Gen. 5:12; Mahalalel at 65, Gen. 5:15; Jared at 162, Gen. 5:18; Enoch at 65, Gen. 5:21; Methuselah at 187, Gen. 5:25); Gen. 6:18 implies that Noah only had three sons, whereas for people with such long life spans we'd have expected him to have had far more than that. He only had three children- for he prepared the ark to save "his house" (Heb. 11:7) and Gen. 7:1 is quite clear: ""Go into the ark, you and *all* your household"- his whole household was his wife, three sons and their wives. Period . Perhaps we get the picture of a man who was the underdog, the

farm worker, the sidekick of the family, whose own family life was delayed and limited by this background. Perhaps he turned to alcohol for comfort (hence Gen. 9:21). But it was he whom God chose to save, he alone who was righteous in that generation which perished. It was the quiet, broken man who was saved. The Hebrew word for "Comfort" [a play on 'Noah'] occurs later, when we read how God "repented" that He had made man (Gen. 6:6,7). Lamech's desire for 'comfort' was fulfilled but not as he imagined; not through his son being his personal slave, but rather in God changing His mind about humanity and making a new start. We get what we desire, in essence; and so we need to desire the right things. Another alternative is that we are to understand 'comfort' in 5:29 as only one possible translation; the idea could be that Lamech hoped that his son Noah would be the one who would bring about repentance / changing in God regarding the curse upon the earth. In this case, we see Lamech hoping that this son of his would be the promised "seed of the woman" of Gen. 3:15, a Messiah figure. However, the Lamech of 5:28 may well be the Lamech of Gen. 4:18-22; both Lamechs are described as having Methuselah as their father. As often in early Genesis, this would be a case of one history being recorded in one chapter and then another one in the next- as with the two creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2. In this case, if Lamech is the same Lamech, then Noah had very gifted and high flying siblings. His brother Jabal was the leader of the cattle owners (4:20); his brother Jubal was the leading musician of the age (4:21); Tubalcain his other brother was the leader of all the metalworkers. Lamech was the first polygamist, who killed a young man for a slight insult and boasted about it; and whose wife Adah means 'decorated / adorned'. These were people of the world. And Noah was the sidekick brother who was to do all the menial farm work so the rest of them could pursue their careers and social lives. Against this of course it can be argued that there are differences in the genealogies of chapters 4 and 5. However, in the context, Gen. 6:1-4 describes how the lines of Seth and Cain intermarried [the sons of God married the daughters of men] and it could be argued that the genealogies we have aren't complete, generations are skipped, and 'having a son' could be understood in a wider sense than referring to a son directly fathered by the person concerned. 'Lamech' in Hebrew is comprised of the three central letters of the Hebrew alphabet and it could be argued that this reflects his 'joining' function [as it does in other Semitic literature], in joining the Sethite and Cainite lines together. The resemblances between the six names in Gen. 4:17,18 with six in chapter 5 is striking, and they both culminate in Lamech, as if he was the one in whom the lines mixed. Interestingly, Lamech in Gen. 4:24 speaks of 77 fold vengeance coming upon him; and the Lamech of Gen. 5:30 [the same Lamech?] dies at 777 years old. It also needs to be carried in mind that Semitic 'genealogies' aren't always chronological; they are constructed in order to make various points or develop themes, as in the genealogies of the Lord in Matthew and Luke.

The same root word for "Noah" is found in 2 Chron. 6:41, where the ark of God 'rested' or

'Noah-ed' in the tabernacle. When the ark 'rested' on Ararat ['holy hill'] the same word is used (Gen. 8:4). A case can be made that Ararat was in fact Mount Zion, where the ark was later to 'rest' in the temple. The 'resting' of the ark was therefore the fulfilment of God's intention in Noah- God's salvation is described as a "promised rest" (Heb. 4:10,11), and it was prefigured in the final resting of the ark. Thus the final salvation of God is to be understood in terms of God 'resting' with us, in us, within His ark. He labours and struggles too... for us. And those struggles will only be at rest when we are saved in the last day; a Father's eternal struggle for His children. The 'rest' spoken of in Noah's name was thus a rest for God. Noah's going out of the ark into a cleansed, pristine world was therefore symbolic of our going forth into the Kingdom at Christ's return.

It's significant that the various Mesopotamian legends about a flood all speak of there being conflict between the divinities before the decision to flood the earth was taken; and then quarrels and recriminations between them after it. The Biblical record has none of this- the one true God brought the flood upon the earth by His sovereign will, and He lifted the flood. In the legends, the hero of the flood [cp. Noah] is exalted to Divine status, whereas in the Biblical record Noah not only remains human, but is described as going off and getting drunk. Throughout pagan legends, the Divine-human boundary is often blurred- gods get cast down to earth and become men, whilst men get exalted to 'Heaven' and godhood. This gave rise to the idea of 'angels that sinned' and were cast down to earth. But in the Biblical record, the Divine-human boundary is set very clearly- the one God of Israel is *so* far exalted above humanity, His ways are not ours etc. (Is. 55:8), that there can be no possibility of this happening. The exception of course was in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ- but even He was born as a genuine human upon earth, and [contrary to Trinitarian theology] He was no Divine comet who landed upon earth for 33 years. The whole idea of the Divinity and personal pre-existence of Jesus Christ is simply not Biblical. The Mesopotamian legends speak of the flood being sent to stop man destroying Enlil's "rest" by his noise. The Mesopotamian gods sought for a "ceasing from toil", "rest from labour"- identical ideas to the Hebrew concept of *shabbat*. This was why, it was claimed, the gods first created man and put him to work in their garden- so that they could "rest". This background is alluded to in the way that Genesis speaks of man being *cast out* of tending the garden of Eden as a punishment- scarcely something the gods would wish if man was there to save them working there. God speaks of Him giving *man* a *shabbat* as a rest for man from his labour. And the flood, although it was Divine judgment, ultimately worked out as a blessing of 'rest' for man in that the 'world' was cleansed from sin. Thus 'Noah' was given that name, meaning 'rest', "because this child will bring us relief from all our hard work" (Gen. 5:29 G.N.B.). Adam's work in Eden wasn't onerous; his work when cast out of the garden was hard. The wrong ideas are clearly alluded to and often reversed- in

order to show that a loving God created the world for humanity, for our benefit and blessing- and not to toil for the gods in order to save them the effort. The 'rest' so sought by the Mesopotamian gods was actually intended by the one true God as His gift to humanity.

5:30 *Lamech lived after he became the father of Noah five hundred and ninety-five years, and became the father of sons and daughters*- He died relatively young compared to his contemporaries, five years before the flood. We can assume he was supportive of Noah's life work until he died. But I suggested on :29 above another possible take on Lamech.

5:31 *All the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, then he died*- I suggested on :29 that his death at 777 would connect him with the Lamech in the line of Cain, who pronounced a multiple seven curse upon others.

5:32 *Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth*- see on Gen. 5:29. The flood came when Noah was 600 (Gen. 7:11), yet he spent 120 years preparing it (Gen. 6:3). So it's possible that he wasn't married when the call came to build the ark; he'd have explained his life mission to his wife, and she'd have been his first convert. Alternatively, if he were already married at 480, they had many years of barrenness in their marriage. Given the long lifespans in those days, this would've been very hard to take. Yet he didn't take another wife. He was "moved with fear", 'reverently apprehensive' at what God told him, and prepared the ark in order to save his family (Heb. 11:7). Yet he began doing this before he had any children, and perhaps before he was married. He had faith that he would one day have a family, in accordance with God's invitation to make an ark in which to save his family. The mention of three sons being born in one year might mean they were triplets. Perhaps there was a far higher incidence of multiple births in those days, just as lifespans were far longer. This would mean that there would have been a veritable population explosion going on in the lead up to the flood- another connection with our last days, which are "as the days of Noah".

The flood came when Noah was 600. He was building the ark 120 years, from when he was 480. He was told then that the ark was to house his children and their wives (Gen. 6:18), when as yet he had no children. He went ahead and started building in faith, and 20 years after starting his barren wife had triplets. For it seems they were his only children. He raised them in the knowledge of what was to happen, and they persuaded their girlfriends / wives of this too. A truly wonderful example of the Spirit of Christian living.

Ez. 14:20 could imply that Noah's sons and daughters in law were saved by his faith and intercession, rather than their own righteousness: "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were

in it, as I live, says the Lord Yahweh, they would save neither son nor daughter; they would save only their own lives by their righteousness". He presumably had other children, and his three sons and their wives presumably had children and grandchildren. But none of these were saved. They would've been destroyed amongst the wicked. We can imagine the deep division within the family as a result of Noah's commitment to the ark project, his belief in judgment to come and God's word. Or maybe the rest of the family were killed due to the conflict with the line of Cain. Or it could be that for some reason, the family was afflicted with barrenness, as were many other faithful in the Biblical record. I suggest this because Noah is described as preparing the ark for the saving of his household, and his three sons and their wives and Noah's wife are described as "all of your household" (Gen. 7:1). But it could be that he was commanded to prepare an ark for the saving of his household (Heb. 11:7), but many of his family refused the salvation made potentially available to them.

We note that there are recorded here 10 generations from Adam to Noah, and there are also 10 generations recorded from Noah to Abraham (Gen. 11). Each of the final generations in each list is recorded as producing three siblings. The lifespans are nearly always divisible by five... the seventh in the list is highly significant, etc. These and many other such features lead us to question whether we are to read these genealogies as strictly literal. The genealogies in Mt. 1 and Lk. 3 are clearly structured to make a point, and this indeed was how genealogies were used in ancient literature. On the other hand, it could be argued that just as there is pattern in nature, reflective of the Divine higher hand, so there is in the lives and development of God's people over history.

GENESIS CHAPTER 6

6:1 *It happened that when men began to multiply on the surface of the land, and daughters were born to them*- Longer lifespans, stronger human stock and perhaps multiple births (Noah had triplets- see on Gen. 5:32) would have contributed to a huge population explosion, akin to what we have in these "last days" which are "the days of Noah". The implication is that the population explosion was related to the intermarriage of the faithful with the unfaithful of which we will now read, leading to the total declension from the faith apart from Noah. The connection would simply be in the fact that the faithful were so outnumbered; they preferred to marry into the line of Cain, rather than remain faithful. We sin "like sheep", Isaiah 53 says. For all our so strongly imagined independence and sense that we are original and strong, we are all hopelessly influenced by the herd instinct. The sheer size of the unbelieving population weighed heavily upon the faithful, until they gave in and joined the apostate majority. This highlights the faithful strength of mind and individual conscience which there was in Noah; and he is set up as our pattern in these last days, which the Lord saw as prefigured in "the days of Noah".

The flood myths give basically two reasons for the cause of the flood- the world was overpopulating [especially according to the *Enuma Elis*], and there was a battle between the gods which resulted in earth being flooded. Moses' explanation alludes to this but was radically different- the population growth was a result of God's blessing, and the flood came because of human sin. And, no cosmic battle which resulted in earth's inhabitants suffering because of it. Time and again, the surrounding myths sought to minimize sin, whereas Moses' record highlights it. Sadly, Jewish interpretations went the same way as the flood myths, with the Book of Enoch likewise attributing the flood and all human suffering to an Angelic revolt. Time and again, the difference between Moses' account of history and the surrounding myths is seen in the fact that Moses emphasizes human sin.

6:2 *That the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they took for themselves wives of all that they chose*- The first recorded marriage out of the Faith was when the sons of God (the believers) saw the daughters of men (the women of the world), that they were "beautiful" (translated "better" 72 times; i.e. they *preferred* them to the faithful) (Gen. 6:2). Partners were chosen on the basis of appearance, rather than spirituality. And so it has ever been. They "chose" who they wanted, rather than marrying within the line of the seed of the woman or to spiritual women. The forbidden fruit always appears more beautiful; and the language of 'seeing' something as beautiful and attractive, and then taking it in sin, is all the language of Eve's failure with the forbidden fruit. The next verse describes how because of this, God decided to destroy mankind after 120 years. The corruption of God's way at that time was epitomized by marriage out of the Faith. The situation just before the flood is a type of that in the last days (Mt. 24:38); marriage out of the Faith will be a major problem for our last generation, according to this type.

Signs within the ecclesia seem to herald the Lord's coming even clearer than those without. As a prelude to the flood, the Sons of God married the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2)- the true believers married unbelievers. However, the "sons of God" often refers to Israel (Is. 43:6,7; 63:8; Jer. 31:20; Ez. 16:20; Mal. 1:16; 3:7), hinting that there will be a big Jewish inter-marriage problem in the last days too. There is ample evidence of this.

6:3 *Yahweh said, My Spirit will not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh- "Strive with"* has been interpretted as "remain with" by some (E.A. Speiser) and the LXX. In this case the connection would be with the later statements that the flood took life away from all in whom was the breath of life. But "strive" is the more natural reading. I suggest rather than the Spirit of God sought to work with men to make them spiritual; but He never unduly forces. Yet He does struggle with men, as He did with Jacob and as was epitomized in his struggle with the Angel; and yet He never forces. Peter says that the Spirit of Christ was in Noah and it was this which witnessed to Noah's audience. Paul seems to allude here, when he criticizes the Galatians for having such a struggle

between flesh and Spirit- when instead they should completely surrender to the Spirit: "But I say, walk by the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are contrary to each other. You may not do the things you would like to!" (Gal. 5:16,17). God will not battle with man endlessly; there comes a point when He will no longer try, and judgment must come, with the resultant destruction of the flesh. This is what happened at the flood.

In 2 Pet. 2:5 Peter says that Noah was a preacher of, or [Gk.] 'by' righteousness to the people around him. Yet in 1 Pet. 3:19 Peter says that Christ preached to those same people through His Spirit. The resolution surely is that although Noah had never met the Lord Jesus, he lived according to the same Godly spirit as did Jesus; and this was his witness to his world. In this sense the spirit or disposition of Christ was found in all the Old Testament prophets (1 Pet. 1:11). There is ultimately only one Spirit (Eph. 4:4). The same spirit of holiness which was in Jesus was likewise thus in Noah. "The Spirit", the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ are all equated in Rom. 8:9. The ark 'was' Noah for those 120 years. When the ark 'rested' on Ararat ['holy hill'] the same word, 'Noah', is used (Gen. 8:4). Likewise the things of the Lord Jesus and the salvation which is in Him, both for ourselves and others, should be likewise identified with us.

The withdrawal of a man's Spirit by God, as with the withdrawal of the Spirit gifts, is to be seen in some sense as God's judgment of man. Gen. 6:3 LXX and RVmg. implies this.

The Gilgamesh flood stories are significantly lacking in attaching much value or significance to human moral behaviour. The flood happened as a result of arguments amongst the gods, or because they just didn't want so many human beings on the earth- and not because of human sin. According to Gen. 6:3 (cp. 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5) there was a period of grace for 120 years before the flood, during which time Noah preached and urged people to repent. Such grace and pleading with man isn't found in the pagan myths because they fail to locate the root cause of the flood in human sin. And the gods of the various pantheons knew nothing of grace. God's appeal to humanity via Noah is in sharp contrast to the way the Gilgamesh Epic speaks of the flood being a secret which the gods carefully hid from man. The Epic records how Utnapishtim loaded the ark with his silver and gold lest it be destroyed (Gilgamesh Tablet 11:80-85 and 94,95); the Biblical record says nothing of this, speaking only of how living creatures and people were saved by the ark. Clearly life and people are of more importance to God than wealth, which cannot ultimately be saved. The ark of Gilgamesh had sailors to sail it, and "the pilot" is recorded as leaving the ship at the end of the flood. The Biblical ark had no sailor nor pilot apart from God. The Gilgamesh hero of the flood escaped it despite the will and intentions of the gods, who had decreed man's destruction. Noah was a Biblical hero because he believed in God's gracious desire to save him.

Yet will his days be one hundred twenty years- This could mean that lifespans were reduced, but people kept living to great ages right up to the flood. So I take this as

meaning that after 120 years, the judgment would come. The name "Methuselah" had been predicting this for over 800 years already. Knowing the destruction that would come on all except Noah, God waited in the hope that more would be saved. He as it were hoped against His own foreknowledge that more would saved (1 Pet. 3:20). Likewise God told Ezekiel that Israel would not hear his preaching (Ez. 3:7); and yet Ezekiel repeatedly prefaced his preaching addresses with an appeal to *please hear* God's word (Ez. 6:3; 13:2; 18:25; 20:47; 34:7; 36:1,4). He was hoping against hope; his preaching work was asking him to attempt the impossible. To make a nation hear who would not hear. Jeremiah likewise was told that Israel wouldn't hear him (Jer. 7:27), but still he pleaded with them to hear (Jer. 9:20; 10:1; 11:6; 16:12; 17:24; 38:15); God's hope was that perhaps they would hearken (Jer. 26:3) although He had foretold they wouldn't. Jeremiah was told not to pray for Israel (Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11) and yet he did (Jer. 14:20; 42:2,4). It was the spiritually minded lifestyle of Noah in those 120 years which was his witness to the world of his day. Peter says in 1 Pet. 3:19 that Christ through His Spirit preached to the people of Noah's day.

The Lord Jesus / bridegroom "tarries", the same Greek word translated 'delay' in "my Lord delayeth his coming". The Lord does delay His coming- the man's mistake was in acting inappropriately because of this. God's judgments likewise "waited", or delayed, in Noah's time (1 Pet. 3:20)- presumably for the 120 year period of Gen. 6:3. In a similar way, the judgment on Nineveh preached by Jonah also delayed- it came in the end, but their repentance meant that it delayed at that time.

THE FLOOD AS A TYPE OF THE LAST DAYS

It is a commonly stressed theme throughout Scripture that the days of Noah are a type of the last days of AD70. The clearest is in Mt. 24:37: "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the son of man be". It is generally understood among us that the events of AD70 and the " coming" of the Lord then, point forward to that in the last days. Thus it is not surprising that a number of passages describe the AD70 judgments of Israel in terms of the flood; which suggests that they also have reference to the last days:

- 2 Peter 3 is a clear example, describing the destruction of the Jewish system in AD70 as being by fire as opposed to water used in Noah's time. Yet the chapter also has reference, e.g. through it's links with the new Heavens and earth of Is. 65, with the destruction of the present age at the Lord's return.
- Nahum 1 describes the coming judgements on Israel in terms of mountains and hills splitting, and there being a great flood; all Genesis flood language.
- Dan. 9:26 describes the Romans in AD70 destroying "the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood", the LXX implying with a *sudden* flood, as in Noah's

time.
- Is. 54:9 describes the judgments on Israel being "as the waters of Noah". The end of the flood, the end of Israel's judgments, therefore typifies the second coming.
- In the light of this the Lord's parable about the man building on sand whose house was destroyed when the heavy rain came (Mt. 7:25,27) must have primary reference (as so many of the parables do) to the judgement on the Jewish house in AD70. Those who built on sand as a result of not hearing Christ's words were the Jews- also described as shoddy builders in Mt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7; Mic. 3:10; Jer. 22:13.

We can therefore look at the Genesis record of the lead up to the flood and be confident that every detail has some relevance to our time; and therefore grasp the reality of the fact that we should feel the same tenseness and intensity as Noah did as he waited for the rain. Note how Jesus' return is described as the rain in 2 Sam. 23:4; Hos. 6:3; Joel 2:23.
- Our present population explosion has only been paralleled in Noah's time. The longer life-spans could have resulted in each woman bearing up to 200 children; bearing in mind the lack of present constraining factors such as adverse climate, space, physical degeneration of the human stock over 6,000 years etc. which we now face, it is likely that in the 10 generations from Adam to Noah up to 2,000 million people were produced.
- These longer life-spans would have resulted in a great accumulation of knowledge and skills in the arts and sciences. Gen. 4:22 describes Tubal-Cain (contemporary with Noah) as "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron", hinting at technical education and industrialization. Similarly Jubal was "father of all such as handle the harp and organ" (Gen. 4:21); a growth in so-called culture (i.e. sophisticated pleasure-educated Christians please note). Note the emphasis on education- "an instructor... father... father" .
- Cain's first big city (Gen. 4:17) no doubt spawned others. Complex, selfish city life would have been apparent at Noah's time- as it is supremely throughout our modern world.
- "Lamech shall be avenged seventy and seven fold" (Gen. 4:24) he boasted. Does this hint at the war preparations and a spirit of personal vengeance and pressing for one's 'rights' which fills the earth today?
- There is an emphasis on there being a "father" of all the cattle keepers, all the musicians, and an instructor of every metal worker (Gen. 4:20-22); implying the kind of commercial cartels and unionism which we have today?
- Job 22:15-18 comments on the people living just before the flood that they cast off all commitment to God and yet God " filled their houses with good things" ; i.e. material wealth despite a viciously God-forsaking attitude. Exactly the scene today.
- One of the few women mentioned as being contemporary with Noah was Adah- meaning 'to decorate, ornament'. And of such women the sons of God took wives of all

that they chose (Gen. 6:2). Dolled up women picked up at will by sex-mad men could not be a more telling parallel with our age. Note too how the three periods picked out in Scripture as having major similarities with the last days- Sodom, Noah's time, Israel in AD70- all have the common feature of sexual misbehaviour. There can be no doubt that this is a major indication that we are in the last days.
- Given this apostacy of the sons of God and the unwillingness of the world to listen to Noah's preaching (2 Pet. 2:5) the size of the ecclesia must have declined, until it was only 9 strong. 'Methuselah' means 'When he dies, it shall come'- suggesting that he died a few days or weeks before the flood came. We can imagine the ecclesia falling away one by one until it was just that old brother, the middle aged Noah, and his three faithful sons (no doubt he had other sons and daughters who he failed to influence). The small, declining size of our ecclesias and the total apathy to our preaching should not discourage us- as with all negative things, a positive message can be read into them in the light of Scripture. And the message here is that such things clearly indicate that we are in the last days. The only people to survive the temptations of these 'last days' before the flood were one family unit. As these events are so pregnant with latter day relevance, it may be that we are to perceive here a faint hint that strongly led family units are the way to survive the last days. Noah is described as " the eighth" (2 Pet. 2:5), perhaps alluding to the fact that of the eight people saved in the ark, he was " the eighth" ; he put the others first. The three who escaped the judgments on Sodom, another type of the last days, were all members of the same family; possibly implying the same thing. It must surely be significant that our strongest members are often from families with other strong members.
However, the general spiritual apathy grieved God at His heart, we are told. This reminds us of the often overlooked fact that God is an emotional being- the world today grieves Him, and it is to be expected therefore that He is all the more intently watching us, to see whether we are going to keep ourselves separate from the spirit of this desperate age.

6:4 *There were aggressive men [Nephilim] in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown-*

There is no mention at all of “the sons of God” coming down from heaven. Why assume these “sons of God” are angels? The phrase is used concerning men, especially those who know the true God (Dt. 14:1 (R.S.V.); Hos. 1:10; Lk. 3:38; Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1). If believers are to be made equal to angels (Lk. 20:35,36), will they still experience the same carnal desires which then motivated the sons of God, or have the possibility of giving way to them? Of course not! Luke 20:35,36, clearly says that the angels do not

marry: “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the

resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage… for they are equal unto the angels". It is commonly believed that the angels who are thought to have sinned came down to earth at the time of the garden of Eden incidents, but Genesis 6 concerns the time of the flood, which was many years later. The Hebrew word for "giants" in Genesis 6:4, is also used to describe the sons of a man called Anak in Numbers 13:33. Freak human beings of unusual size or strength are sometimes born today, but it does not mean that their parents were angels. We are not specifically told that the giants were the children of the "sons of God". "There were giants… and also *after that*… the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men" (:4).If Angels married women, then who were the children, and what were they like? The apocryphal book of 1 Enoch claims that the offspring were "evil spirits" and witches (1 Enoch 15:8–16:1) – but the Bible is utterly silent about this.

The word "nephilim" comes from a Hebrew root meaning 'hackers or assailants'- implying arrogant gangs strutting round assailing people at will. Job. 22:15-17 R.V. gives the same impression. Compare this with the gang warfare and intimidation of the Americas and many countries, which is going to take over the *eretz* promised to Abraham. We already see it, in the images of Islamist fighters wandering around the *eretz* today.

The Hebrew syntax here would suggest that this is a notice that at this time, there were giants in the earth. The giants aren't described as being the offspring of the relationship between the sons of God and daughters of men. The word "giants" has two possible meanings: "fallen ones" (which would be relevant to their being the "sons of God" who had spiritually fallen away) and "assailants, hackers, tyrants" – the definition provided by Martin Luther and H.C. Leupold (H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis, Vol. 1* (Ann Arbor, MI: Wartburg Press, 1942), p. 250). This is the root of the Hebrew word for "giant", and is used in 2 Kings 3:19,25, to describe a vicious attack on the Moabites by Israel. Thus we get the impression that there were men, perhaps of great physical size and strength, who went around viciously attacking people. They became famous (or infamous) – "men of renown". Job (22:15–17) comments upon them: "Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood: which said unto God, Depart from us". Notice that this refers to men, not angels. The intention of Moses in Genesis was to explain Israel's surrounding world to them, and deconstruct the false ideas they encountered in surrounding myth. The people were frightened by the "giants" they met in the land of Canaan (Num. 13:33). These *nephilim* [LXX *gigantes*] had their origin explained by Moses in Genesis 6 – the righteous seed intermarried with the wicked, and their offspring were these *nephilim*, mighty men of the world. Note in passing how Ez. 32:27

LXX uses this same word *gigantes* to describe pagan warriors who died– no hint that they were superhuman or Angels.

The Israelites were aware of the existence of unusually large people – the Zamzumin, Zumin, Rephaim, Nephilim, Emim, and Anakim (Dt. 1:28, 2:10,11, 20,21, 3:11). The bed of Og, King of Bashan, a Rephaim, was nine cubits long, over four meters (14 feet) – Dt. 3:11. In Canaanite mythology these giants came from intermarriage between human beings and the gods; but Moses in Genesis 6 is surely addressing this myth and correcting it. He's saying (by implication) that this didn't happen, but rather the Godly seed and the wicked intermarried; and yes, at that time, there were giants in the earth, but they were judged and destroyed by the flood, and the implication surely was that the Israel who first heard Moses' inspired history could take comfort that the giants they faced in Canaan would likewise be overcome by God.

"And also after that" could be placed in brackets, as by the NET Bible. The idea would be that the *nephilim* in the *eretz* were encountered later in the history of the *eretz*, and indeed the term is used about the giant inhabitants of Canaan in Num. 13:33 (see note there). The Anakim or giants were descendants of Noah, but the point is that they were the equivalent of the strong warriors who strutted the *eretz* earlier, and who were judged and destroyed by the flood.

Umberto Cassuto pays special attention to the reference to the sons of God and daughters of men in Gen. 6, demonstrating that the "giants" are *mortal*, they were to die at best after 120 years; and they were on *earth* not in Heaven. Thus the Canaanite myths, which ironically later Judaism re-adopted, were deconstructed by Moses. He summarizes Moses' intention in the Genesis 6 passage as being to teach Israel: "Do not believe the gentile myths concerning men of divine origin who became immortal. This is untrue, for in the end all men must die, because they, too, are flesh… you must realize that they were only "on earth", and "on earth" they remained, and did not become gods, and they did not ascend to Heaven, but remained among those who dwell below, upon earth… the intention of the section is to contradict the pagan legends regarding the giants" (Umberto Cassuto, *Biblical And Oriental Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1973) Vol. 1 pp. 21-28).

The claim that this verse refers to Angels marrying men has many problems. There is no mention here of "the sons of God" coming down from heaven- and such a fall supposedly happened at the time of Adam's fall, not now, many generations later. Why assume these "sons of God" are angels? The phrase is used concerning men, especially those who know the true God (Dt. 14:1 (R.S.V.); Hos. 1:10; Lk. 3:38; Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1). If believers are to be made equal to angels (Lk. 20:35,36), will they still experience the same carnal desires which then motivated the sons of God, or have the possibility of giving way to them? Of course not! Luke 20:35,36, clearly says that the angels do not marry: "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection

from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage… for they are equal unto the angels". The Hebrew word for "giants" in Genesis 6:4, is also used to describe the sons of a man called Anak in Numbers 13:33. Freak human beings of unusual size or strength are sometimes born today, but it does not mean that their parents were angels. We are not specifically told that the giants were the children of the "sons of God". "There were giants… and also *after that*… the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men" (:4). If Angels married women, then who were the children, and what were they like? The apocryphal book of 1 Enoch claims that the offspring were "evil spirits" and witches (1 Enoch 15:8–16:1) – but the Bible is utterly silent about this.

The idea of cosmic beings coming to earth and having sexual relations with human women is a classic piece of pagan myth; and the Jews came to adopt these into their interpretations of the Genesis 6 passage, e.g. In the Book of Enoch. Josephus brings out the similarities: "The angels of God united with women… The actions attributed to them by our tradition [note that – "our tradition", not Scripture itself!] resemble the bold exploits which the Greeks recount about the Giants" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 1.3.1). Clearly, Jewish thinking sought to accommodate the pagan myths.

We have shown that the "sons of God" may refer to those with the true understanding of God. The "sons of God' of every generation have kept themselves separate from the people of the world, and are warned by God not to marry such people because they will influence them away from following the true God (Ex. 34:12,15,16; Josh. 23:12–13; Ezra 9:12; 1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14–16). Genesis 3:15 describes how the seed (descendants) of the serpent would be in constant conflict with the seed of the woman (cp. Gal. 4:29). The early chapters of Genesis highlight the fact that there were these two sorts of people; the descendants of Seth called themselves "by the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26 A.V margin) and comprised the righteous "sons of God", the seed of the woman. By contrast, the descendants of Cain, are described as being associated with murder and instituting polygamy (Gen. 4:23,19), the art of weapon production (Gen. 4:22) and entertainment (Gen. 4:21). The names of these people imply that at this time they started an alternative, apostate, system of worship to replace the true worship of God, which angered God; e.g. Cain named a city after Enoch, whose name means "dedicated"; Irad means "eternal city"; Mehujael means "God combats"; Lamech means "Overthrower" (of the truth ?). The sons of God marrying the daughters of men would therefore describe the inter–marriage of these two lines, so that only Noah and his family were the "seed of the woman" at the time of the flood.

Careful reflection on Genesis 6 indicates that the "sons of God" must have been men:

– They "took them wives of all that they chose". This process of choosing an appealing woman for marriage is so obviously something experienced by men. Notice how the "sons of God" probably took more than one wife each – "wives of all that they chose". This was a characteristic of the seed of the serpent (Gen. 4:19), showing us that the two

lines had merged; because of the sons of God marrying the daughters of men, God said that in 120 years' time, He would destroy man (Gen. 6:3) in the flood. Why should God punish and destroy man if the angels had sinned? Seeing that angels cannot die (Lk. 20:35,36), there would have been no point in destroying the earth with a flood to try and destroy them. Things fall into place far better if the "sons of God" were men: therefore God said, "The end of all flesh(mankind) is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with (from) the earth" (Gen. 6:13). The violence on the earth which vv. 3–5 associate with the apostasy of the "sons of God" arose through man – man, not angels or the Devil, had filled the earth with violence: another reason God brought the flood was because the earth had become corrupt. Why did this happen? It was corrupt, "for (because) all flesh had corrupted His way upon the earth" (Gen. 6:11,12). Man had corrupted the true way of God – due to the sons of God, who understood "the way", mixing with the people of the flesh. "The way" is a phrase used to describe the true understanding of God (e.g. Gen. 3:24; 18:19; Ps. 27:11; 119:32,33; Acts16:17; 9:2; 18:25; 19:9,23; 2 Pet. 2:2). This corruption of "the way" by the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 is commented on in Jude 11, where the apostate Christians of the first century are likened to those men who went "in the way of Cain" – not of the truth. Cain was the father of the seed of the serpent line

– The actions of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:2, are described in v. 5 as "the wickedness of man", which "was great in the earth… every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"

– Jesus said that the world in the last days would be similar to what it was at the time of Noah. He implied that in the same way as men had the wrong attitude to marriage in Noah's time, so men also would in the last days before His return (Lk. 17:26,27). The only reference to attitudes to marriage at Noah's time is in Genesis 6:2, thus again implying that the "sons of God" who married wrongfully were men.

Apostate Jewish theology sought to minimize human sin and blame it on a Satan figure. It's significant that when the inspired New Testament writers refer to the flood, there is no suggestion by them that they accepted the idea that sinful Angels somehow led humanity into sin. Instead, they repeatedly underscore the fact that it was human sin which led God to punish humanity. The uninspired Book of Jubilees, written about 150 BC, claims that Noah complained to God about "the unclean demons" leading his grandchildren into sin and asked God to judge these demons, thus resulting in the flood (Jubilees 10:1–7). That is mere fantasy – and quite the opposite of what the Genesis record states – where clearly it is human wickedness which leads God to judge humans. What I find so highly significant is that the Lord Jesus and His apostles stress that it was indeed human sin which led to Divine judgment through the flood. Effectively, they're thus deconstructing these false ideas which were circulating and upholding the Biblical emphasis against the sophistry of the false theology about Satan / demons which was

circulating. It's a tragedy that the same false understandings still circulate, and so many still refuse to face up to the clear teaching of Scripture – that human beings sin and must take responsibility and bear judgment for that sin.

This passage is actively deconstructing false Canaanite myths about sinful gods, giants, demons etc. it could be argued that this passage, along with much of early Genesis, is actually deconstructing the wrong ideas about Angels, demons, Satan etc. which Israel had encountered in Egypt and amongst the Canaanite tribes. It is teaching that the giants which Israel had noticed were in fact only human, and no more. They were "mighty *men*", "*men* of renown". Later Scripture does likewise – the *Rephaim* had children like other human beings (2 Sam. 21:16,18; Dt. 3:11), inhabiting an area known as the valley of Rephaim (Josh. 15:8). Cassuto comments: "The intention of the section is actually to contradict certain folk–tales, and to erase, as far as possible, their mythological features" (Umberto Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975) Vol. 2 p. 108). Elsewhere, Cassuto draws attention to the significance of God's comment upon the sin of the 'sons of God' in Gen. 6:3: "My spirit shall not abide in [or, strive with] *man* forever". God comments upon the *human* condition, not upon anything out in the cosmos. He comments: "[this] implies: Do not believe the heathen tales about human beings of divine origin, who were rendered immortal; this is untrue, for in the end every man must die, "in as much as he, too, is flesh"... The Torah's intention is to counteract the pagan legends and to reduce to a minimum the content of the ancient traditions concerning the giants" (Umberto Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998 ed.) Vol. 1 p. 300). The record of the flood which follows that of the mention of the 'giants' can be read as a further deconstruction of the myths about them. The Biblical record states that God opened the "windows of Heaven" (Gen. 7:11). The identical term in Ugaritic occurs in Tablet 2 AB, col. 7 line 17 of the Ras Shamra tablets. Cassuto explains that "The Canaanites used to tell of the god Baal that at one stage he built for himself a palace in the sky and opened therein windows... The Canaanites attributed to Baal the sending down of rain from heaven", but that the giants / offspring of the wicked gods "set down their feet and closed up the deep, and they placed their hands on the windows" (References in Umberto Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992 ed.) Vol. 2 pp. 86,87).

6:5 *Yahweh saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*- The enormous judgment of the flood was because of human thoughts. This is in radical contrast to the various flood myths of the ancient world. There is almost a juxtaposition between human thoughts- and the enormity of the punishment. But that was the point. How man

thinks is so hugely significant to God. Noah's response was to prepare "an ark to the saving of his house... and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7). We know from Peter that the ark represents Christ. Noah's response was not to smugly reflect how that soon he would be vindicated for his separation from the world, i.e. for his own personal righteousness. Instead he took seriously God's warning that sinners were to soon be destroyed. Noah was, of course, a sinner as we all are. He therefore must have cried out to God in faith, asking for God to count him as if he were righteous, so that he would be saved from the coming judgments against sin. This is how he had righteousness imputed to him. He showed his faith that God really had justified him by doing something physical- his faith led to the 'works' of building the ark; as our faith likewise leads us to baptism into Christ. Through Christ, God "scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts" (Lk. 1:51). This is quoting from Gen. 6:5 LXX concerning the wicked imagination of man's heart at the flood; note it was their thoughts and imaginations which were so obnoxious to God. This is even more evidence that we can read the events of the flood as typical of two things; our salvation from the judgment upon sin, and also of the events of the last days, when that salvation will be physically manifested. We are in Noah's position; we can see clearly the judgments which must come upon sin. By our nature, we are part and parcel of that sin which has to be judged. Our response *cannot* be to trust in our own righteousness, which we may feel we have as a result of our physical separation from the world. We must instead be motivated by imagining the reality of Christ's coming, to make sure that we are covered in the righteousness of Christ, so that the impending destruction of sin will not take us away with it. Perhaps at no time before has the body of Christ so needed to learn the lesson of Noah; to cease from our own works, "and become heir of the righteousness which is by *faith*".

6:6 *Yahweh was sorry that He had made man on the earth*- "Sorry" is AV *It repented*- "It repented The LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart". To repent means to change around. God Himself can change; the one thing that doesn't is His unfailing love and grace for His people. Yet the language here could be applied to Angels, or to God's manifestation of His thoughts through them. It was the Angels who actually made man on earth, in the image of themselves, and we have shown that it was the Angels who actually brought the flood on the earth. So it could be argued that it was they who repented and therefore decided to bring the flood. Thus only Noah "found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (:8). The eyes of the LORD are the Angels- it was they who surveyed the earth and saw that it was wicked, except for Noah. The phrase in :13 "the end of all flesh is come before Me" implies that it was brought to God's attention- another example of language of limitation, which must refer to the Angels. Thus it was the Angels who repented, or changed their mind, about creation.

But sometimes words have two meanings, and that is intentional. The Hebrew for "sorry" is also translated 'comfort' and is in fact a form of the word 'Noah' (Gen. 5:29). The hint may be that in all the Divine grief, He was comforted by the existence of even one man, Noah, who loved Him. For Noah really means 'source of comfort'. God's sensitivity is such that the response of one person, above all His Son, can totally affect His worldview and comfort Him in the grief of being the Father of a bad family. The account of Noah is repeated in essence in that of Lot and the destruction of Sodom. One man and his family was saved, having lived in a society of gross immorality, both were "shut in" miraculously (Gen. 7:16; 19:10 s.w.); yet even his salvation was followed by incest and drunkenness, and repopulation followed from that. And the same question is addressed: Will the righteous suffer along with the wicked? The answer is that God takes note of righteous individuals and will give them paths to escape to salvation. We have something similar in Ex. 32-34, where God was prepared to save Moses, and destroy the rest. But in all these records, there is the theme of God's openness to dialogue.

The theme of Divine regret is found in both Genesis and Gilgamesh; according to the Bible, Yahweh regretted the *creation* of man, whereas according to Gilgamesh, the gods regretted the *destruction* of man. This purposeful contrast is surely to indicate that whilst Yahweh has emotions, His judgment of man was just and was done without regret.

There has to be a connection between the fact that "Noah" was intended to bring "comfort" or "repentance" (Gen. 5:29), and the way the same word is now used of how God "repented" that He had made man. The hope of the faithful had been that Noah would bring about the re-thinking of the curse upon earth for Adam's sin; but God's re-thinking was to actually destroy all men upon the earth, apart from Noah.

Gilgamesh speaks of how there was a discussion amongst the gods as to what to do with humanity. Human sin is not given as the reason for their decision, but rather mere capriciousness of the gods. The Atrahasis epic gives the reason as the gods becoming angry that the humans are not serving them enough. In Gilgamesh, the majority of gods wanted to destroy humanity, but some, led by the god Ea-Enki, wanted to save. What is totally unique about the Biblical record is that there is only *one* God involved. Within Him there is this tension between judging sin, and lovingly saving His wayward creation. And thus we read the incredible statement that God “repented” that He had created man (Gen. 6:5). In Gilgamesh, there is a tension amongst the gods; Ea-Enki becomes so passionate to save humanity that he rebels against the other gods. In the true, Biblical record, that tension between gods is expressed as a tension within the heart of the one true God. He created mankind; and then He wanted to destroy them for their sin; and yet He struggled with this. The record leads us to enter into the Divine pain, the struggle

of God. This is totally and utterly unique; this is the truth, which all other religions and myths could never get hold of. Moses' record was paving the way for his own experience of this aspect of Israel's wonderful God. For he too had experienced God stating His judgment of His people, 'repenting' that He had created them as a nation, seeking to destroy them, and yet being sensitive to Moses' pleas. One sees the same Divine pain in later Scripture, especially in Hosea. There, God alternates between having no mercy on His people, and showing mercy; not being their God any longer; yet being their God. And like a wounded lover, God declares: "I will love them no more"; and yet in the final, tear-jerking outpouring of God in Hosea 14, we read the wonderful conclusion: "I will love them freely". This is such a hard thing to really come to terms with. For how can a God who is all powerful and who knows the end from the beginning, have such feelings? Yet those Divine feelings are legitimate, they really were felt, and they are felt by God Almighty about us at this very moment. It is so much easier to do as Gilgamesh did, and have a judgmental god and a saviour god; or to have a 'good God' and a bad, evil satan, as in the theology of today's apostate Christianity. But the wonder of Yahweh is that this one and only true God has these two aspects within Him. To know something of this Divine struggle, this surpassing love of God, is something that flows out from a belief in there being only one God. The issues of grace and truth, love and judgment, mercy and justice, are all brought together in the awesome personality of this God with whom we have to do.

And it grieved Him- For "grieved", see on Gen. 8:10; Is. 63:10, where again the Spirit of God is grieved by the people in the *eretz*. Prov. 3:20 RV says that "By his knowledge the depths were broken up, and the skies dropped down the rain". The flood was brought about by God's wisdom, not because a deity lost his patience and temper with mankind. God destroyed mankind because of His *grief* (Gen. 6:6)- and He did so because He planned on saving the world through water (1 Pet. 3:20). Noah and the faithful were saved from corruption and the faith being lost by the world that threatened to destroy them (spiritually) being itself destroyed. There are many allusions to the flood in Job, notably in the descriptions of the waters being stored up by God, released by Him as He wishes, and having had bounds now placed upon them after the flood (Job 38:9-11,22,33; 26:8; there's specific mention of the flood in Job 22:16). The flood would've been relatively recent history in Job's time. It's therefore instructive to read in Job 37:11-13 that God sends His waters upon the earth partly for correction, partly in judgment, and also partly "for mercy". The flood was in a sense a Divine mercy, in ending the existence of impenitent sinners.

In His heart- The evil heart of mankind troubled the heart of God (Gen. 6:5,6). This "heart to heart" between God and man is amazing.

6:7 *Yahweh said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the surface of the ground; man, along with animals, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them*- Man, beast, creeping things, birds- a reversal of the creation order in Gen. 1:20-27. 6:7,8 *I will destroy man… but Noah* could imply that God's initial intention was to totally destroy humanity, but because Noah found grace [the idiom could imply God heard his prayer], God made a way of escape for Noah and intended to found a new humanity from him. I've elsewhere commented that much in the early Pentateuch is connectable with Israel's later history; Moses' account in Genesis was in order to explain to Israel in the wilderness the background to their situation. The situation here in 6:7,8 recalls how God wanted to destroy all Israel and make of Moses a new nation (Ex. 32:10); but Moses, like Noah, found grace in God's eyes (Ex. 33:13; 34:9). Moses describes himself as one who had found grace in God's eyes at the very time that God speaks of making a new nation from him- he saw the connection. God's expressed regret that He had made the animal creation can read strangely; it reads as if it is an emotional statement. And perhaps that is indeed how we are to read it; here in early Genesis we are being introduced to a God who has passion, whose anger flares up in His face (Ez. 38:18), and only subsides because of His grace.

It was when "Yahweh saw that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil all the day" that He decided: "I will blot out from the earth the Adam I have created" (Gen. 6:5-7). But comparing this with Gen. 8:21, we get the impression that God comes to accept the weakness of man, and to tolerate it without destroying it: "Yahweh said in His heart, "I will never again curse the soil because of the Adam, for the inclination of the Adam's heart is evil from youth". This same pattern is seen later; God is so angry with human sin in His people that He decides to change His plans and destroy the sinners. But He later again changes, and decides to tolerate them. Thus in Ex. 33:3,5 God says that "I will not go up among you for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I would consume you on the way… You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you". But after Moses' intercession, God does go up among them even thought they are a stiff-necked people. He hears Moses' prayer of Ex. 34:9: "I pray, let Yahweh go among us for this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance". This is not to say that God will not judge sin and sinners. He definitely will. But we see here a growth in tolerance, akin to what many men experience as they pass through the fatherhood experience. We think of how God tells Abraham "Now I know that you fear God, in that you have not withheld your son… from Me" (Gen. 22:12). Being a father is not simply an act of procreation; fatherhood is a relationship, and it could be argued that it goes with the territory of fatherhood to change and be changed in response to your children. This may be one window onto how God in this sense can change or learn. It was a choice He made to go through that experience. God is not fickle, and yet He has emotions. Later He will say that He repents of certain relationships with His people, and rejects them; and then He

changes His mind again, repenting of His repentance as it were. His repentings are "kindled together" at the time of Hosea. This is how deeply involved God is in the response of His children to Him. It inspires us to love and serve Him with all we have and are; in a way that a stone faced, unfeeling god would never inspire. God's omnipotence is such that the Master of the plot as it were gets emotionally caught up within the plot. As we go through life we are faced with the awesome reality that God responds passionately and emotionally to our every move. For or against Him. This is the huge meaning of the crucifixion- so much response is elicited, and in turn responded to by God. Realizing this dimension of God is the ultimate answer to the scepticism and stone facedness of the postmodern world.

6:8 *But Noah found favour in Yahweh's eyes*- Or, "found grace"; see on Gen. 9:21. Noah was saved by grace and was likely not without his weaknesses. Finding grace may suggest that He sought it- that he recognized his weakness [alcoholism?] and asked for God's grace; and found it. 2 Pet. 2:5 speaks of how "the old world" was not "spared", but Noah was, in that he was saved. His salvation was by grace, it was a 'being spared' rather than a reward for his righteousness. In Gen. 7:1, God says that He considered Noah as 'seen righteous'. Here we have an Old Testament working model of justification by grace through faith. The statement of Gen. 7:1 is *after* Noah has built the ark; so his works have demonstrated his faith. But his justification is by grace not works; and in Gen. 8:21 God speaks of humanity including Noah as having the imagination of evil in his heart. But despite that, God counted or 'saw' him righteous. Perhaps the account of Noah's drunkenness [with no apparent repentance] is there to show us what being 'seen righteous by grace' means in practice. Heb. 11:7 cites Noah as an example of those to whom righteousness is imputed by faith; and in Romans, Paul explains that this is a parade example of *grace*. Clearly Paul has Noah in view as a worked example of a sinner being saved by grace through faith, by having righteousness imputed to him. Noah is not therefore presented as righteous, but as faithful; and thereby having righteousness imputed to him.

6:9 *This is the history of the generations of Noah*- a Hebraism for 'an account of the life' of Noah. Yet the Hebrew for "generations" means just that. We expect to now encounter a list of children, grandchildren etc. Instead we read a summary of Noah's character. His children, his offspring, his memorial in this earth, was not his children, but rather his character. This is comfort for the childless. Our characters are our generation. This is what shall remain beyond the grave; for our spirit, the personality we develop, abides with God after our death and shall live eternally as 'us' at the Lord's return to earth. So often, individual character development becomes subsumed beneath the pressures of childrearing. But our ultimate "generation" is us, our personality and character.

Noah was a righteous man- The idea is, complete. All parts of his life were devoted to God, the lesson of the whole burnt offerings. But as noted on :8, his righteousness was imputed to him by faith, through grace.

Blameless among the people of his time- We must note the connection between God showing grace, undeserved favour, to Noah- and him being described here as a just or righteous man. Heb. 11:7 states that Noah's righteousness was that which comes from justification by faith. And he was the only one amongst the "people of his time" who had such faith. the idea is not that he was so much better than them. He was the forerunner of Abraham. Noah was counted righteous, because he believed- he believed God's words about the flood coming, he gave 120 years of his life to building an ark, and by his example witnessed to the world and pleaded with them to also believe. It wasn't that God as it were rewarded Noah for his good deeds by counting righteousness to him. Otherwise there'd be no meaning to the statement that Noah found grace from God (6:8). So we can see how it worked out- Noah's reasoning must've been something like: 'We're all sinners and quite rightly done for by this flood that will come, me as well as the rest of my world. But… wait up… God has given *me* a way out of this, by building an ark and being saved from it. But… I'm a sinner and deserve to die in this judgment that's coming. So how can it be, that *I*, with all my weakness and dysfunction, can survive this judgment? It must be that although I am worthy of destruction in the flood, God's willing to count me as if I'm righteous and therefore not destroy me with the world of the ungodly. Wow. He counts *me* as if I am righteous… and I believe that. So I will go on building the ark and seek to persuade as many others to believe God is willing to count them as righteous and if they believe that, they'll jump on board the ark with me'.

Noah walked with God- Noah as one of the seed of the woman had the characteristic of Enoch, who was in the same line. Moment by moment in the day, we are to be "with" God, on a journey with Him. All life is movement, a journey. It's not a case of being on a journey whilst others are static, but moving with God.

Gen 6:10 *Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth*-
Gen. 6:18 implies that Noah only had three sons, whereas for people with such long life spans we'd have expected him to have had far more than that. He only had three children- for he prepared the ark to save "his house" (Heb. 11:7) and Gen. 7:1 is quite clear: "Go into the ark, you and *all* your household"- his whole household was his wife, three sons and their wives. Period . I suggested on Gen. 5:29 that we get the picture of a man who was the underdog, the farm worker, the sidekick of the family, whose own family life was delayed and limited by this background. Perhaps he turned to alcohol for comfort (hence Gen. 9:21). But it was he whom God chose to save, he alone who was righteous in that generation which perished. It was the quiet, broken man who was saved.

The mention of three sons being born in one year (Gen. 5:32) might mean they were triplets. Perhaps there was a far higher incidence of multiple births in those days, just as lifespans were far longer. This would mean that there would have been a veritable population explosion going on in the lead up to the flood- another connection with our last days, which are "as the days of Noah".

6:11 *The earth was corrupt before God*- Note how this verse is quoted in Ez. 8:17 about the land (same word as "earth") of Israel being filled with violence. Similarly Gen. 6:13 is alluded to in Ez. 7:2,3,6. This opens up an understanding of Ezekiel along the lines that it is describing the events of AD70 as well as other periods. The flood being such a clear type of AD70, passages which allude to it must also have an AD70 context. "Before God" means 'in His presence'; the idea may be that His presence was still found at the cherubim which guarded the entrance to the garden of Eden. But 'before Him' there, the earth was found corrupt. And so the flood swept away Eden and the sanctuary. This would imply that up until the flood, God was willing to allow Eden to be restored and to grant entry to it- but no saviour figure arose in the line of the seed of the woman, despite some, such as Noah, Cain and Seth, who may have had the potential. And so the salvation program was set back, as has happened so often in salvation history.

The same Hebrew word is translated "corrupt" and "destroyed" (s.w. :13). The people destroyed themselves; their corruption was their own destruction. And this is how God works; it's not simply that judgment for sin is appropriate to the sin, but that sin is its own judgment and condemnation. Therefore to "bear sin" is to bear the [judgment for] sin. And God's judgment and destruction is simply a confirmation of man's choice to destroy himself and his world. In this we see how God respects human freewill decisions, to the point that we are confirmed in those choices by Him. And that adds meaning to human decision and imparts a gravity and seriousness to human choice.

The Jewish apocryphal Book of Enoch was instrumental in forging the Jewish misunderstanding of Satan as a personal being. This book shifts the blame for sin from humanity to a Satan-figure called Azazel: "The whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: to him ascribe all sin" (1 Enoch 9:6; 10:8). There is a subtle but significant difference between this and the Biblical record in Gen. 6:11- which states that the earth became corrupt before God because of *human sin*. The Biblical record makes no attempt to pass the blame for this onto any other being- humanity was punished because *they* sinned. It would in any case be surely unethical for God to punish humanity because of what Azazel did.

And the earth was filled with violence- The world was characterized by *hamas*- "unrighteousness". 'Hamas' can mean "lawlessness perpetrated by force" (Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary On The Book Of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1998)

Vol. 2 p. 52). Perhaps we have here a suggestion that the 'land' promised to Abraham- the arena of the Biblical flood- is to be dominated by 'Hamas' or a like terrorist organization.

6:12 *God saw the earth, and saw that it was corrupt*- He sees or 'looks' all the time (Ps. 14:2; 53:2,3). 'Looking upon' is an idiom for answered prayer or God's response to human request (Gen. 6:12; 29:32; Ex. 2:25; Dt. 26:7; Jud. 6:14; Lk. 1:48). Perhaps [as often in early Genesis] we have the same events recorded in different words; in 6:8 we learn that Noah found grace in God's eyes; and perhaps in response to Noah's prayers for salvation from his evil world, God looked upon the earth and decided to destroy it in response to Noah's prayers. Not that necessarily Noah prayed for earth's destruction; but this was the method God used to answer whatever Noah was asking for.

For all flesh had corrupted His way on the earth– The same word is translated 'destroy' when we read of God's resolve to 'destroy' humanity with the flood (Gen. 6:13,17). Humanity had destroyed themselves; Divine condemnation and judgment is only really a working out of what people have done to themselves. The same word occurs in Ex. 32:7, where we read that Israel had corrupted / destroyed themselves. This is an example of how within the Pentateuch, events in early Genesis set the scene for the later story of Israel. God's "way" in the *eretz* was surely the way to the tree of life, guarded by the cherubim. The flood swept all that away, including the garden of Eden and the possibility to come to eternity through the sanctuary and a saviour-seed of the woman. "All flesh" had corrupted or destroyed that way by their immorality. And God confirmed that by literally destroying it.

We note that the *eretz* was corrupt because the people upon it were corrupt. So often, the *eretz* and its people are seen as one. Hence the *eretz* was left desolate whilst the people of the *eretz* were desolated. In :13 we will likewise read that the people of the land had filled the land with violence; and this was why the land ["earth"] had to be destroyed.

6:13 *God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth*- "Come before Me" rather suggests that God was sharing His feelings with Noah, explaining that the idea of destroying the earth and man upon it had come into His mind, before Him for consideration. But Noah had 120 years to change that outcome. We marvel at God sharing His inner musings with mere man upon earth; and man's possibility to affect the outcome of God's thoughts.

Both Moses and Peter stress that God brought the flood upon "the world of the ungodly", i.e. the wicked *people*. The Jewish writings claimed that the purpose of the flood was to destroy sinful *Angels*, and that mankind suffered from the result of their destruction.

Thus the *Testament of Naphtali* 3.5: "Likewise the Watchers departed from the order of nature; the Lord cursed them at the Flood". The Jewish writings repeatedly change the Biblical emphasis upon wicked people (especially Jews), claiming that the various Divine judgments were upon wicked Angels. Quite why people on earth should have to suffer the result of this remains a begged question. The Biblical record speaks repeatedly of the destruction of "all flesh". It was their 'corruption' which came 'before God' (:11); here, it is the end or destruction of "all flesh" which was before God. Again, people are put for their behaviour. This may sound obvious, but in reality, we so often consider that we ourselves in our core being are a spiritual person, and yet we allow ourselves to do things and say words which are [so we like to think] 'not really me'. But human words and actions are treated by God as the person. For that is who we are. The word is made flesh, whether that word is good or bad. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Mt. 12:34).

It's significant that the various Mesopotamian legends about a flood all speak of there being conflict between the divinities before the decision to flood the earth was taken; and then quarrels and recriminations between them after it. The Biblical record has none of this- the one true God brought the flood upon the earth by His sovereign will, and He lifted the flood. In the legends, the hero of the flood [cp. Noah] is exalted to Divine status, whereas in the Biblical record Noah not only remains human, but is described as going off and getting drunk. Throughout pagan legends, the Divine-human boundary is often blurred- gods get cast down to earth and become men, whilst men get exalted to 'Heaven' and godhood. This gave rise to the idea of 'angels that sinned' and were cast down to earth. But in the Biblical record, the Divine-human boundary is set very clearly- the one God of Israel is *so* far exalted above humanity, His ways are not ours etc. (Is. 55:8), that there can be no possibility of this happening. The exception of course was in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ- but even He was born as a genuine human upon earth, and [contrary to Trinitarian theology] He was no Divine comet who landed upon earth for 33 years. The whole idea of the Divinity and personal pre-existence of Jesus Christ is simply not Biblical.

6:14 *Make a ship of gopher wood*- A commonly available tree in the Middle East. The ark is Christ. He was from common material, of our human nature. Building a boat on dry land, before anyone had experienced rain or flooding, was the kind of paradigm breaking challenge which in essence we experience in this age. For we are asked to bend all our powers to preparing for a future which we can only see by faith, leading to the mockery of those around us.

You shall make rooms in the ship- Heb. nests. There is a unique place for each of us prepared in God's eternal house- Jn. 14:1-3.

And shall seal it inside and outside with pitch- Cp. our being sealed in Christ with the Spirit in our hearts, as it were "inside", in a way which is visible to all, "outside" (Eph. 1:13; Eph. 4:30). The same idea is to be found in the Lord shutting in Noah (Gen. 7:16). The Hebrew for 'pitch' is related to the word for 'covering', as in the atonement covering for sin. Clearly, the ark and the flood narrative are intended to be interpreted as a parable of redemption in Christ.

6:15 *This is how you shall make it. The length of the ship will be three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits*- The ark was not designed for sailing, it had no means of self propulsion, nor self-steering. We likewise are led by the Spirit, and once we surrender to that, our path is not of our own device nor direction. The ark represents Christ, entering Him by baptism (1 Pet. 3:19-21). Once there, we're in God's hands. 300 x 50 x 30 is the same proportion as the human body- significant in that the ark is understood by Peter as being a type of the body of Christ, into which the believer enters by baptism.

The Biblical account of the flood gives details which are imaginable, earthly realities; there is nothing of the grossly exaggerated and other-worldly which there is in the pagan flood legends. Thus the Biblical dimensions for the ark are realistic, whereas the boat mentioned in the Babylonian legend recorded by Berossus was supposedly about one kilometer long and half a kilometer wide. Noah was 600 years old according to the Biblical record, whereas Ziusudra, the Mesopotamian equivalent of Noah, was supposedly 36,000 years old at the time of the flood.

6:16 *You shall make a roof in the ship, and you shall finish it leaving a cubit between the roof and the sides. You shall set the door of the ship in its side. You shall make it with lower, second, and third levels*- "Roof" is AV "*a window*"- Heb. a light (as RV, ASV), a glistering thing; the word comes from the word for pressed oil. The Rabbis suggest it was a precious stone. If so, it would look forward to the Lord Jesus as the light of our world as we live within the ark. This isn't the same Hebrew word as in Gen. 8:6, where Noah opened a window in the ark. "The door" likewise is a title of the Lord Jesus; the same Hebrew word is used multiple times of the tabernacle door (Ex. 29:11) and the temple door, also of the door of the houses at Passover time in which salvation was to be found (Ex. 12:22,23). The three levels are hard to interpret; we think of Paul's reference to a "third heaven", and the three divisions of the tabernacle, into most holy, holy and the entrance area beyond the door of the tabernacle. The ark is presented as a kind of tabernacle, a sanctuary, with Noah building it obediently, as Moses did the tabernacle (Gen. 6:22).

6:17 *I, even I, do bring the flood of waters on this earth, to destroy all flesh having the*

breath of life from under the sky. Everything that is in the earth will die- The condemned world of Noah's time [the flood was a clear type of the final judgment] were to 'pine away / languish' (Gen. 6:17; 7:21- AV "die"). The wicked will melt away from the Lord's presence (Ps. 68:2). Rejected Israel are described as being "ashamed away" (Joel 1:12)- the same idea. This is the idea behind Heb. 12:15 RVmg: "...man that falleth back from the grace of God". What they did in this life in slinking away from the reality of pure grace will be what is worked out in their condemnation experience. 1 Jn. 2:28 speaks of them as being "ashamed from before him at his coming", the Greek suggesting the idea of slinking away in shame.

6:18 *But I will establish my covenant*- The covenant wasn't established until Noah left the ark, Gen. 9:11. Noah lived by faith in this promise of a promise- which is what this was. Being in covenant relationship with God is presented as the opposite of dying. The covenant was of salvation, and outside of it, there was no salvation, only death. The same to this day. This encourages us to preach that covenant to others, and urge those who accept it to remain within it.

With you- "You" singular. God established His covenant with Noah personally, but Noah was able to save his family as well on account of his covenant relationship with God. Ez. 14:14,20 state that in Ezekiel's time, Israel were so wicked that Noah would've saved only himself and not his family. Yet Heb. 11:7 says that Noah saved his family by preparing the ark. The implication could be that Noah's spirituality 'covered' his weaker family, because they were not as unspiritual as the people of Ezekiel's time, although still in need of saving by another. This suggests that to some extent, we can affect the salvation of third parties, especially family members, by our own finding of grace before God. Noah is strangely described as "the eighth person" of the eight who were saved (2 Pet. 2:5). Perhaps this means that he put the salvation of the others first, and entered last of all into the ark. The covenant was with him, relating to his personal salvation; but he wasn't spiritually selfish, but rather worked to incorporate others within his own salvation. And God remembered this, calling him "the eighth" (RV "Noah with seven others").

You shall come into the ship, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you- Noah apparently had only one wife, even though it seems she wasn't very fruitful. Polygamy was likely popular amongst the wealthy- indicating Noah's faithfulness to his wife as well as possibly his poverty. Note the stress upon "you", Noah- he was the one God was in relationship with, and the salvation of the others was through him: "I will establish my covenant with *you* [singular]- *you* shall come into the ship, *you*, *your* sons, *your* wife, and *your* sons' wives *with you*". We perhaps need to jettison the kids' Bible pictures of Noah working on the ark with his three sons helping him, with their wives bringing them food as they laboured. Quite possibly Noah alone built the ark, and his family were saved by grace on account of him. It was "the ship which he had made"

(Gen. 8:6). Heb. 11 says that Noah was the one who believed, and moved with fear, prepared an ark in order to save his family. That said, they did freely enter the ark at the end of the 120 years.

6:19 *Of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ship, to keep them alive with you. They shall be male and female*- The animals were gathered from all over the land. They cannot represent the saints- Noah's family represents them. They may therefore look forward to the people from all over the world who will survive the judgements on the world due to their association with us. Thus many of those to whom we witness but they do not respond may well survive the holocaust to come upon the world to live in the new age of peace, like that which followed the flood. This concept should give the ultimate fillip to our enthusiasm for preaching- no longer obsessed with numbers of baptisms but with the number of people being witnessed to. Far more clean animals than unclean were taken into the ark. Peter in Acts 10 saw a vision in which clean animals represented Jews and unclean were Gentiles. Does this indicate that more Jews will survive the judgments to come on the world than Gentiles? Given the many Jews that we know will die in the last day judgements, it follows that if this line of interpretation is correct very few Gentiles will survive at all.

This throws interesting light on the likely population in the Millennium, if indeed that understanding is literally correct. If each saint rules over some mortals, as Rev. 5:10 and the parable of ten and five cities indicates, then the population of the cities cannot be that great. For all the world to come and worship at Jerusalem to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zech. 14) could suggest small numbers relative to the present world population. Everything apart from what was in the ark was destroyed by the flood; the carnage was beyond description. Thus in the last days, which will be an even fuller cataclysm than anything yet seen on the earth, such wholesale destruction is to be expected, in which only a handful survive.

"Shall you bring" contrasts with "shall come unto you" (6:20). Noah's ark is a well known type of the salvation which humanity can find in Christ; and yet close analysis of the Genesis record reveals that there were some animals whom Noah had to bring into the ark and take them with him (Gen. 6:19; Gen. 7:2); and others who came to Noah and entered into the ark of their own volition (Gen. 6:20; Gen. 7:9,15,16). The same Hebrew is found in Gen. 8:9, about how the dove came to Noah of its own volition, and Noah welcomed her and took her into the ark. Putting all this together, we are to compel men to come in (Lk. 14:23); and yet we are also to be there to welcome in the seekers who seek of their own volition. It's easier to do the latter; to put up a website, waiting there for some eager seeker to come and find. But we are also to compel people in, and to

also bear in mind that there are some who will be attracted to the Gospel from selfish reasons, as the man who buys the field thinking that he can exploit it for his own benefit. These too we are to take on board and not turn away. Whilst people, with all their wonderful uniqueness, should never be pigeon-holed nor over-categorized... all the same, we need to consider the type of person we're dealing with as we plan out our approach. For if we seek them, we will consider who they are, and how appropriately we can engage them.

A week before the flood came, Noah was told to bring seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of unclean animals into the ark. This two stage gathering process may suggest that in the last days, immediately before judgment falls, there is a desperate final appeal to the world; and good and bad, clean and unclean, come in. Just as the parable of the marriage supper teaches.

"Of every sort" may not mean every single kind of animal, just as not literally "all men" shall be saved, but representatives of them. Semitic languages comfortably carry this kind of idea when they speak in absolute terms such as "every" or "all". It depends how we read the word "of". If it is only the *eretz* in view, then the logistical problems are far less. In the type, this speaks of all kinds of people preserved in Christ- but not literally all are saved. If Noah hadn't brought them in, much to the mockery of the surrounding world, they wouldn't have been saved. Few, i.e. 8 people, were saved in the ark (1 Pet. 3:20). The animals therefore don't represent the 'saved'. The point may simply be that through our salvation, there is also the salvation of the animal world; or perhaps the animals were representative of those who will be given the chance of redemption after the Lord has returned and established the Kingdom, both good and bad, clean and unclean. Note the use of clean and unclean animals to symbolize people hearing the Gospel in Acts 10:9-16.

6:20 *Of the birds after their kind, of the livestock after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every sort shall come to you, to keep them alive-* "Come to you [Noah]"- cp. Jn. 6:37 "All that the Father gives me shall come to me". Noah was a type of Christ, saving His household. As "Come unto me" (Mt. 10:28). "To keep them alive" is an idea found later in Genesis, when we read that Joseph created as it were a sanctuary in Egypt and gathered food for others to eat, "To bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive" (Gen. 50:20). There are many such interconnections within the Pentateuch, especially between the early chapters of Genesis and Israel's later recorded experiences.

6:21 *Take with you of all food that is eaten, and gather it to yourself; and it will be for food for you, and for them-* This would've involved Noah observing the animals carefully in

order to understand what food they required. If his gathering of the animals represents our gathering of people for the Kingdom, we can learn from this- to understand those whom we seek to bring in to Christ and care for in Him. Seeing they were in the ark for a year and 10 days (Gen. 7:11 600th year, 2nd month, 17th day of the month to 601st year, 2nd month, 27th day, Gen. 8:13,14), this involved a huge amount and variety of food; and also observing the animals to see what they each ate. People really would've thought Noah was crazy. All this preparation for others was part of the witness through which Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). And so it is with us; there is no record of Noah preaching, but his example and dedication to the salvation project was of itself the preaching.

6:22 *Thus Noah did. According to all that God commanded him, so he did-* As noted on Gen. 6:16, the ark was a kind of tabernacle. The comment upon Noah's obedient building is that made so often upon Moses' obedient building of the tabernacle, and the related commandments required to save Israel (Ex. 7:20; Ex. 12:50; Ex. 40:16).

During the preparation period, Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5). But there's no hint in the Genesis record that he preached in any formal sense. 1 Pet. 1:11; 3:19-21 suggest that he made his witness through "the spirit of Christ". His very preparation for the coming of the day of the Lord was his witness. Noah must be one of the greatest examples of witness through silent example (cp. 1 Pet. 3:1), openly structuring his life around his faith in God's promised future rather than living just for today. 1 Pet. 3:20 says that God's patient grace "waited" whilst the ark was being prepared. But the Greek really means to "await", with the idea of expectation, looking for something. So as Noah preached, God's grace eagerly looked for and awaited a result. The result may appear tiny- 'just' his wife, three sons and three young women whom they then married. But God's grace was eagerly awaiting and anticipating the success of his witness. And it's just the same with our witness and appeal for baptism into the Christ ark in these last days, which were typified by that period of Noah's life.

GENESIS CHAPTER 7

7:1 *Yahweh said to Noah, Come with all of your household into the ship- "*Come you [singular]... for you [you singular] have I seen righteous"- the focus is always upon God's individual relationship with Noah, as a result of which his family are saved. God saw Noah as righteous- but not his family? Noah and the seven had to leave behind their homes, land and families. They were promised just the bare necessities of life in the ark- just as we are assured of in Christ.

"Come you" is definitely alluded to in Is. 26:20,21: "Come, My people, enter into your rooms, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourself for a little moment, until the

indignation is past. For behold, Yahweh comes forth out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity". The "rooms" clearly allude to the rooms or nests within the ark. There seems a principle that God somehow removes or safeguards His people whilst He judges the earth (Gen. 19:22; Ex. 8:22; Ex. 9:26; Rev. 7:3). The lifting up of the ark perhaps connects with the lifting up of God's people to save them from persecution.

"All of your household" suggests this was all he had. Or it could be that there were other children and grandchildren, but those who do not go God's way are effectively not our household. Only those in the ark are our true family. But perhaps his entire family consisted of his three sons. He therefore had no daughters and it would seem that his sons had no children. This tiny family size must be significant- for in those long lived ages, most women would have likely had over 50 children. Again, it was the small, broken and despised who were chosen of God. It seems that Noah's daughters in law only started bearing after the flood. Or it could be that he had other children and grandchildren, who were judged wicked. There would've been a huge division within the family over whether to support the salvation project or not; of the kind that continues to this day.

For I have seen your righteousness before Me in this generation- Heb. "you have I seen righteous". God 'saw' Noah as righteous- not that he was in himself, but God imputed righteousness to him, for Noah was saved by grace not his own righteousness, Gen. 6:8. Righteousness was imputed to Noah on account of his faith (Heb. 11:7). He was "moved with fear" because he really believed God's word of judgment. And therefore he prepared the ark, the works which are part and parcel of faith, and was counted righteous on account of his faith. The others were saved because they were "with him" (Gen. 7:25) rather than because of their own righteousness; for Noah alone was seen righteous, not 'Noah and his family'. "You have I seen righteous" could mean God saw Noah alone as righteous, and his family were saved through him. It is stressed that "Noah only... and they that were with him" were saved (:23). Noah alone was saved- and those with him. Clearly their salvation is presented as dependent upon his, rather than the family being presented as believers on a similar level to Noah. There is an element to which the faith of the faithful can save third parties. In this sense, the New Testament says that Noah built an ark to the saving of his household. Just as the Lord Jesus saves us, we are to 'fill in the gap' for others in the spirit of Mk. 2:5. This enables us to reflect the Lord's work for us in what we do for others. And that is why in the life of every believer, there will be those whom we desperately wish would turn or return to the Lord's way. They are there in our lives so that we might be exercised in prayer and effort for them.

7:2 *You shall take seven pairs of every clean animal with you, the male and his female. Of the animals that are not clean, take two, the male and his female*- Three pairs and

one for sacrifice? Or, seven pairs, because the clean were to be for sacrifices on the ark during the year they were on board? There were more clean animals perhaps because they were to be sacrificed or eaten for food. But we note all the same God's desire to save the unclean as well. Initially, Noah had been told to just take pairs of all animals. Now, he is told to take seven pairs of the clean animals. People were vegetarian before the flood (Gen. 9:3), so the division of animals into clean and unclean was for the purpose of teaching the principles of acceptable sacrifice to God. This last minute push to obtain pairs of clean animals, just a week before the flood came (:4), would have involved frenetic activity on Noah's part. The parable of the marriage supper, along with other hints in Scripture, suggests a last minute desperate appeal to humanity on the eve of the Lord's return.

Noah was to "take" the animals, and yet they "came" to him (Gen. 6:19,20; 7:9 "went / came in unto Noah"). Perhaps some he had to 'take' whilst others 'came'; just as with those we save, some come to us, others we have to proactively go out and take. Or it could be that the animals of Gen. 6:19,20 'came' to Noah (the ones who were to keep seed alive on the earth); but these last ones were 'taken' by him (perhaps they were intended to provide food and sacrifices during the voyage). This would look forward to the last great appeal for the Gospel just before the Lord's return; the people in the streets are 'compelled to come in', whereas others were intended to 'come' of their own volition although clearly in response to God's stimulus through the Spirit.

7:3 *Also of the birds of the sky, seven and seven, male and female, to keep seed alive on the surface of all the earth*- Lit. the face of all the earth / land. The earth / land is often described as having this "face", or 'presence', as if it is somehow consciously alive and is "the presence" of God to us. Hence any defacement of the planet is an act done upon the face or presence of God. The text here suggests that birds are preservers and distributors of seed; at least, that was how it was in the environment of the *eretz* of those times. We note there is apparently no conception at this point of there being clean and unclean birds (although the LXX does make the difference, stating "of fowl also of the air that are clean, seven and seven, male and female, and of fowl that are not clean, two and two, male and female"). This is perhaps stressed by Gen. 7:14 noting that birds "of every sort" entered the ark. If the Masoretic text is correct, then we are shown here how God only later classified some birds as unclean; which again proves Paul's later point, that there is nothing unclean of itself. It was a matter of designation, and was intended as a lesson to God's people about the constant need to divide the clean from the unclean in daily life and thinking.

7:4 *In seven days, I will cause it to rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. Every living thing that I have made, I will destroy from the surface of the ground*- According to :10- seven days of waiting for the rain whilst "shut in", which we can compare with Is. 26:20. However, an alternative reading is possible. Gen. 7:4 "For yet seven days" could

imply that Noah was asked to come into the ark seven days before the rain started coming. But Gen. 7:13 [along with Mt. 24:38; Lk. 17:27- quite an emphasis] says he entered only on the day that the rain came. Why did he hang around outside for those seven days? Was it from disobedience, just as Lot delayed in taking the way of escape from Divine judgment? Or because he was still desperately appealing for people to enter the ark? If so, this points forward to the intensity of our appeal to the world which there should be in the very last days, going into the byways and hedges and compelling [or trying to compel] people to "come in" (Lk. 14:23). If we think we're in the last days, our appeal should have this intensity. These seven days could be read as a delay by God in bringing the judgment of the flood, and may be alluded to in 2 Pet. 3:9, where we read that God's patience waited in the days of Noah because He so urgently awaited / hoped for repentance and response.

The number forty is typically associated with testing. The test was of the faith of Noah and his family. Being within the ark, shut in whilst the deluge came, would have been a scary experience. We would be wrong to imagine them within the ark, breathing sighs of relief. Rather were they being tested; for even within the ark, there was the possibility they would lose their faith, as there is for us too.

"Rain" was unknown at the time. As the perfect Father and Teacher, God uses language in a manner which will intellectually stretch His children; stretch us to rise up to His way of perceiving things. Thus sometimes God appears to use language with no regard as to whether the people who first heard it could understand it. God spoke to Job about snow (Job 37:6), to Abraham about sand on the sea shore (Gen. 22:17), and here to Noah about rain– things which they had never seen. And the New Testament concepts of grace, *agape* love, humility etc. were outside the ability of first century Greek to properly express; new words had to enter the language in order to express these ideas. Yet God is also capable of speaking in the language of the day, bringing Himself right down to our human level of language use. It is vital to appreciate that God uses language in different ways in different parts of the Bible – otherwise our interpretation of it will be inconsistent and contradictory.

God sending His rain upon the just [Noah and the other seven 'just', Gen. 6:9] and unjust [the unrighteous world] may be an allusion to this verse (Mt. 5:45). The universe isn't just ticking away by clockwork with God somehow distant and uninvolved. He is actively involved with us, and in that sense is not far from any one of us. Mt. 5:45 certainly sounds like a reference to the flood- and yet the context is of God's love towards both sinners and righteous alike. The destruction of "the old world" was therefore an act of love- although that's very hard for our human minds to accept. To curtail the lives of the wicked who refuse to repentant after extensive appeal to them, is, in fact, Divine grace.

7:5 *Noah did everything that Yahweh commanded him*- “Did all that was commanded by the Lord” is a phrase which in Hebrew occurs around 100 times in the Old Testament.

The first occurrence of a phrase in the Bible is often instructive. In Gen. 6:22 and Gen. 7:5 we have the first occurrence of this, concerning Noah. He is therefore set up as a paradigm of faithful obedience to God which inspired many of later generations. As noted on Gen. 6:16, the ark was a kind of tabernacle. The comment upon Noah's obedient building is that made so often upon Moses' obedient building of the tabernacle, and the related commandments required to save Israel (Ex. 7:20; Ex. 12:50; Ex. 40:16). The ark is therefore presented as the prototype tabernacle; and it is there that we are located. For life "in Christ" is life within the ark, according to Peter.

7:6 *Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the land*- Perhaps the flood began on his birthday. The Biblical account of the flood gives details which are imaginable, earthly realities; there is nothing of the grossly exaggerated and other-worldly which there is in the pagan flood legends. Thus the Biblical dimensions for the ark are realistic, whereas the boat mentioned in the Babylonian legend recorded by Berossus was supposedly about one kilometer long and half a kilometer wide. Noah was 600 years old according to the Biblical record, whereas Ziusudra, the Mesopotamian equivalent of Noah, was supposedly 36,000 years old at the time of the flood.

7:7 *Noah went into the ship with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, in the face of the floodwaters*- This could imply that like Lot facing the destruction of Sodom, they didn't enter as commanded them (see on Gen. 7:13), and waited until the floodwaters were right upon them before entering. When seven days before the flood came, they were told to enter the ark (:4); whereas :13 says it was "on the selfsame day" that the rain came that they entered the ark. This reflects a weakness, although an understandable weakness we may all have made- wanting to wait until the last minute rather than be obedient. Although Noah definitely had faith, demonstrated by his works in building the ark, he was weak at the last moment. That has a psychological credibility to it that matches our observed human experience; just as his getting dead drunk after the trauma of the flood also has an absolute credibility to it. Or perhaps the idea is that they saw those waters by faith, and entered the ark seeing the waters which were as yet invisible. Again we see that Noah was seen / counted righteous (:1); the record of his drunkeness is surely included to make the point that he was not of himself righteous.

A careful reading of Gen. 7:7,10,13,16 reveals that Noah entered the ark twice- once before the seven days, and then finally at the end, perhaps when he had finished loading the animals. At the second entry he was shut in. Peter reasons in 1 Pet. 3 that the ark represents two things- being in Christ by baptism, and being saved from the tribulations to come on the world of the last days. These are typified respectively by the first and second entries of Noah into the ark. If our baptism is like that first entering in, then Noah's tense, earnest waiting for the rain in the next 7 days should typify our

feelings towards the second coming (cp. the rain). We should live our whole lives after baptism as if we know for certain that the second coming is but a week away.

For Noah and his family the reality of these things would have ebbed and flowed during that week- some days and hours more than others. But it would have remained with them in the back of their minds as an ever-present reality. Methuselah's death by the time they entered the ark would have heightened their awareness of the shortness of the time ('Methuselah' = 'when he dies, it shall come'). By being in the ark with them, that same intensity of feeling ought to be ours. Never before would they have felt so estranged from the world around them which they knew had such limited time left to satisfy its pleasures. And what scant interest they would have paid to their own possessions, homes, farms and all the other material things around them which they knew would so shortly be ended. In all this lies a powerful lesson to us. Instead their minds would have been obsessed with the ark, the symbol of their faith down through the past years. 'We need this for the ark... we must do that for it' would have been their way of thinking down through those years, as Noah in faith prepared the ark for the saving of himself (Heb. 11). And this lays the pattern for our dedication and consumption with the things of the truth, the ark, Christ our Lord and His ecclesia.

He entered "because of the waters". They'd not seen the waters, but faith sees those things which are not as though they are, following God's principle of thinking likewise (Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:3). Noah was "moved with fear" because of what he believed would come (Heb. 11:7- just as we should be, for the same phrase is used in Hebrews about us at Heb. 4:1). The motive for Noah's entry into the ark was partly fear (Heb. 11:7). Knowing the "terror of the Lord" (a phrase used in the OT with reference to coming judgment), Paul persuaded men to accept His grace (2 Cor. 5:11). Noah went into the ark (cp. baptism) from fear of the coming flood, as Israel crossed the Red Sea (again, baptism) from fear of the approaching Egyptians, as men fled to the city of refuge (again, Christ, Heb. 6:18) from fear of the avenger of blood, and as circumcision (cp. baptism) was performed with the threat of exclusion from the community (possibly by death) hanging over the child.

The sons were born to Noah when he was around 500, so by the time of the flood they were around 100 years old, as the flood came when he was 600 (Gen. 7:6). Lamech, Noah's father, had children at 182; most men of that epoch seem to have begun families by that age. Seeing there are no mentions of Noah's sons having any children, it could be surmised that they took wives immediately prior to entering the ark, so as to "keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. 7:3). Those women in their turn must have been motivated by faith to go into the ark; surely they'd have faced huge opposition and rejection from their families for marrying into that strange 'Ark' family. Their motive could only have been faith in Noah's preaching, backed up as it were by the spirit of

Christ which was seen in him (1 Pet. 1:11; 1 Pet. 3:18-20; 2 Pet. 2:5). Indeed, 1 Pet. 3:18-20 speaks of some people at Noah's time who "once were disobedient" but who were converted by his preaching in the spirit of Christ. Who were those converts, if they weren't those three girls who then married his sons?

There is Biblical emphasis upon the fact that Noah entered the ark on the very day the flood came; but this phrase seems to imply that he waited until the very last minute. This may have been because of the urgency and desperation he felt in appealing to others to come into the ark with him. He truly was a remarkable “preacher of righteousness”. Our knowledge of this world’s future means that as we walk the streets and mix with men and women, our heart should cry out for them, no matter how they behave towards us, and there should be a deep seated desire for at least some of them to come to repentance and thereby avoid the judgments to come.

7:8 *Clean animals, animals that are not clean, birds, and everything that creeps on the ground*- The emphasis is clearly that the ritually unclean could find salvation. The body of God's people have always struggled with this; their tendency has been to assume that those pronounced "unclean" cannot have any part within the system of salvation, however that was articulated over human history. And this has been the cause of so much sinful division amongst them.

7:9 *Went by pairs to Noah into the ship, male and female, as God commanded Noah*- "To Noah" makes us note again the emphasis upon Noah personally as the agent of salvation. Perhaps at no other point in salvation history apart from the cross, has so much depended upon one man. Noah's family, clean and unclean animals, were all saved because of one man's faith and subsequent works. The salvation of "male and female" of course points ahead to the salvation of all types of people, male and female, in Christ (Gal. 3:27-29). We note again that some Noah had to gather in; others came to him of their own volition, in response to God's working directly upon them. And so it is in our latter day Gospel work.

"To" and "into" are the same Hebrew words. The animals came to Noah, to the ark. The same words are found in Gen. 6:19,20. The animals would "come to" Noah, and he was to "bring [s.w. "come"] them to / into the ark". God brings men and women to us, but we have to bring them into His Son. We see here the huge significance of the command to baptize people into Christ, the ark. They are brought to us, through the Spirit, the hand of providence- if we pray each day for meetings with them. And we are to bring them into the ark. We are workers together with Him. He brings people to us, we bring them into the ark.

7:10 *It happened after the seven days that the waters of the flood came on the earth*- "The seven days" suggests this was a significant period. Is. 26:20 and other passages

teach that there will be a 'shut in' period in the very last days to preserve the faithful from the beginning of judgment upon the land, just as Israel in Egypt were preserved from the effect of the judgments upon Egypt.

7:11 *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep were burst open, and the sky's windows were opened*- The different state of things before the flood perhaps meant there was a huge amount of water underground which now came to the surface through earthquakes and volcanoes. The opening of the sky's windows has been interpretted as meaning that a water canopy which then covered the land came crashing down to earth. But the opening of heaven's windows is used elsewhere in the Bible in a more figurative sense. If the second month is according to Hebrew reckoning, then this was one month after Abib, i.e. in early May. This was the time associated with flooding, as the Tigris and Euphrates flooded at the time because of the snow meltwater coming to a peak then. This may mean that the latter day judgments, of which the flood was a type, are a result of natural processes being intensely magnified.

7:12 *The rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights*- Moses was in the cloud, which is also water, for the same period expressed with the same term (Ex. 24:18; Ex. 34:28). The idea is that a new creation emerged out of this experience. The Lord likewise in the wilderness (Mt. 4:2). Forty is clearly associated with testing, and the test was of Noah's faith rather than that of the surrounding world. The test was as to whether they believed that the promised final salvation would come, or whether they too would perish in the cataclysm. It's the same for us, who are within the ark of Christ.

7:13 *In the same day Noah, and Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, entered into the ship*- I suggested on Gen. 7:7 that perhaps they were intended to enter the ark seven days before the flood, but didn't do so until the very last moment. This could have been because of a delay in obedience which reflected a lack of faith, as Lot leaving Sodom; or a desperate desire to get out there and appeal to folks at the very last minute. Or maybe the wrench with unbelieving family was just too much. Noah's children took no children with them. Presumably they had children. Perhaps those children were old enough to respond, and refused. The pain of parting with them would've been intense. LXX has "with him", which supports the idea that Noah was faithful and due to this he saved his household. There is an element to which salvation depends upon third parties (see on Mk. 2:5).

7:14 *They, and every animal after its kind, all the livestock after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort*- "After its kind" could refer to representatives of every genus rather than every species. But the more comfortable explanation is again that this refers to the animals

known to *eretz* Israel. Apart from the size of the ark, the logistical issue of gathering literally all animals and birds and their appropriate food for a year... is considerable, if we insist upon a global flood. "Of every sort" [including all those birds later defined as clean or unclean] may support the note made on :3- that there was no distinction between clean and unclean birds. I will suggest on :16 that not literally samples of all the animals did actually enter the ark. The Hebrew *kol* translated "every" is very flexible in meaning, and probably another Hebrew construction would have been used if the idea was that literally every species was gathered into the ark. *Kol* can mean just as much "any" or "whatever", and it is frequently translated like that. So "every" does not have to mean 'every species', but the idea could be just as we have it in the descriptions of "all men" being saved; not literally every man, but any, 'whosoever will', whoever and whatever, out of the wider whole of 'all men'.

7:15 *They went to Noah into the ship, by pairs of all flesh with the breath of life in them*- He gathered them, but they came unto him, as in our witness to the world. Animals are shy; did Noah work for many years to understand animals so that they came to him [cp. our understanding of the audience we preach to]? Or was it that animals only came to fear humans after the flood (Gen. 9:2) and therefore they came more naturally to Noah without their present shyness and nervousness of human beings? The record consistently defines the living creatures as those who had the breath of life in them, or as other verses say, within their nostrils. This may or may not be a point to remember in the abortion debate; for the unborn fetus is without the breath of life in its nostrils. That's why babies can be born underwater. The animals represent those who are called into the ark with Noah, the Comforter, the Lord Jesus. Some were moved by God to come to him, 'drawn' by the Father, as the Lord put it. The Spirit is the agency in that drawing, and that is why the otherwise obvious note is made that they were flesh, with the spirit of life in them.

"Of all flesh" is emphasized (:15,16; 8:17). The same term is used of how God intended to destroy and make an end "of all flesh" (Gen. 6:13,17); the tragedy being that He is "the God of all flesh" (Jer. 32:17). But "of all flesh" was to be saved. The implication is, by grace. The ark speaks therefore of God's grace. We are in the same position; all flesh is as grass, to die for ever. But through God's grace in His Son, and our faith in that demonstrated by works, we like Noah can be saved; and can save others.

7:16 *Those who went in*- "Those who went in, went in..." may hint that not all the animals entered who potentially could have done. There is no actual specific statement that all the animals entered. Noah was intended to start entering the ark with the animals seven days before the flood began, but in reality, he and the animals only entered on the day the flood came. Logistically this creates a problem- a problem we are intended to perceive. For "all the animals" to enter in one day is surely asking for a lot to happen within 12 hours. In this case, Noah's disobedience, or delayed obedience, meant that

not all animals were saved who could have been saved. We wonder whether the dinosaurs were an example of the lost species. And it is the same with our delayed obedience, or disobedience, to the call to go out and save all men. This provides another alternative to the global / local flood conundrum, and the question as to whether the ark was large enough to hold all the animals- be they of the *eretz* / earth promised to Abraham, or the entire planet. It could be that all the animals were invited; but not all responded, or they all came but Noah failed to get them all into the ark. Human dysfunction and lack of response likewise militates against God's ideal desire to save 'all men'.

Went in male and female of all flesh, as God commanded him; and Yahweh shut him in- For "shut him in", see on Gen. 6:14. Note again the emphasis upon Noah- the animals came to him personally, *he* was shut in, and thereby his family and the animals were shut in too. As Gen. 7:23. The entry of the animals is framed here as being on account of *Noah's* obedience. The same Hebrew word for "shut in" occurs in Is. 26:20,21: "Come my people, enter into your chambers [cp. the rooms / nests in the ark] and shut your doors about you; hide yourself as for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain". This passage in Isaiah seems to be applying the language of the flood to the preservation of God's people in the last days. The mention of the blood shed upon earth recalls Gen. 9:6. And inevitably we think of the significant New Testament teaching of how those who enter into Christ are "sealed" with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; Eph. 4:30).

"All flesh" is of course used of the universal appeal of the Gospel; indeed, "all flesh" is used of all those who hear the Gospel message and have the opportunity of salvation (Is. 40:5; Is. 49:26; 66:23; Ps. 65:2; Joel 2:28). And unto Him shall "all flesh come".

In Mt. 25:10, the Lord clearly appears to allude to the closing of the ark's door. For in the last days too, the door shall be shut- and there will be people who desperately wish to enter and shall be unable. This was surely the situation when the ark door was shut. The Hebrew is equally translated "shut in" as "shut out", which might encourage us to see the desperate population shut out by the fact Noah was shut in. We note the same word is used of Lot being miraculously "shut in" (Gen. 19:10). As explained on Gen. 6:6, this is but one of several similarities between Noah and Lot. That Lot was 'within', behind the Divinely shut door, was by grace; and the same with Noah. It could be argued from :1,4 that the door of the ark was open for seven days before it was closed. As if there was a last minute appeal for people to enter. We think of other references to a door being opened or closed, referring to opportunities to respond to the Gospel. If, as argued on :7,16, Noah himself was disobedient to enter the ark until the very last day- that would explain why nobody else did. We note that the door represented the Lord Jesus; and it

must have been large, so that potentially at least, large animals like elephants could have entered.

7:17 *The flood was forty days on the earth*- The idea is that the flooding was for forty days; the waters were on the earth just over a year.

The waters increased, and lifted up the ship, and it was lifted up above the earth- This is the word for the lifting up of acceptable sacrifice to God, found throughout the Pentateuch. There may possibly here be a foretaste of the faithful being lifted up from the earth in the last days to save them from the judgments coming on the earth. "Lifted up" is twice stressed here. It's tempting to connect this with God's people being snatched away into the air (1 Thess. 4:16,17), one taken and another left, taken to judgment like a vulture rises up into the air and then comes down upon a carcass.

7:18 *The waters prevailed, and increased greatly on the earth; and the ship floated on the surface of the waters*- "The face [s.w. surface] of the waters" is the phrase used of how the Spirit of God fluttered upon the face of the waters to bring about creation (Gen. 1:2). The record is teaching that a new creation was to come about, despite human 'prevailing' against it. The idea of the waters prevailing may suggest that people tried their best to escape them by fleeing to higher ground, all to no avail. Again we see how judgment is in fact creativity, rather than a Divine being lashing out in wrath and anger.

7:19 *The waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth. All the high mountains that were under the whole sky were covered*- Perhaps a reference to the "high places" where idols were worshipped. For this is how the "high hills" of the *eretz* are commonly mentioned later in the Bible.

7:20 *The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered*- The Hebrew idea is that the mountains were filled in, the whole *eretz* became even, the mountains brought down and the valleys lifted up by the water until an even surface was created, upon which Noah and the ark moved. The idea is very similar to the picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus over a similarly filled in, even area in Isaiah 40. Noah is definitely to be read as a type of the Lord Jesus. "The mountains" in view are those of the *eretz*, the land promised to Abraham. The text does not require that the waters were 15 cubits above the tops of the mountain. Perhaps the reference is to how the ark was 30 cubits high (Gen. 6:15), and the ark was submerged to half its depth- the waters prevailed 15 cubits upwards on the ark. For the ark to land on Ararat, the waters would have been 15 cubits above the point where the ark landed. "The mountains were covered" means literally 'had the hollows filled up'. The risen water made the surface of the earth smooth- and this is the very idea of the preparation for the Kingdom and the Lord's return in Is. 40. The mountains are brought down and the vallegs exalted to make a plain. Noah's emergence from the ark into a cleansed world looks forward to the

Kingdom. The judgments are necessary, but they are creative in their intent- to lead towards the Kingdom.

7:21 *All flesh died that moved on the earth, including birds, livestock, animals, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man*- The judgment upon man had radical implications for the animal creation; this continues the theme of how the natural creation suffered as a result of Adam's sin. His sin was repeated in essence by the society of Noah's time.

7:22 *All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life*- This is the language of the creation of Adam; here we have a de-creation, in order that a new creation might come forth. As noted on :15, the record consistently defines the living creatures as those who had the breath of life in them, or as other verses say, within their nostrils. This may or may not be a point to remember in the abortion debate; for the unborn fetus is without the breath of life in its nostrils. That's why babies can be born underwater.

Of all that was on the dry land, died- The Hebrew implies a parched or waste land. This could suggest that the flood was local, of a waste land / wilderness forming a basin hemmed in by mountains. Or it could suggest that the busy, prosperous world of Noah was spiritually a waste land, a desert.

7:23 *Every living thing was destroyed that was on the surface of the land, including man, livestock, creeping things, and birds of the sky. They were destroyed from the land*- Perhaps the fowl of the heaven were destroyed by the heavy downpour of rain. As only a remnant of the human and natural creation survived, so only a remnant of the world around us will come through the future judgments on the earth. The fact an olive tree survived indicates that there was not total destruction. This kind of mass destruction is typical of that which will come upon Israel in the last days: "I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the land... I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven... and I will cut off man from off the land... that day is a day... of clouds and thick darkness... and I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men" (Zeph. 1). This is clearly flood language; the description of blind men may connect with Zech. 14:12 prophesying the loss of eyesight for the latter day invaders of the land (cp. how the men of Sodom were smitten with blindness in another type of the last days). Is. 54:9,10 promise that although God will judge Israel with the 'flood' of the second coming judgments, yet He will never totally reject them on account of the remnant: "As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke (reject) thee. For the mountains *shall* depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee". This is surely saying that the same order of physical catastrophe as came upon the earth at the flood will again come upon Israel in the last days; *but* we must not see this as God breaking His covenant of faithfulness to His true people. Heb. 11:1,7 stresses how much Noah really believed God's prophecy about the nature of the

flood; he was "moved with fear" by these predictions. The physical world around us is going to be changed beyond recognition; this ought to make it easier for us to come to terms with the fact that *all* aspects of *our* surrounding world will likewise pass away.

Only Noah was left alive, and those who were with him in the ship- Yet again, Noah is the focus of salvation, but in him and with him his family were saved. The others were saved because they were "with him" rather than because of their own righteousness; for Noah alone was seen righteous (Gen. 7:1), not 'Noah and his family'. It all speaks of salvation in Christ, for His sake and by grace. "Left alive" is literally "remained", and the idea is of a remnant- another idea which is developed in later scripture. For we are the remnant, out of the destroyed Israel after the flesh.

7:24 *The waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days*- Five months, a pattern of the last days, Rev. 9:5,10. The final siege of Jerusalem in AD70 lasted for the same period, coming after 3 years of the Roman campaign against Israel which started in AD67. The three and a half year suffering of Israel which culminated in AD70 may well point forward to a similar period in the last days; in which case the flood would typify the final months of that period, during which the judgments will be poured out most intensely. The five month tribulation of Rev. 9:10 may also have some relevance here. Thus the state of Israel in AD70 was typified by the world of Noah's time, which therefore looks forward also to the last days, in the light of the evident connections between that period and our last days which are made in 2 Pet. 3 and the Olivet prophecy.

GENESIS CHAPTER 8

8:1 *God remembered Noah*- Most references to God remembering are in the context of Him keeping covenant. The grace of all this is that God had not yet made a covenant with Noah. He will go on to do that soon; but even before that, He "remembered Noah".

Read literally, this would be implying that He has the capacity to forget or be oblivious; in which case, this 'language of limitation' may refer to the Angels rather than God personally. It would be worth speculating whether every time God is said to 'remember' something, this language of limitation refers to Angels, who have the capacity to have their memories limited, and to need to remember things. After God remembers, He often does an action which necessitates other Angelic action, as if one Angel- the one which 'remembers'- commands other Angels. One wonders whether this is the case when God "remembered" Noah in the ark and sent a "wind" to drive back the waters. He "Who makes His Angels Spirits (winds)" was therefore sending an Angel in control of a wind to execute His work. The idea of the Angels being in control of the winds and all elements of the natural world is a common one, seen most clearly in the book of Job. In support of this Angelic approah, it could be noted that this is an *elohim* statement, rather than of Yahweh Himself. The Hebrew for 'remembered' is elsewhere used in the

sense of making mention of (Gen. 40:14; Ex. 23:13 etc.). Did the Angels make mention of Noah before the Council of Heaven, and God responded by sending out an Angel / wind to pass over the earth and drive back the waters? God makes His Angels spirits / winds (Ps. 104:4).

Or it could be that from Noah's perspective- and Genesis is at times written from the standpoint of human beings on earth, e.g. the creation record- God had forgotten him, but now God remembered him. In this case we would have another indication of Noah's imperfect faith. Moses uses the same figure in Gen. 30:22 to describe how God 'remembered' Rachel in responding to her prayer. Likewise God 'remembered' the righteous in Sodom in response to Abraham's prayer (Gen. 19:29). Could this not imply that whilst Noah was spared from the world's judgment, he was earnestly praying for the days to be shortened, and to be allowed to emerge from the ark into the new world? This would point forward to the urgent prayer of the faithful in the last days.

But God's "remembering" of people doesn't have to imply He forgot before remembering. The language can mean simply that He was aware of them, and acted upon that awareness. Moses uses the same figure in Gen. 30:22 to describe how God 'remembered' Rachel in responding to her prayer. Likewise God 'remembered' the righteous in Sodom in response to Abraham's prayer (Gen. 19:29). Could this not imply that whilst Noah was spared from the world's judgment, he was earnestly praying for the days to be shortened, and to be allowed to emerge from the ark into the new world? This would point forward to the urgent prayer of the faithful in the last days.

All the animals, and all the livestock that were with him in the ship- Again the emphasis is upon salvation associated with Noah personally. The animals were "with him". But we also note God's pity for animals as for all His creation.

And God made a wind to pass over the earth. The waters subsided- The flood makes a good case study of Angelic control of the natural world; see on :3. Jude 14 quotes Enoch's prophecy of the flood as saying that it would be associated with the Lord coming with "ten thousands of His saints" (Angels- cp. Dan. 7). The fact that Angels were used to cause the flood is found written between the lines of the Genesis account. The "windows of Heaven" being opened must refer to Angelic activity, as Job describes God calling for the wind and lightening to obey Him, and they come to Him and obey. This language must be about animate beings- i.e. the Angels responsible for these elements of nature. Gen. 8:1 says God remembered Noah- the language of limitation, as God Himself cannot forget or need to bring things to memory. We have suggested that this language of limitation be always applied to the Angels; thus it would seem they were in charge of the flood. "God (the Angel co-ordinating the flood?) made a wind (an Angel- "Who makes His Angels spirits"- 'spirit' is the same word as 'winds') to pass over the earth... and the waters returned from off the earth, in going and returning (A.V.mg.)".

This last phrase is used elsewhere about the Angels as God's eyes roaming around the earth on His missions, and also there is the connection with the ideas already discussed of the Angels constantly going to and fro between God and the earth and around the earth.

8:2 *The deep's fountains and the sky's windows were also stopped, and the rain from the sky was restrained*- Gen. 6:4 stresses that the giants were mere men; and that it was God and not the giants who opened and closed the windows of Heaven and sent the rain of the flood. This would fit in with wider evidence that the flood record, like that of the sons of God and daughters of men, is also purposefully deconstructing pagan myths about the flood. Here, Gen. 8:2 states clearly that it was God who caused the flood rains to cease and the waters to subside – whereas the pagan myths claim that it was the sun god who appeared and caused the waters to evaporate. The Biblical record says nothing about the waters disappearing by solar evaporation, but claims they subsided as a result of the work of Israel's God. The restraint or opening of the heavens to provide rain is language used later of the drought or blessing of rain which God can bring on the *eretz* (Hag. 1:10 s.w.).

8:3 *The waters receded from the earth in going and returning. After the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters decreased*- "In going and returning" is the language of the surges of huge tidal waves, caused by the underwater eruptions of the "fountains of the deep" being broken up (Gen. 7:11; 8:2). Being in the ark must've been a very rocky ride; the boat would've been tossed and thrown most of the time. And so it is with our ride in Christ. But "going and returning" is also the language of the cherubum (Ez. 1:14), forging another hint that the whole flood experience was in the hands of Angels. See on :1 *And God made a wind to pass over the earth*.

The 150 days, or five months, are a significant period in the series of latter day judgments which are to come upon the *eretz* (see on Rev. 9:5,10).

8:4 *The ship rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month*- For "rested" see on Gen. 5:29. This is the meaning of "Noah"; the ark and Noah are connected, just as the ark was a type of the Lord Jesus, according to Peter. Israel left Egypt on the 14th day of Abib, the seventh month which became the first month in their new calendar; they likely crossed the Red Sea on the 17th day of that month. So perhaps it was on the very same day that the ark rested. Israel's passage through the Red Sea typified baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), just as Noah's passing through the floopd waters did (1 Pet. 3:19-21). Note that this was the same day that the Lord Jesus was resurrected- He died at Passover, 14th Abib, and resurrected three days later, 17th Abib.

On Ararat's mountains- This could be an intensive plural, implying the one great mountain of Ararat. The word could mean "holy hill", and the great mountain of the *eretz* was mount Zion, not some arguable spot in present day Armenia. It would of course be so appropriate in the typology of the whole event, speaking of final salvation upon Mount Zion and the redeemed going forth into a new world.

8:5 *The waters receded continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen*- This could imply that from their position on Ararat, or mount Zion, Noah and his family witnessed this receding of the waters and the emergence of mountain tops. For by whom were they "seen" if not by them? And whilst the record is Divinely inspired, we wonder if Noah kept some kind of diary which Moses is now presenting, under inspiration. For the references to dates and what was seen from the ark are very precise and specific.

8:6 *It happened at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ship*- This is not the same Hebrew word which some versions translate 'window' in Gen. 6:16 [see note there]. There had been no command to make this window. Does this suggest a lack of faith within Noah, wanting to see what was going on outside, when God had designed the ark as a structure which didn't give those within it the opportunity to see where they were going? The humanity and weakness of Noah is what makes him accessible to us as an example. It could be argued that the sending forth of the raven and dove were in themselves a lack of faith- for he had been commanded to preserve the animals, and letting one go like that was hardly responsible. But God conceded to Noah's humanity and worked with him in this. The window was perhaps more of a spy hole- Gen. 8:9 speaks of Noah putting his hand out of it and pulling in the dove. It's worth reflecting whether obsessions with prophecy are some kind of building a futile spy hole, when we are to trust our ultimate salvation to the Lord, in His good time. We have remarked elsewhere that events in early Genesis are to be connected with similar things later in the Pentateuch. The sending out of the two animals to know the state of the land perhaps connects with Moses' sending out of the spies to know the state of the land- and this too wasn't an act of great faith, for Moses surely should've believed the Divine / Angelic information about the state of the land rather than having to rely upon human investigation.

Which he had made- Time and again, we read of how *Noah* made the ark, and of how the animals and his family were *with him*. The whole salvation project was clearly based around this one man, and as such it so clearly points forward to the Lord's work.

8:7 *And he sent out a raven. It went back and forth, until the waters were dried up from the earth*- The use of an unclean and then a clean bird indicates again that God's salvation plan has use for both. The same lesson was taught to Elijah, when ravens were used to feed him- in another situation typical of the latter day experiences of the

remnant (1 Kings 17:4). The Lord singled out unclean ravens as an example of animals with whom the Father has some level of caring fellowship (Lk. 12:24). The waters were not dried up for some time; so we imagine the unclean bird coming back and forth to the ark; unless it lived on the floating bodies of animals. The coursing back and forth of the raven parallels how the waters went and returned (:5 Heb.) as they receded, with the unclean raven perhaps representing the wings of God's Spirit over the whole process.

8:8 *He sent out a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from the surface of the ground*- The exact program of events wasn't clear to Noah, just as it will never be to us in the last days, within the ark of Christ. Therefore he tried these experiments with the birds "to see if" the time had come, and how the program was going. How long things shall continue for in our last days is open ended, or at least, we don't know any precise program. But at the end of the experience, Noah would have realized that he had been within the ark for exactly a year, and that every stage had been carefully planned and allowed by God. We too shall see the same, and only then will all Biblical prophecies, types and shadows fall perfectly into place in our understanding. We noted on Gen. 7:17 that the flood came for 40 days- a period of testing. And God "remembered Noah", an idiom for answering prayer. Noah had no prior understanding of the time periods involved after the 40 days of flooding had ended (Gen. 7:4). He gathered enough food for the animals and his family to last over a year. We think of the wise virgins taking extra oil for their lamps, not knowing how long the bridegroom will delay.

8:9 *But the dove found no place to rest her foot*- She found no Noah. It was Israel who were to later find no rest for the sole of their feet as they tramped the Gentile world [same Hebrew words in Lam. 1:3]. Their returning to the Lord was prefigured by the dove's return to Noah. There seems some kind of allusion to all this in Is. 57:20,21, bearing in mind that the flood waters would have been troubled and dirty: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked".

And she returned to him into the ship; for the waters were on the surface of the whole earth. He put out his hand, and took her, and brought her to him into the ship- There's a definite allusion to this in Ps. 116:6,7 [the surrounding verses there have several allusions to Noah and the flood]: "The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return, O my soul, to your rest [Heb. *Noakh*- Noah]; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you". The Psalmist felt himself as that simple dove, flying over this shattered world looking for a place to land, and finding none, only to return to the Lord- symbolized by Noah. Note how in Ps. 55:6 the Psalmist also wishes to be as a dove. This is surely the way to read and use Scripture- to take an image and see the relevance to ourselves. This is why the Bible writers make such allusions which may appear out of context when analyzed in literary, philological terms of exposition. But the Hebrew way

of interpreting Scripture isn't always like this; the emphasis upon "context" can be taken too far, and it's more of a Western than an Eastern way of using literature.

Put forth his hand and pulled her- These are the very same Hebrew words as in Gen. 19:10, where the Angels put forth their hand and pull Lot into the house and shut the door, just as Noah had been Angelically 'shut in' the ark. The connection of thought may simply be to show that Noah rescued / saved the dove from endlessly flying over the wastage of the Gentile world, which connects with our thoughts above about how the dove represents God's wayward people returning to Him.

8:10 *He stayed yet another seven days; and again he sent the dove out of the ship*- The Hebrew word translated "grieved" (see on Jud. 10:15) occurs about Noah in Gen. 8:10: "And he stayed [s.w. to be grieved, hurt] yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark". This word is found translated in other places like this: "Be in anguish" (Dt. 2:25); "wounded" (1 Sam. 31:3); "exceedingly grieved" (Es. 4:4); "travaileth" (Job 15:20); "wounded" (1 Chron. 10:3); "sore pained within me" (Ps. 55:4); "I am pained at my heart" (Jer. 4:19); it is several times used of a woman "in pain" , "travailing" in expectancy of the birth (Is. 26:17,18; 54:1; 66:7; Mic. 4:10). Why was Noah grieved and distressed, as he waited seven days before sending the dove out again? Surely for the plight of his world. He was hoping the dove would return with some sign of civilization, some hint of human survival. His grief was for the corpses floating, for the animals lost... for the world that once was. He had preached to them for 120 years, and they hadn't listened. Yet he didn't think Well that's their problem, they didn't want to hear when they could, it serves them right. And neither does it seem he was looking out of the ark window thinking. I'm sure glad *we* were obedient. As the rain came down, it seems to me that the practical reality of the tragedy would have dawned upon Noah; as the waters rose, he would have pictured the folk he knew running to ever higher hills he would have seen the faces of local children, maybe those of the guys he bought wood from, faces of the women his wife had bartered with, memories of his own brothers and sisters, perhaps his other children. It seems to me that he spent all that time in the ark grieving, grieving, grieving for the tragedy of it all. He surely wasn't smugly thinking Ha, serves them right, and praise God, I'm saved, and there's a great future Kingdom for me in store!. I also muse- and no more than this- that perhaps he went on a bender on coming out of the ark because he just couldn't handle the tragedy of it all. Walking around an empty earth knowing he was saved and the others hadn't made it...

This all has vital, biting relevance to us. For Peter takes Noah in the ark as a symbol of us all in Christ. Yes, he was there thanking God for His gracious salvation, looking forward to the new world to come, but distraught at the tragedy of those masses who hadn't responded, and who had died the slow, desperate, struggling death of drowning. He

sent out the dove to see if the waters were "abated" - but the Hebrew word is usually translated "curse"; he wanted to know if the curse was still evident; if the waters were cursed in the presence of the ground / earth. The same word is found in Gen. 8:21 "I will not again *curse* the ground". If our concern for this world is genuine, if our preaching is not just seeking to gain members, or prove ourselves right and others wrong, then we will grieve for this world; even though the exclusion of some from Gods salvation is in some way their fault. Those who reject our message we will grieve and bleed for; not just shrug our shoulders over. Lack of response should concern us, worry us, *drive us* to think of how we could be the more persuasive of men.

The dove makes a nest from twigs on the ground. But it returned just with a leaf. Nothing thus figured that the ground wasn't yet dry. Clearly he had no message from God about when exactly the ark would rest and could be opened. And likewise it is futile to construct timelines for the latter days. Just as the wise virgins take oil not knowing how long the delay will be, so Noah took enough food because he didn't know how long he would be in the ark.

The rooms in the ark were "nests". But the dove eventually makes her own nest away from the ark, after nervously testing her ability to do so. The dove, like the Lord's sheep, came in and out of the ark freely. The raven went back and forth eating from carcasses, but was not allowed back into the ark. It "returned" to the ark like the rejected banging on the door but Noah didn't open to it. It roamed around ceaslessly with no purpose. We are told it flew back and forth until the waters were dried up, but this was at least 57 days after it was sent out, when the dove had already settled independently (Gen. 8:13-17). This is unnatural. The raven could have settled. It didn't. Ravens aren't long distance continuous fliers. We could infer the raven flew back and forth until he died. The pointless goong to and from fro the ark is a picture of the condemned. The dove achieved a purpose in its missions, but the raven didn't. The going and returning of the raven matches the movement of the waters, which represented condemnation. The raven is associated with them. Israel in yheir condemnation found no rest for the sole of their foot, like the raven. The dove specifically returned "to Noah", like a personal relationship with the Lord, and was let in. Perhaps here we have the picture of the condemned and accepted leaving the ark, the body of Christ, which has served for their salvation from the world and now has no further function for them. Like the dove, we will experience the glorious liberty of God's dear children. Man says he wants freedom but is very nervous to take it. He feels safer in a nest next to others, within a structure, a denomination, a church. Just like the dove.

8:11 *The dove came back to him at evening, and, behold, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off. So Noah knew that the waters were abated from the earth*- Noah was a "herald of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5 Gk.). In the ancient world, heralds were associated

with an olive branch or wand, e.g. Mercury the herald-god had an olive branch in his hand. Noah may therefore have understood from this that now he was indeed the herald of the new age of righteousness. But a herald worked to take messages between opposing parties and to reconcile them- the olive branch was thought to have power over warring snakes. Perhaps Noah was being reminded that his work wasn't over- it was for him to go forth from the ark and reconcile people to God. Instead he got drunk... Israel being the land of olives (Dt. 8:8), this would be another indication that the flood was a local affair over the 'land' promised to Abraham. As olive trees don't grow near the present Ararat in Armenia, this lends support to the Jewish tradition that the olive came from the mount of Olives, and the 'ararat' / 'holy mount' upon which the ark landed was Mount Zion. Doves fly home. They are released at special events because they circle around and then fly off home. The dove flew off and remained away from the ark because it's home was now above water. Again suggesting the ark departed from the same place it settled.

"Leaf" is also translated branch. A broken off olive branch is exactly the figure Paul uses to describe Israel in Rom. 11:17-24. The whole story is a very detailed prefigurement of Israel's return from Gentile dispersion and Divine judgment, not simply to God, but into the Christ ark. Is. 54:9 encourages us to see things this way too, for the waters of the flood are there interpreted as God's wrath with Israel, and their cessation speaks of His eternal acceptance of them at their return to Him.

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8:12 *He stayed yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; and she didn't return to him any more*- "Stayed" is s.w. to be patient, wait, trust. It's a different Hebrew word from that in Gen. 8:10, although there many versions also read "stayed". There in 8:10 the Hebrew means to writhe, wriggle, twist in pain- rather indicating Noah's impatience and dented faith. But now his patient waiting returns. This patient waiting for Christ's Kingdom is of the essence (2 Thess. 3:5). Saul also tarried [s.w. Gen. 8:12] seven days, but he offered his sacrifice then rather than wait longer as Noah did to offer sacrifice (1 Sam. 13:8). Potentially encouragement had been set up for Saul, but he failed to take it. He was supposed to perceive the similarity in position between himself and Noah; but he failed to see it nor think himself into the situation.

8:13 *It happened in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from the earth. Noah removed the covering of the ship, and looked*- If the "covering" refers to our covering in Christ, for the ark represents Him, then this may suggest that the whole idea of covering or atonement will be removed when we emerge from the ark into our full salvation. Then like Adam we shall walk in Eden in the presence of God, see His face and be unashamed.

*He saw that the surface of the ground was dried- "*Dry" is s.w. waste, destroyed, desolate. It was this which maybe made Noah depressed and turn to alcohol- for he loved people and so cared for them, and had sought their salvation in vain for 120 years.

8:14 *In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry*- The exact time references suggest Noah kept some kind of diary, or at least memorialized the exact sequence of events to be passed down the generations, until they came to Moses, who under inspiration turned them into inspired scripture. The period between Noah realizing the earth was "dry" and then God telling him to exit the ark (:15) may point forward to some time period required for the establishment of the Kingdom. And there are plenty of other scriptures which hint at such a period between the end of the latter day judgments, and our walking forth into paradise restored.

8:15 *God spoke to Noah, saying*- We are presented with God speaking to Noah, and his direct obedience to the word received (Gen. 6:3,13; 7:2). This theme continues here. He is presented as obedient, just as Moses is.

8:16 *Go out of the ship, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you*- Obedience to such a command might seem obvious. Surely Noah wanted to leave the ark. But he had been there for a year; was there some reticence in going forth into what might have appeared a somewhat spooky new world? Maybe he didn't have the bravery for that new world, and typical of all humans, preferred to just stay where he was, where he felt safe. We see here a window onto the inertia which is a stronger part of human nature than we might wish to accept. We think of Joseph's brothers, nervous to accept his grace; and the language of the faithful being *made* to sit down and be served at the Messianic banquet, and those who really couldn't remember their good deeds being told "Come, enter the Kingdom!".

8:17 *Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh, including birds, livestock, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply on the earth- "*Bring out with you" is you singular. Again, Noah is seen as the Saviour, with all the others saved due to being with him. We can in a sense save others by our witness, even though the Lord is their Saviour in the ultimate sense. "Breed abundantly" is the same word as in Gen 1:20, "let the waters bring forth abundantly". Again we have the idea of a new start, with Noah as Adam given the chance to learn the lessons. But he gets dead drunk.

8:18 *Noah went out, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives with him*- As noted on :15, Noah is presented as obedient to words spoken from God. Perhaps we are to notice from the strict list of those who emerged that the sons and their wives produced no children during their year in the ark. Again we note the repetition of "with" in :16-18; Noah was the saviour, and those saved were only saved because of being "with" him.

8:19 *Every animal, every creeping thing, and every bird, whatever moves on the earth, after their families, went out of the ship*- The order in which the animals are listed is different from that in Gen. 6:20; 7:21. Perhaps because in the ark they mixed together; our experience in the Christ ark should lead to unity.

8:20 *Noah built an altar to Yahweh, and took of every clean animal, and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar*- This was on Noah's initiative. There had been no altars stipulated previously. God had asked Noah to build an ark, and now Noah of his own volition builds an altar. As we mature in Christ, we no longer simply follow commands but take our own initiative in God's service. Noah's first reaction may have been to build a house for himself and his family; but he put God first and built an

altar. If one of "every clean animal" was offered, this would've been a huge number of animals. The idea was perhaps that representatives of all flesh will be acceptable to God in the end. This huge outpouring of gratitude speaks of how we will feel as we walk away from the judgment seat into the Kingdom at the last day.

8:21 *Yahweh smelled the pleasant aroma*- The smell of huge numbers of burning animal carcasses isn't sweet to man. But what man finds foolish, pointless or abhorrent can touch the heart of God for its sweetness to Him. The Hebrew would be rendered "sweet savour". 'Sweet' translates *nychoah*, related to the word 'Noah'. Noah was his sacrifice. Our lives are sacrifices being offered up. Just as the Lord Jesus was an offering of a sweet-smelling savour (Eph. 5:2 uses the same language as the LXX here). Noah was his sacrifice, as we are ours, and as the Lord was His. We each have our unique smell to God. Just as God's heart was melted by sacrifice, so even more was His heart touched and even altered by the Lord's death. And our sacrifices no less touch His very heart. It's why sacrifice is such an important principle in spiritual life.

Again and again, Moses sought to refocus his people on the practical, the literal, the concrete, and away from the myths which surrounded them. And yet he does this by alluding to those myths, so as to alert Israel to the fact that the new, inspired record which he was writing was fully aware of the myths God's people were being assailed with. This would explain the similarity of expressions between some of the myths and the Genesis record- e.g. "The Lord smelled the pleasing odour" (Gen. 8:21) is very similar to the Gilgamesh Epic, 9.159-160: "The gods smelled the odour, the sweet odour". The Biblical record is one of hard human reality, undiluted with the fantastic or mythical: "The central figures of the Bible saga are not, as in so many hero-tales, merged in or amalgamated with persons belonging to mere mythology; the data regarding their lives have not been interwoven with stories of the gods. Here all the glorification is dedicated solely to the God who brings about the events. The human being... is portrayed in all his untransfigured humanity" (Martin Buber, *Moses* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1947) p. 17).

Yahweh said in His heart- We may never know in this life God's feelings in response to our sacrifices. We can touch the heart of God, we tiny mortals on earth... And God's word opens up to us the very inner thoughts of God Himself.

I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again strike everything living, as I have done- see on Gen. 8:10. "We could surely conclude that as a result of seeing the carnage, God downgraded His view of man and His hopes and expectations of him. Not again curse" is alluded to in Rev. 21:1, there will be no more curse in God's Kingdom. It

seems Noah had the potential to enable the Kingdom there and then, as did so many-Solomon, the Jews returning from exile, Israel in the first century. Every time, human weakness and shortsightedness stopped it.

God saw that "the imagination of man's heart" was evil from his youth; not from his birth, showing that God is referring to the specific attitude of those times rather than to man's innate sinfulness. The implication is that God was especially saddened at the evil thinking of a reprobate, corrupted youth. And how much more today? God as it were reduced His expectations, cut us yet more slack, made even bigger concessions to humanity.

The essential struggle of God is brought out by the account of God's 'repenting' that He had cursed the earth. According to one translation, Gen. 8:21 can read: "I will never again declare the earth to be cursed (as I have done hitherto) on account of humanity, because the imagination of the heart is evil from one's youth". The reference to cursing the earth surely alludes back to the curse of Gen. 3:17. Could it be that God is saying that He 'repented' not only of the flood, but of the cursing of the earth in response to Adam's sin? The final outworking of that repenting of course was through the work of the Lord Jesus, and the ultimate enablement of Paradise restored on this earth. It's as if God is as it were coming to terms with the evilness of man; although He perceives that man is bent on sinning from his youth, by grace, He promises never to destroy mankind. In wrath, He remembered mercy. God has emotion and it's hard to read this any other way than that He regretted how far He had punished humanity. This tension within God, between being immutable and yet being emotional, is impossible to ultimately explain.

It was when "Yahweh saw that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil all the day" that He decided: "I will blot out from the earth the Adam I have created" (Gen. 6:5-7). But comparing this with Gen. 8:21, we get the impression that God comes to accept the weakness of man, and to tolerate it without destroying it: "Yahweh said in His heart, "I will never again curse the soil because of the Adam, for the inclination of the Adam's heart is evil from youth". This same pattern is seen later; God is so angry with human sin in His people that He decides to change His plans and destroy the sinners. But He later again changes, and decides to tolerate them. Thus in Ex. 33:3,5 God says that "I will not go up among you for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I would consume you on the way... You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you". But after Moses' intercession, God does go up among them even thought they are a stiff-necked people. He hears Moses' prayer of Ex. 34:9: "I pray, let Yahweh go among us for this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance". This is not to say that God will not judge sin and sinners. He definitely will. But we see here a growth in tolerance, akin to what many men experience as they pass through the fatherhood experience. We think of how God tells Abraham "Now I know that you fear God, in that you have not withheld

your son... from Me" (Gen. 22:12). Being a father is not simply an act of procreation; fatherhood is a relationship, and it could be argued that it goes with the territory of fatherhood to change and be changed in response to your children. This may be one window onto how God in this sense can change or learn. It was a choice He made to go through that experience. God is not fickle, and yet He has emotions. Later He will say that He repents of certain relationships with His people, and rejects them; and then He changes His mind again, repenting of His repentance as it were. His repentings are "kindled together" at the time of Hosea. This is how deeply involved God is in the response of His children to Him. It inspires us to love and serve Him with all we have and are; in a way that a stone faced, unfeeling god would never inspire. God's omnipotence is such that the Master of the plot as it were gets emotionally caught up within the plot. As we go through life we are faced with the awesome reality that God responds passionately and emotionally to our every move. For or against Him. This is the huge meaning of the crucifixion- so much response is elicited, and in turn responded to by God. Realizing this dimension of God is the ultimate answer to the scepticism and stone facedness of the postmodern world.

8:22 *While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease*- The reference to the seasons, planting etc. suggest this is relevant to the earth / land of Israel and not world-wide [there is no Summer and Winter on the equator]. There are six different seasons mentioned here. This would indicate a different climate at the time- although some cultures such as the Copts likewise split the year into six seasons rather than the four seasons common today in European countries.

GENESIS CHAPTER 9

9:1 *God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful*- Remember that Noah had only produced three children in 600 years, and his sons had not had any children.

And multiply- Clearly we are being invited to see this as a new creation, with the implication that they were to obey where Adam failed. The "earth" they were to multiply in was the *eretz* promised to Abraham, and so in chapter 10 we have a list of the nations within that area- as evidence of obedience to this commandment.

Most of the flood myths claim that human overpopulation led the gods to destroy man. But the Genesis record instead stresses the value of human life, even if that life must be surrendered in judgment for sin. The focus is upon human sin. But God's encouragement of man to multiply stands in stark contrast to the idea that the gods didn't like man multiplying, and for that reason alone- destroyed him or reduced the human population through a flood.

The invitation to be fruitful and multiply is exactly that given to Adam. Note the similarities with Adam in Eden- replenish the earth (9:1 = Gen. 1:28); have dominion over animals (9:2 = Gen. 1:28); commanded what to eat (9:3 = Gen. 1:29); prohibition of some things which they were not to eat (9:4 = Gen. 2:16,17). Adam's sin, resulting in cursing, is matched by Noah's sin and the pronouncing of cursings. Yet again, the great potential for the Kingdom of God was spoilt by human weakness. We have noted that the wind / Spirit upon the face of the waters is reminiscent of the Genesis creation. Here too, we have a new world emerging on the ruins of an old one. But like Adam, Noah goes out and soon fails [in that he gets drunk and has perverted sex with his own relative, rather than multiplying]. The tragedy of man's consistent failure stands writ large. And we marvel at God's amazing patience, His attempts to work with men; and it throws into relief the victory and perfection of the Lord Jesus, through whom we can in fact become the creation God wished for throughout human history. After all the false starts and wasted potentials, He finally was the One in whom all the potentials were fulfilled and became enabled for a new race of people in Him.

And replenish the earth- This is the same word as in Gen. 6:11,13, where the earth was "filled" with violence. Is the implication that Noah's family were to fill the world with righteousness in place of the evil that had filled it? In this case, the subsequent failure of the family with sexuality and alcohol is a sad response to such a fine calling.

9:2 *The fear of you and the dread of you will be on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the sky*- This part of the promise seems only made to Noah and his sons in the context of the animals with whom they had contact in their work of replenishing the land / earth area which had been flooded. There are animals which don't fear people, and God brings this to our attention in the later chapters of Job. Thus the ostrich is "without fear... she scorns the horse and his rider" (Job 39:16,18); the horse "goes on to meet the armed men. He mocks at fear, neither is affrighted (Job 39:21-24); behemoth and leviathan [the hippopotamus and crocodile?] are portrayed as fearless of men, indeed it is men who fear them (Job 40,41). The "fear and dread" of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the "fear and dread" which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21; 3:8; 11:25).

Everything that the ground teems with, and all the fish of the sea, are delivered into your hand- This may not be a general promise to all humanity. Rather it may mean that the effects of the curse in Eden were greatly reduced for Noah and his family when they left the ark. It is hardly so that all fish and animals are given into the hand of every man, worldwide. We can assume that Noah and his family failed to make good of the potential given them; and his drunkenness reflects that. The Hebrew phrase "delivered

into your hand" will later be used of how the tribes of the *eretz* were all delivered into Israel's hand (Ex. 23:31; Num. 21:34; Dt. 2:24 etc.). And like Noah's family, Israel failed to make good use of that potential power. The worshipping of animals "that the ground teems with" (Dt. 4:18 s.w.) was therefore a refusal to accept that these things had been delivered into the hand of the faithful.

9:3 *Every moving thing that lives will be food for you*- There was no distinction between clean and unclean animals, which could be eaten and which couldn't. There are therefore no animals unclean of themselves; the Mosaic laws concerning them were therefore only to teach an object lesson, rather than being a reflection upon any intrinsic uncleanness of any specific animals.

As the green herb, I have given everything to you- This would imply that Noah's family didn't eat animals but only "the green herb" before the flood. The concept of clean and unclean animals which was known to them therefore referred only to sacrifice and not to diet.

It could be argued that it was God's original intention that man should not eat animals. But in line with His increased recognition of the moral weakness of man and promise to be more accommodating of it (see on Gen. 8:21), now God allows killing of animals by man. Possibly part of the corruption of all flesh recorded in Gen. 6:11,12 was that man had begun killing and eating animals anyway, when this was contrary to the intention at the time of the Genesis 1 creation. "All flesh" in Gen. 6:11,12 refers to the entire animal creation; it was 'corrupted' by man. Presumably in that man began killing, eating and perhaps having sex with the animals. How else was the "all flesh" corrupted by man? And now God makes some partial concessions to man (see on Gen. 8:21), in allowing him to kill and eat animals, although not to consume their blood. After the Lord's death, the prohibition of blood was relaxed. So we see God becoming increasingly accomodating to people, His grace increases, and yet culpability to judgment also increases.

9:4 *But flesh with its life, its blood, you shall not eat*- Much meat could never have totally been made free of blood. Here therefore we have an example of where a commandment was given, but 'best effort' was looked for rather than complete technical obedience. Likewise the stipulation that only unblemished animals be offered; for most animals have some blemish if scrutinized closely. But as noted on :5, the "flesh" in view may specifically refer to human flesh.

The whole logic of the command and principle behind it [that life is God's] requires that the forbidden blood was actually giving life to the body. So the reference is surely to blood whilst it is pulsating, and not to "blood" per se. And as in some remote parts today, to eat live animals was not uncommon especially in worship rituals. The eating of

live locusts is quite common still in many areas. All the arguments about 'kosher' food are therefore misplaced. For "blood" doesn't keep a dead body alive and is not therefore "the life". Blood is not magic; blood poured on a dead body will not revive it, and bodies die with blood in them- having blood in your body doesn't mean you cannot die. It is a beating heart and *pulsating* blood that is a sign of life. And it is that life, that beating heart and pulsating blood, whilst we have it, that is to be given to God. And to not do so requires us to forfeit life (:5). It's a very powerful choice- to totally give life to God because we have it, or lose it. We are driven thereby to recognize that our very life is God's exclusive property and not our own. The strict commands to pour out blood to God first in Lev. 17 are distinctively Israelite- no pagan system has this feature. Because God alone places this supreme meaning upon human life. So whilst God judges sin, as seen in the flood, this must be balanced against the huge importance God places upon human life. For it is actually *His* life. And this is why :5 will make the point that to take life is wrong, because it is actually taking life from God. And the Lord taught that to curse is to murder; and we should not curse man, because he is made in the image of God, and has God's life within him. Gen. 9:6 LXX makes the point: "He that sheds man's blood, instead of that blood shall his own be shed, for in the image of God I made man". 'Taking' extra life, another life, through murder... means that *your* life is to be taken from you and returned to God. Man does not have the right to dispose of his own blood or life; suicide is likewise ruled out here. If a man takes another man's life, the blood of the slain cries out for *deliverance* (Gen. 4:9; Job 16:18; Ez. 24:7), i.e. that that life is no longer with the murderer, but should be delivered back to God, through the death of the murderer. This is why God becomes the avenger of blood; for the shed blood cries out for vengeance, for the return of life to God through the death of the murderer (Is. 1:15; 59:3). This is why a murderer is a thief (Job 24:14). And animals who take human life are likewise to be slain, to have their lives returned to God (a principle repeated in Ex. 21:28,29 about the necessary death of an ox who gores a man). But the principle has far wider and more personal application, for the life we have been entrusted with is God's and must be lived *for Him* and given back to Him. 'Living for ourselves', in the chasing of careers, wealth and relationships in this life is therefore outlawed. It is a selfish taking of life, and is logically on the same level as suicide. The law of Moses forbad the use of money as compensation for taking life. If you give your life to making yourself wealthy, then you have taken away your life from God; you have stolen life from Him, and that cannot be compensated for by your acquired wealth. Once we accept this absolute sovereignty of God over human life, including *my* life, then we find a kind of freedom- freedom from the perceived need to achieve, to make something out of 'our' life, to 'succeed', to 'make a living', to 'make it' in life. And freedom from the fear of losing life or having life constrained, by health or economic issues. Because as we see in this context of the flood, God has sovereign power to create and de-create, to give and take life and then multiply it again. And we are to acknowledge His absolute claim over human life. "It's

my life!" is totally wrong. The important thing is that our lives are His and surrendered totally to His loving and eternal care.

9:5 *I will surely require your blood of your lives*- God was the ultimate avenger of blood (Gen. 9:5); in setting up a way of escape from the avenger of blood, He surely indicates how He recognizes the rightness of His own principles, and yet sought a way for humanity to not perish because of them. In this we see an exquisite prophecy of His provision in Christ, and of the tension between the justice and grace within God's character, the tension Hosea spoke of as God's internal struggle about whether to destroy or redeem Israel when they repeatedly sinned against Him. By all means compare the account of such a case in 2 Sam. 14:7, where it was recognized that God 'devises means' to preserve people from the avenger of blood- a reference to the cities of refuge. In all this we see the tension within God's person, as He so earnestly seeks to work through our failure to bring about His glory.

Their lives would be required of them if they presumed to take the symbol of life to themselves. It was to be critically important to recognize that all life is God's, and to assume that we can live life for and to ourselves is punishable by losing the life we have.

At the hand of every animal I will require it- Does this mean that animals which ate meat with blood were to be killed? That would be hard to operate in practice, and would have led to the distinction of all carnivores. Or is the "flesh" of :4 human flesh? In this case, any animal which ate human flesh was to be killed, just as murderers were to be put to death.

At the hand of man, even at the hand of every man's brother, I will require the life of man- This could mean that the duty of killing those who shed human blood fell upon the person's "brother", and if this were not done, then God would require it of the "brother". Or the idea may just be that the blood or life of our brother will be required from us if we slay him. In all this we see foreshadowed the idea that we are responsible for our brother, and cannot answer as Cain, that we are not our brother's keeper. If we take or hinder his life, as Cain did to Adam, then it will be required of us, as it was of Cain. This means that we must be especially careful not to make our brother lose eternal life by making him stumble.

God's judgment is ongoing, He has not as it were switched off and will only open the books at the last day. Ps. 9:10-12 says that when God makes "inquisition [s.w. 'require'] for blood, He remembers those who "seek" [s.w. 'require'] for Him. He seeks and searches us out, holding us accountable for actions; and yet we are to seek after Him. And thus we meet... The verse means that God requires life from us- the Lord Jesus alludes here when He spoke of how the soul of a man would be "required" at the day of his death (Lk. 12:20), and woe to us if we have only 'bigger barns', petty materialistic

acquisition, to show for it. If we take another's life, that life will be required of us- because of the general principle, that God 'requires' human life from us. So the principle is that we should not merely avoid taking the life of another; we should give our lives back to God, knowing that life is required of us.

9:6 *Whoever sheds man's blood, his blood will be shed by man*- This is not a command to shed the blood of murderers. The Lord seems to allude to it when commenting that he who takes the sword shall perish with the sword (Mt. 26:52). It appears to be more of a warning, an observation as to what happens to those who shed blood, even if they consider they are doing it in justified vengeance for the shedding of blood. We must give full weight to the incident in 2 Samuel 14, where we learn that there is a higher principle than revenging blood- that of grace and forgiveness. God now continues to explain why man's blood shouldn't be shed- because we are made in God's image. That reasoning is such that any shedding of blood, even in vengeance, ought to be avoided.

We can also look at this commandment as a way of outlawing the murder / execution of others for minor matters. We see a contrast with how Lamech boasted of killing a young man for offending him. Tyrannical bullying and abuse of power is therefore clearly abhorrent to God. We must consider the fact that Cain and Lamech didn't die for their murders, committed before the flood. But it seems that now the death penalty for murder is being introduced. We see here how God's plan with man develops. He apparently more generously accepted the sinfulness of man after the flood (see on Gen. 8:21). But His judgment of sin actually increased at the same point, at least in this matter. And we can see a further extension of this in the Lord's work- which brought about even greater acceptance of man, and forgiveness of human sin. But the judgment level increased, with even hateful thoughts now being judged as murder. This comes to its full term as we face the cross. There was and is "the judgment of this world", the comfort of total forgiveness and grace; and yet an associated higher level of judgment for those who refuse it. And that has a seamless logic to it; a love like that cannot just be refused without consequence.

For God made man in His own image- As James 3:9; the fact humans are made in God's image means we should perceive the value and meaning of persons, from not killing to holding the door open for people... Defacing God's image earns death. In what ways can we destroy the image of God in others apart from by killing them? Any form of dehumanizing surely does the same. Because we are made in God's image, we should therefore not *kill* other humans (Gen. 9:6). James says the same, in essence, in teaching that because we are in God's image, we shouldn't *curse* others. To curse a man is to kill him. That's the point of James' allusion to Genesis and to God as creator. Quite simply, respect for the person of others is inculcated by sustained reflection on the way that they too are created in God's image.

These statements at this point in Genesis 9 all reflect the extreme value and dignity God places upon human life. For man is made in the image of God. At first blush, this may seem to jar against the record we have just read of God's destruction of most human life in judgment for their sins. But the juxtaposition is intentional. We are being warned not to view the judgment of the flood as meaning that God doesn't value human life. He does, intensely so. Those who read the account of the flood but fail to reflect upon Genesis 9... will be left with a totally wrong impression of God. The gift of His Son for the salvation of man proves that for all time. The conclusion is therefore that the flood was absolutely necessary judgment for sin; and it was a judgment that was made with full awareness of the value of human life. The reminder that man was made in God's image also serves to highlight God's pain and loss in judging man at the flood. It was as if He had cut off His own image, His own face; His personal loss was huge. But He 'had' to do this in order to preserve a line of believers who were willing to become in His moral image, and through whom His Son would come. For in Him we would see the image of God in human form.

The command not to murder has its basis in the fact that human life is not for us to use as we will (Ex. 20:13; Lev. 17:11; Gen. 9:6). It is God's life within those other people around us. Others, therefore, are not for us to use as we will. Gentleness and sensitivity to the life of others, in family life, the workplace, on the road... is therefore an outcome of our belief that the 'other' person likewise has been created by God and has life from Him. To drive in an unkind way, to act in a thoughtless way to others' detriment, is therefore the same basic error as taking human life in murder. It is worth reflecting that nearly all other usages of the word "image" or 'making something after an image...' have a literal sense to them. An image was made which was a literal, physical representation of something else. Idols were "images" of the gods thought to be elsewhere, e.g. "in heaven". If the god was believed to have three heads, then so did the "image" of it have three heads. The word is used in 2 Kings 16:10 of a "replica" being made of an altar. The literal, physical sense of "image and likeness" is shown by how the term is used in Gen. 5:3, where Adam "begot a son after his own form, and after his own image". The idea of man being in God's image would therefore have been understood in a literal sense; all men are representations, or images, of God. How we treat men is how we treat God. God exists in human form, far grander and greater than us; but we are in His image. And there is a clear connection with the making of images of the gods, i.e. idols. If man is in God's image- then all idolatry is ruled out. The total focus of man is therefore upon his relationship with his God and creator. And the body, being in the image of God, is highly significant and important. This is a stark contrast with the Greek view, that the [supposed] "soul" was all important, and the body was a mere casing. The human body, and how it is used and related to in others, thus becomes of huge significance. Paul several times argued with the Corinthians against the idea that usage of the body was irrelevant.

9:7 *Be fruitful and multiply. Increase abundantly in the earth, and multiply in it*- As Adam and Eve were to "be fruitful and multiply" in the land / Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:28), so Noah and his sons were to do just the same in the same land after the flood (Gen. 9:7); and the children of Abraham were promised that they would do likewise in the very same land (Gen. 35:11). I suggested on Gen. 3 that perhaps the first sin was one of omission- Adam and Eve omitted to go forth and multiply as commanded. This would explain the emphasis upon this commandment, in this attempt to restore Eden. On the figurative level, it is the Lord Jesus who brings forth much fruit in us due to His resurrection out of the earth, as Noah came out of the ark (Jn. 12:24).

9:8 *God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying*- Again, the family are addressed by God as being "with [Noah]"; just as salvation is predicated upon our being counted as together with Christ. The new covenant is likewise made primarily with the Lord Jesus, the singular "seed"; and thereby with us, insofar as we are in Him.

9:9 *As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you, and with your offspring after you*- Covenants were two way agreements, with conditions for both parties and a token of the covenant. All the elements of a covenant are present- apart from the conditions for the other party, i.e. Noah. This is the force of the words "As for Me, behold...". It was unilateral. God's covenant is of grace- He binds Himself to certain things, without any corresponding demands upon Noah. See on :10. "With you" is repeated in 9:11. The covenant wasn't with humanity generally but to the children of Noah.

9:10 *And with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the livestock, and every animal of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ship, even every animal of the earth*- God is in covenant relationship with the animals. But such a covenant was obviously unilateral. Perhaps the information about the animals was added in order to underline how God's covenant with man was likewise unilateral; it was what God wanted to do for man, rather than a demand from man. This is grace. And although we have no contractual duty to respond, yet we do respond; we cannot be passive to such grace; see on :9.

Those within the ark represented those saved in Christ. It's difficult to work out the difference in symbology between the animals, and Noah and his family. But the animals also were finally included in the new covenant made after the ark had performed its saving purpose. So we are led to speculate that there is a class of people other than those secured "in Christ" who will somehow be finally saved, having been preserved from the latter day judgments which the flood waters represent. This same teaching is found in the way that the blood of the Passover lamb seems to have secured the salvation of the firstborn of both Israel and the animals who were brought [by others] within the blood covered houses (Ex. 11:8).

9:11 *I will establish My covenant with you: all flesh will not be cut off any more by the waters of the flood, neither will there ever again be a flood to destroy the earth*- "Ever again" or "any more" (AV) sounds as if destruction of the earth by flooding had happened several times before. It's almost as if the God of all grace is showing Himself progressively gracious to earth's inhabitants: 'I've done it before several times, but now I promise you humans, you new race of inhabitants upon whom my special love is to be shown through My Son, that I'll never do it again'. 2 Peter 3 alludes to the flood, but says that the agent that will be used to destroy the *eretz* or land of the last days will be fire. A similar level of destruction is coming, but by fire and not water.

9:12 *God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations*- Covenants of those days had a token or material symbol associated with them. But they also featured requirements from both sides; as noted on :9, God's grace is such that the covenant He now made was simply a requirement on His side. The covenant was with the animals too- and clearly that too was a one-sided agreement. The token of the new covenant would be the blood of God's Son, just as the blood of the lamb was a "token" (Ex. 12:13), perhaps memorialized in the communion bread and wine, just as circumcision was the token of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:11 s.w.).

9:13 *I set my rainbow in the cloud, and it will be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth*- The sign of the rainbow is described as God hanging up ['setting'] His bow. To hang up your bow was an idiom for ceasing from conflict (Hab. 3:9-11; Ps. 7:13). It was as if Yahweh the warrior was laying aside His bow, ending His conflict with mankind. The contemporary flood myths articulate all this in terms of there being a dispute amongst the gods; some wanted to destroy mankind, others wanted to show mercy; some regretted the earlier judgments against mankind, others didn't; some wanted to assure mankind that he wouldn't be destroyed; others argued that he must face the consequences of his sin. Here the Biblical record is so amazingly different. All these emotions are portrayed as occurring within the one and only God. As humanly incomprehensible as it is, that an all powerful, all knowing Being could have such conflicting emotions, this is without doubt the God whom the Bible reveals to us.

The Babylonian Epic Of Creation (6.82) claims that after Marduk's victory, he set his bow in the sky and it became a constellation. He also supposedly used his bow to shoot arrows at the clouds which caused the deluge. "So, too, the pagan Arabs related of one of their gods that after discharging arrows from his bow, he set his bow in the cloud". These myths are alluded to and corrected by the statement that God's bow is simply the rainbow, a purely natural phenomenon which is merely an optical feature and certainly

not a literal bow of any god. Yahweh's bow, the rainbow, is a symbol of His grace and love towards His creatures. The later Old Testament repeatedly uses the idea of the true God shooting His arrows as a figure of His judgment of His enemies and salvation of His people (Hab. 3:9,11; Zech. 9:14; Ps. 38:2; 64:8; 77:17; 144:6; Job 6:4; Lam. 2:4; 3:12). The whole mythical, pagan idea of a god having a literal bow and arrows is thereby deconstructed. The question arises, however, as to why Moses is alluding to Babylonian myths which were current only centuries after his time. My response is threefold. Firstly, God could have inspired Moses to speak in terms which would later take on relevance to the myths which God foresaw would arise. Secondly, the Babylonian myths may well have developed from myths which were current in Moses' time. A third possibility is that the Pentateuch was re-written under Divine inspiration whilst Judah were in captivity in Babylon, and the historical accounts presented in such a way as to have relevance to the Marduk worship and other Babylonian mythology which surrounded God's people in Babylonian captivity.

Rainbows being experienced worldwide doesn't mean that the flood was therefore global. Moses under inspiration wrote for the Israelites, to enable them to make sense of their world, and he explained to them that they were to understand that the world wouldn't be destroyed by water again. However 2 Peter 3 seems to say that the heavens and earth of Peter's time would be destroyed not by water but by fire, after the pattern of what God did at Noah's time. This passage has some relevance to AD70- which was a destruction of the Jewish system in the land of Israel, not worldwide.

There's another way to read Gen. 9:13-17 which I offer not in any dogmatism but for reflection. It may not mean that God intends us to look at rainbows and remember His covenant; it may be that God sealed the covenant He made at that time by bringing a cloud over the earth and displaying in it a bow or arrow [the Heb. translated "bow" also means an arrow and is thus translated in places]. God set or "hung up" [the Hebrew is translated that way elsewhere] His bow- as if to say, 'My bow and arrows are now hung up. I'm through with judgment by this flood. It's over. I've hung up My bow / arrows'. YHWH shooting arrows is a figure for His judgment in later Scripture. So it's a bit of an assumption that God's talking about rainbows here. A Divine covenant was typically sealed by a one-time token, e.g. His covenant with Abraham by the token of passing between the animal pieces. The token of a covenant was therefore a one-time act, not something like rainbows which are ongoing. The covenant was between God and Noah and also all animal flesh on the earth at that time. The token of that covenant was therefore relevant to Noah not humanity generally. So it would make sense if there was some theophany to Noah involving awesome clouds and a special display of God's now hung up bow / arrow over it. God set His bow in that cloud, the record states. But rainbows don't exist at any location in the clouds; they are an optical phenomenon in the eye of the observer.

God did this so as to "remember" His covenant; but "remember" carries the idea of God marking it, this is what He did to mark the covenant He had just made as a one time demonstration to Noah. Surely it can't mean that whenever God sends rain, He sees the rainbow and remembers in the sense of "Ah yes, now I remember, I'm not supposed to use rain to kill people". People still die by flooding today and I guess some of them drown within sight of rainbows... and the survivors likely watch rainbows as they mourn their dead. The literalistic readings of the rainbow seem to create more questions than they solve. They also depend upon the assumption that there were no rainbows before the flood, and this was a special creation; but rainbows are observed in mist [e.g. over waterfalls or wave spray] as well as rain clouds so I somewhat doubt there were no rainbows seen before the flood. It's also an assumption that there was no rain before the flood- Gen. 2:5 simply states that before the creation of Adam there was no rain, possibly implying that the created plants didn't grow until Adam was created to tend them.

9:14 *It will happen, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow will be seen in the cloud*- The Hebrew doesn't have to mean 'whenever'. As suggested on :13, this could have been a one time event. Perhaps it was some foreshadowing of the bringing of a cloud at the crucifixion?
The idea of the rainbow being a ‘reminder’ to God not to destroy the earth again with a flood is rather hard to understand when applied to God. But if this is a reminder to the Angels, who brought the flood in the first place, this makes more sense (Gen. 9:16).

9:15 *And I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters will no more become a flood to destroy all flesh*- "To destroy" is Heb. 'to cut off'. Having crossed the Red Sea, God sealed His covenant with Israel at Sinai. After emerging from the ark, God made a covenant with Noah. And circumcision was the entry point of covenant relationship with God. The record of these Old Testament occurrences also brings out the converse- what happened to all those who were not in covenant with God, who had not received the typical 'baptism'. The unbaptized Egyptians were "cut off"" (Ex. 9:15); "all flesh" that was not baptized into the Christ-ark was "cut off" (Gen. 9:15 AV). "The uncircumcised man child... that soul shall be cut off" (Gen. 17:14). The New Testament matches this by the oft repeated teaching that outside of Christ, there can be no salvation.

9:16 *The rainbow will be in the cloud. I will look at it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth*- The rainbow is to remind men of the essential salvation and patience of God. And yet He describes it as reminding *Him* of His promise of salvation- as if He might forget.

This is the kind of language of limitation which is so common in the Bible. It could be explicable by referring it to Angels; or it could be that God presents Himself in human terms, without strict attention to who He actually is. For by nature He does not "forget" or need reminding. This would mean that those who may misunderstand God in some theological areas can still have a legitimate relationship with Him; just as God presented Himself here as 'needing a reminder'.

God set the rainbow in the sky so that when *He* looks upon it, He will remember His covenant with Noah. The pronouns seem wrong; we would expect to read that the rainbow is so that when *Noah* looked upon it, he would remember... but no. God condescends to man to such an extent that He invites Noah to understand that when *he* remembered the covenant with Him, God does likewise.

9:17 *God said to Noah, This is the token of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth*- I have suggested above that the bow was displayed at just one time, or just in the experience of Noah and his sons, as a token of the covenant God had made with them. The covenant was between God and "all flesh that is on the earth / *eretz*", at that time. God is not in covenant relationship with literally all people upon the planet. This leads us to again conclude that the idea is not that whenever rainbows appear anywhere on earth, this is a reminder that God is in covenant relationship with all people on earth. Rather was the bow [which may not have been a rainbow as we now understand them] revealed in some kind of special theophany to assure Noah and his family that there would never again be a flood.

9:18 *The sons of Noah who went out from the ship were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham is the father of Canaan*- This may be in order to emphasize that Canaan was born after the exit from the ark; and therefore the incident involving him and Noah's drunkenness would have occurred quite some years afterwards.

9:19 *These three were the sons of Noah, and from these, the whole earth was populated*- This makes more sense when understood as referring to the *eretz* promised to Abraham. Genesis 10 provides the details; all the listed descendants of Noah refer to peoples dwelling within the *eretz* promised to Abraham.

9:20 *Noah began to be a farmer, and planted a vineyard*- It could be argued that Gen. 9:2 was commanding Noah to cease being a crop farmer and instead dominate and eat animals. One disobedience, or taking of a lower spiritual level, often leads to greater temptation in other areas. And this is what happened with Noah.

The Gilgamesh Epic specifically records that Utnapistim gave the workmen wine to drink whilst they built the ark (Tablet 9, lines 72-73). The Biblical account appears to consciously contradict this by stating that Noah was the first to make wine- and he did this *after* the flood.

9:21 *He drank of the wine and got drunk. He was uncovered within his tent*- Noah was a survivor, and all survivors struggle with "Why me?". In his case, he now had no competition. He was ruler of the world. There was no man to oppose him as king of the world. But he couldn't handle such great salvation. He got drunk. Lot likewise got drunk after his salvation by grave from Sodom. Man cannot handle well these ultimate realities, and often turns away from the good news of them and even the experience of them.

See on Gen. 8:10. There's a juxtaposition here between God's wonderful covenant being followed by Noah getting drunk in response to it. Despite having been given a wonderful, one sided covenant of Divine grace. We too find it hard to cope with the huge import of God's grace. It's not something we merely accept with a smile, thinking "Oh how sweet". The enormity of it is riveting and very demanding. And Noah couldn't handle it. Surely Noah knew all about alcohol, for his generation were partying right up until the flood came. If they had developed iron smelting technology by Gen. 5, they surely knew about alcohol. It is stressed that only Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives entered and left the ark. By the time Noah gets drunk, Canaan had been born to Ham and was at least a young adult. So we cannot think that Noah got drunk from ignorance as to the effect of wine, nor that it happened immediately after leaving the ark. Noah maybe had weaknesses which aren't recorded in the record of his earlier life. Peter reasons that God saved Noah by the flood (1 Pet. 3:20,21); God saved Lot by destroying Sodom and Noah by destroying his surrounding world, because He knows how to deliver the godly from temptations (2 Pet. 2:5-9). It could be that had God not done this, they too would've been caught up in the evil around them, so powerful was it. Hence Is. 54:9 speaks of the flood as "the waters of Noah". It was Noah's flood, the flood required for him, as well as to judge the world. HE was saved by grace rather than his good works (Gen. 6:8). The Mesopotamian myths speak of how the hero of the flood (cp. Noah in the Biblical account) was raised to divine, immortal status. Gen. 9:29 comments simply upon Noah: "And he died". In the myth of Utnapishtim, the one who survives the flood is turned into a hero and becomes a god. But of course Moses' inspired record is different. The flood story ends with Noah dying- not becoming a god. And Noah not only remains human, but he remains *very* human- because he goes out and gets blind drunk after he comes out of the ark. Moses' point is surely to show that real human lives really do intersect with Almighty God's work, words and actions.

9:22 *Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside*- The sin of Ham in relation to Noah's drunkenness included the fact that he told his brothers about Noah's shame (Gen. 9:22). This incident seems to be alluded to by Paul when he says that it is a shame to speak of what sinners do in secret (Eph. 5:12). A large amount of the communication which would be called 'gossip'

includes the communication of sinful things which would be better not entering the minds of saints in any case- one tends to gossip about a neighbour's adultery rather than his lost cat. The sin of Ham is presented as telling his brothers about their father's sin. The word "outside" gives the impression of seeing something in privacy, and then going outside and telling it to others.

9:23 *Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it on both their shoulders, went in backwards, and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were backwards, and they didn't see their father's nakedness*- "Covered" is a related word to the 'covering' of the ark (Gen. 8:13). As they had been covered by God and thus saved, so they sought to cover the sin of another. Our experience of covering in Christ should be similar, not gossiping of others' sin but seeking to cover it (s.w. Prov. 17:9; 10:12; 11:13). There is a direct allusion to this incident in Prov. 12:16: "A prudent man covers [s.w.] shame". What they did to Noah is what we should do in response to our covering / atonement in Christ. Covering others' sin isn't the same as turning a blind eye to it; it involves conscious forgiveness, but then the covering of it in the sense that God also covers sin and doesn't mention it against us ever again.
"Their faces were backward" uses the same word as in Ex. 33:23, where God hides His face from Moses and only His "back" is seen. The verbal similarities between the two incidents are pointed. Perhaps Moses in recording this incident is suggesting that he felt like drunken Noah, and God showed the same grace to him as Noah's sons showed to their drunken father by not looking upon his sin and nakedness.

Uncovering of nakedness was an idiom for incest. Possibly Ham slept with Noah's wife, Ham's own mother, whilst Noah was drunk. This would explain the otherwise strange cursing of Canaan for Ham's sin; although this requires us to understand this as uttered after the child was born. Of this was the outcome of the incest, then all makes sense. This would then be the situation of Dt. 23:1 "A man shall not take his father's wife, and shall not uncover his father's skirt". To uncover your father's nakedness was to uncover your mother's nakedness: "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is the nakedness of your father" (Lev. 18:7,8). Such things are described as the practices of the Canaanites and Egyptians, the descendants of Ham. Hence Gen. 9:22 stresses how "Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father". Mem slept with their fathers' wives in order to usurp them. Think of Absalom with David's concubines (2 Sam. 15:20-23), Reuben's relations with Bilhah (Gen. 35:22; 49:3,4), David with Saul's concubines (2 Sam. 12:8), and Adonijah's attempt to acquire David's wife Abishag (2 Kings 2:13-25). This is also condemned in Ez. 22:10. So we can conclude Ham was trying to do this to Noah. He showed no gratitude for the great salvation his father had achieved. Surely the roots of this tension with his father would have been there whilst the ark was being built and

during the time of living in the ark. And yet for all this, Ham was one of those reoresenting the faithful who will be finally saved, according to Heb. 11. The ungodly world was destroyed but Noah and his family saved, Peter argues. Ezekiel likewise implies that Noah saved his family. And so Ham will be saved, despite all this. Just as Noah himself after the flood was set up as a second Adam but failed like Adam. Yet he will be saved. It's all of grace.

9:24 *Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had done to him*- There is a clear similarity with Lot, who got so blind drunk that he didn't realize what was happening whilst his daughters had sexually abused him. And yet Lot, like Noah, is still presented as "righteous" overall. The similarities may suggest that there was some kind of sexual abuse of Noah by his grandson Canaan. To uncover or 'see [a relative's] nakedness' is an idiom used for sexual relations throughout Lev. 18. The fact Ham and Japheth *covered* his nakedness may mean that they did *not* 'uncover his nakedness' in the sense the idiom is used in Lev. 18; they didn't participate.

9:25 *He said, Canaan is cursed*- As suggested on :24, this could be because Canaan had sexually abused him. But another approach is possible. Noah thrice rails against Canaan (:26,27). Why, seeing that the shame had been done to him by Ham, Canaan's father? This seems a classic example of transference- people often focus their anger not against the one who has hurt them, but against that person's relative, family or cause. We should deal with persons directly, perceiving the value and meaning of the human person; and not deflect the relationship onto others as Noah appears to have done. The curses placed by Noah have no fulfilment [contrary to many racist and misguided attempts to force such a fulfilment]. The story ends with a huge spiritual anticlimax, although later reference to Noah shows that he was judged faithful overall.

He will be servant of servants to his brothers- If this is addressed to Canaan, then we can assume that Ham had had other children by this stage, placing the incident some time after the exit from the ark. But as noted above, Noah appears to be talking to Ham, when he is referring to Canaan; he was making the son guilty for the father's sin, and vice versa.

9:26 *He said, Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem. Let Canaan be his servant*- According to :25, Canaan was to be the servant of his brothers. But here he is to be servant to Shem. Again we see a confusion between Ham and his son Canaan. It could simply be because Noah was drunk and confused when he uttered these words; or he could be practicing some kind of guilt by association, making the son suffer for the father's sins, or vice versa. The Hebrew could mean 'May Shem be blessed by Yahweh, his God'. We wonder why Shem is singled out for the highest and first blessing; for

Japheth is to be enlarged, but to still dwell in the tents of Shem (:27). Perhaps Noah was elevating Shem to the status of firstborn which Ham had previously enjoyed. Or maybe Shem did some specific act of kindness in trying to shield Noah's shame.

9:27 *May God enlarge Japheth. Let him dwell in the tents of Shem. Let Canaan be his servant*- "Japheth" means 'enlarged', so there is a play on words here. Noah wishes that Japheth experiences what his name meant. But he is still to dwell in the tents of Shem, who was to be blessed above all. To 'dwell in the tent' of someone meant to be subservient to them (Ps. 120:5). So clearly Noah is establishing a hierarchy here amongst his sons. There is nothing in the record which suggests that Shem did more than Japheth for Noah. But he is given a great blessing here; and again, Canaan was to be servant to Japheth as well as to Shem. The descendants of Japheth and Shem are listed in chapter 10, and there is no particular evidence that these blessings and cursings were actually fulfilled. They were uttered as Noah awoke from his drunken stupour. Likewise not all the blessings uttered by Jacob came particularly true for all his sons.

9:28 *Noah lived three hundred fifty years after the flood*- This meant he died just around the time Abraham was born. We are invited to see an unbroken line of the faithful continuing.

9:29 *All the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, then he died*- The Mesopotamian myths speak of how the hero of the flood (cp. Noah in the Biblical account) was raised to divine, immortal status. Gen. 9:29 comments simply upon Noah: "And he died".

GENESIS CHAPTER 10

10:1 *Now this is the history of the generations of the sons of Noah and of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Sons were born to them after the flood*- Thoughtful readers of Genesis must have wondered at the rubric "Now these are the generations of...". This phrase, the *toledoth* [Hebrew for "generations"] formula, is used to introduce both genealogies and also narratives. Why not say "Now this is the story / account / history of Joseph"? Why describe a narrative as a genealogy? Why preface genealogies and narrative histories as if they are one and the same? I suggest that the inspired writer of the Bible's opening book wished to establish the point that history gives birth to the future, history is pregnant, and not dry, dead and finished. And God's history especially demonstrates that the "generations" somehow repeat themselves over history, in that situations and character types recur over time in a Divinely planned manner.

It has been observed that in none of the flood myths is there anything like the table of nations of Gen. 10, which seeks to explain how the area affected by the flood was

subsequently repopulated. However, the 70 peoples mentioned in Gen. 10 are clearly meant to be understood as representative of the wholeness of peoples. The point is being made that all tribal groups have one common origin, either in Adam or in one of Noah's sons. Remember that Moses was writing against a background of tribalism, where groups were persuaded that their group alone was the master race, and all foreigners were to be despised. The value of persons inspired by the Genesis record rose far above this petty tribalism. And for all our apparent sophistication, it's evident that our world is just as much full of tribalism as it ever was.

The surrounding myths all emphasize how depleted humanity after the flood started to re-grow in size by miraculous means- the Atrahasis Epic claims that magic incantations of the god Ea over 14 lumps of clay gave birth to many new humans after the flood; the Greek flood tradition asserts that Deucalion threw stones which turned into men. The Biblical record states simply and realistically how the population re-grew through natural procreation.

Gen. 10 lists 70 nations- see on Ex. 24:9-11. Luke records that the Lord sent out 72 preachers (Lk. 10:1). The Jews understood that there were 72 nations in the world, based on the LXX of Gen. 10. Surely Luke's point is that they went only to the Jews, thus highlighting the gap between the disciples' understanding at the time, and the Lord's further reaching intention of a mission to the Gentiles.

After the flood, we come to the record of Babel. This is prefaced by some genealogies. The record speaks as if Shem, Ham and Japheth were the only people living on 'earth'. Once we take this to mean 'the land', things are much easier. These three men were ancestors of the Middle Eastern races [as provable within the pages of the Bible itself], but not of any others. The idea that the black peoples descended from Ham / Canaan and were to be servants is sadly a 19th century piece of racism, that has far too much acceptance in our community. The tension between the children of Shem and Canaan has been worked out between the Jews and Canaanites, not white and black. The Canaanites which we read of in the Bible as dwelling in the land were quite simply the descendants of Canaan / Ham. Interestingly, we read of men like Magog, Gomer, Meshech, Tarshish, Asshur, Elam, Aram... all of which occur in prophecies like Ezekiel 38, as the latter day enemies of Israel. The origin of these peoples is not in Eurasia; they are the 'people of the land', the neighbours and relatives of Israel. The peoples of the land spoke one language in the sense that they all had the same intentions- to build a tower, and live together in one place, in Babylon / Babel. Previously we have been informed that the sons of Noah were divided "in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families" (Gen. 10:5,31). So when in chapter 11 we are told that they had "one language" this must refer to their unity of intent rather than them all using the same lexical items. They were scattered from Babylon / Babel into all parts of the land [i.e. that promised to Abraham]. The descendants of Shem, Ham and Japheth weren't

literally scattered into the whole planet. If the flood was local, then there would have been plenty of other people alive in other parts of the planet.

Gen. 12:1-3, the promises to Abraham, has a clear connection with the language repeatedly found in the table of nations in Gen. 10. "Country" (:1), "peoples" (:3), "nation" (:2) and "people/ race" (:1) are terms used throughout Gen. 10. The idea seems to be that all those nations are listed in Genesis 10 in order to help us understand what God promised Abraham. He was promised the inheritance of all the people, nations, countries and races of Gen. 10.

10:2 *The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras*- These and other names here occur in the list of nations in Ez. 38 who will invade Israel in the latter days, and we see that they are therefore all within the territory of the *eretz* promised to Abraham. And that is precisely the situation we see developing there today. The idea that "Japheth" refers to western Europe is mere fancy; the context here clearly explains that these are the nations living in the *eretz*. "Madai" refers to the Medes. "Tiras" is Tyre; and clearly Meshech refers to an area within the *eretz* and not to Moscow; and likewise with Tubal.

We note that out of Noah's three sons, fewest descendants are listed for Japheth. And there is no suggestion in this genealogy that they lived "in the tents of Shem", as Noah had predicted in his half drunken cursing of Ham and blessing of Japheth. This would suggest that his cursings were just that, the cursings of a man awaking with a hangover... and are not to be taken as actual prophecies of the future relationships between the sons.

10:3 *The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah*- Ashkenaz was one of the nations which overthrew Babylon (Jer. 51:27). Again, we're dealing with a people within the *eretz* and not outside of it. I would argue that the Bible has very little to specifically say about the peoples beyond the *eretz*.

10:4 *The sons of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim*- Tarshish is a relative of Togarmah (:3), Meshech and Tubal (:2). This confirms my suggestion on Ez. 38 that Tarshish is with the other invaders and not against them. Tarshish may be another name for Tyre. The Tel Amarna tablets mention some of these names as peoples in the *eretz* promised to Abraham.

10:5 *Of these were the islands of the nations divided in their lands, everyone after his language, after their families, in their nations*- The same idea of nations, languages and families is found in Rev. 5:9 and Rev. 7:9; the converts from them may refer therefore to latter day converts made within the *eretz* from all the nations and families found there. "The islands" is an idiom and not to be taken literally. Some interpret it as meaning a

people who could be reached by sea, or "coastlands". But not all the nations listed inhabited coastlands, and so I don't find this satisfactory. "Islands" is literally "spots", we might better understand it as meaning simply "locations". The same Hebrew word is translated "country" in Jer. 47:4, and is parallel with "places" in Zeph. 2:11. Is. 11:11 lists a number of nations and summarizes them as being "the isles". And Is. 20:6 apparently speaks of the inhabitants of Jerusalem as "the inhabitants of this isle", meaning 'this place'. "The isles" are "the ends of the land", the areas on the borders of the *eretz*, in Is. 41:5.

It's possible that :5 refers to all the descendants of Noah; that they were the sole origin of the nations in the *eretz*. But it could also be that :5 refers specifically to how Japheth was indeed "enlarged" and spread abroad as defined here.

10:6 *The sons of Ham: Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan*- The Canaanites were therefore under Noah's curse to be subservient to Shem. But as discussed on Gen. 9, it's hard to know whether to take Noah's cursings as any more than the cursings of a man awaking from a drunken stupor.

Pan-Arabism will in the end come to its full term (however short-lived), in the final invasion of Israel. The Hebrew word translated “Libya” is also translated “Phut” or “Put”, which was another name for Libya in Bible times. “Mizraim” likewise is the Biblical name for Egypt. Significantly, Phut, Mizraim and Canaan were brothers (Gen. 10:6). There is therefore a strong and valid idea of Arab brotherhood between the Palestinian Arabs [i.e. the Arabs living in Canaan or the land of Israel] and the Arabs of Libya, Egypt and the other countries in the surrounding Arab world. The Babylonian invasion of Judah was a type of the invasion of Israel by latter day ‘Babylon’, which will bring on the return of Christ. But this invasion [as at the time of the Assyrian invasion of Israel] was really by a confederacy of nations- including the Ethiopians, Lydians, Egyptians and Libyans (Jer. 46:8,9 cp. Nahum 3:9). And history will repeat itself- in that these nations along with Babylon will invade Israel in the last days. But where history shall stop, the red line of human time come to a terminus, will be in the simple fact that this time, the Lord Jesus shall return to earth to establish God’s Kingdom here.

10:7 *The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan*- Sheba and Dedan are found in Ez. 38 as amongst the enemies of Israel in the last days; see on Ez. 38:13. The impression is given that all the nations surrounding Israel in the *eretz*, descendants of all three sons of Noah, will invade her in the last days.

10:8 *Cush became the father of Nimrod. He began to be a mighty one in the land*- Nimrod founded Babel or Babylon (:10). The "top" or *rosh* of the Babel tower was to reach to heaven; as in Ez. 38:2, the *rosh* refers to a person who was being elevated, and we assume this person was Nimrod. Ham and his descendants were not therefore black

Africans, as proposed by 19th century racist theologians. The connection is clearly with the "mighty ones" of Gen. 6:4, for whose sake the earth was destroyed by the flood. Again, the potential for restoring Eden was messed up by human dysfunction. The term is used of the 'mighty ones' of Canaan who were to be subdued (Josh. 6:2; Jud. 5:13,23). Israel in the wilderness listening to Moses' teaching would have learnt that there had been 'mighty ones in the land', the very land they were now approaching, who likewise would ultimately come to nothing.

10:9 *He was a mighty hunter before Yahweh. Therefore it is said, Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before Yahweh*- Nimrod "the mighty hunter against the Lord" (Heb.) uses a word related to 'Gibbor', the title of Christ used in Is. 9:6. Nimrod appears to be a prototype anti-God and anti-Christ, and for this he was well known even then. Gen. 10:10,11 shows his characteristic of building cities in the Babylon/Assyria area. Seeing that "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel" (Gen. 10:10), it is not unreasonable to assume that when "a man said to his neighbour, Go to, let us make brick" to build the tower of Babel, this is in fact referring to Nimrod (Gen. 11:3 A.V. mg.).

10:10 *The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar*- Nimrod was therefore the instigator of the Babel building we read of in chapter 11. Perhaps the allusion is to how God created "in the beginning" (s.w.), as if Nimrod tried to make a new creation of his own device. We can therefore assume that idea of Babel, of building a ziggurat to reach heaven, began with Nimrod. In Is. 14, another king of Babylon says the same: "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also in the mount of the congregation (i.e. the temple mount), in the sides of the north (Jerusalem, Ps. 48:2)... yet thou shalt be brought down... that (his children) do not possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities" (Is. 14:13,14,15,21). This last phrase is definitely alluding to the record of Nimrod's city building program as detailed in Gen. 10:9-11. This "king of Babylon" of Is. 14 can refer with equal relevance to either Nebuchadnezzar or Sennacherib,' both of whose invasions of Israel are typical of that which is to occur in the last days.

Again we note that all these places were within the *eretz* promised to Abraham (e.g. Calneh is a place in Assyria, see Is. 10:9; Am. 6:2).

10:11 *Out of that land he went into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah*- The going out of the land of Shinar (:10) presumably refers to how Nimrod's intention to build Babel was thwarted, and from there he went away from the area (he was scattered away from it, Gen. 11:8) and built Nineveh, as a kind of replacement Babel. The AV reads "Out of that land went forth Asshur". The reference could therefore be to the son of Shem who had this same name (:22). In this case the point would be that the descendants of Shem and Ham committed apostacy together, lending weight to my suggestion on chapter 9 that Noah's cursing of Ham was but the ravings of an angry man awaking with a hangover.

10:12 *And Resen between Nineveh and Calah (the same is the great city)*- There is nothing much known about Resen or Calah; yet one or both of them merits the title "the great city". Perhaps this title was because, as noted on :11, Nimrod had been seeking to rebuild Babel there. The same Hebrew term "great city" is used of the cities of Canaan which the Israelites who first heard this Mosaic history were intended to conquer (Num. 13:28).

10:13 *Mizraim*- This is the usual word for "Egypt". The *eretz* extended to the river of Egypt, and so we can assume that this person lived in Egypt east of the Nile, rather than referring to "Egypt" as it is now defined.

Became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim- Anamim may be related to the "anakim", the giant people who inhabited Canaan. Again we can discern how Moses was producing this material with the primary intention of explaining to Israel the origin of the peoples they were to encounter in Canaan. These people were mere men, descendants from the same Noah whom they too were descended from; and whatever their size or physical features, they were not to be unduly feared. We note the absence of Divine names in nearly all the descendants of Noah here listed; in contrast to the way that they feature in the names of those before the flood. The impression we get is that Noah's descendants failed to keep the faith, until it had totally died out and God called Abram and revealed Himself to him.

10:14 *Pathrusim, Casluhim (which the Philistines descended from), and Caphtorim*- As noted on :13, one primary intention of this genealogy was to assure Israel that the enemies they were encountering in the *eretz*, such as the Philistines, were mere men; there was nothing superhuman about them.

10:15 *Canaan became the father of Sidon (his firstborn), Heth*- Sidon is known as a town in northern Palestine. Constantly, we encounter evidence that this genealogy describes the peoples of the *eretz* promised to Abraham. Heth likewise lived in the land of Canaan (Gen. 25:3).

10:16 *The Jebusite, the Amorite, the Girgashite*- The Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem (2 Sam. 24:18), and so often the Hivites, Jebusites and Amorites are spoken of as the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. There is no way that Canaan therefore refers to Africa and negroid peoples.

10:17 *The Hivite, the Arkite, the Sinite*- These were the tribes through whom the Israelites would've travelled on their wilderness journeys; the Sinites lives around mount Sinai. Moses is providing historical and geographical context for the Israelites.

10:18 *The Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were spread abroad*- The same word is used for how the builders of Babel feared being "spread abroad" (Gen. 11:8), and yet they were "spread abroad" after the confusion of languages (Gen. 11:9). Again this is evidence that the genealogy of chapter 10 is descriptive of what came to pass after the Babel incident in chapter 11. We read there of how the situation in chapter 10 came about; see on :20. The same word is frequently translated "scattered", and usually refers to Divine judgment. So we could read this as meaning that the Canaanites were scattered, spread abroad, after Babel, in judgment for wanting to resist that judgment; and for wanting to build the blasphemous ziggurat, a massive temple system intending to place themselves as God Himself. There is reason to think that in the last days a similar structure will be built by the same ethnic groups in the same land... and likewise judged.

If we include Canaan himself, we have from :15-18 a description of 12 tribes of Canaan. They were a fake, imitation Israel; and were to be superseded by the 12 tribes of Israel.

10:19 *The border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as you go toward Gerar, to Gaza; as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, to Lasha*- This note is included to demonstrate how 'their' land was to be later promised to Abraham.

10:20 *These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their languages, in their lands, in their nations*- As noted on :18, we are reading here of a situation which came about as a result of the judgment on Babel. For here we read of division according to their languages; and this was achieved through the judgment upon the Babel builders in chapter 11. We can conclude that the builders of Babel were all the peoples listed in chapter 10, who as a result of Babel were divided according to different languages.

10:21 *To Shem, the father of all the children of Eber*- "Eber" is understood as the root of the word "Hebrew". The idea can be 'one who crosses over', which is one of the basic characteristics of all God's people.

The elder brother of Japheth, to him also were children born- Shem, Ham and Japheth are described as all being born in the same year; perhaps Shem was the eldest because he came out first. Or maybe the curse of Noah upon Ham and Canaan was a way of giving the right of the firstborn to Shem, although he may not have been the firstborn at birth.

10:22 *The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram*- Wherever these peoples later lived, they were at this time all within the *eretz* promised to Abraham.

10:23 *The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash*- "Aram" is the word usually translated "Syria". Job lived in the land of Uz. "Mash" is "Meshech" in 1 Chron. 1:17; the

Meshech of Ez. 38 is to be interpretted as some people within the *eretz* promised to Abraham.

10:24 *Arpachshad became the father of Shelah. Shelah became the father of Eber*- "Shelah" like most of the names in this genealogy has a rather negative spiritual meaning; in this case, "missile". The impression given is that spirituality died out over these generations, until God started again with the call of Abram.

10:25 *To Eber were born two sons. The name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided. His brother's name was Joktan*- This "division" refers not to plate tectonics, but to the division of the earth according to language which we will read of in chapter 11. Several times here in chapter 10, we find reference to the division which is described in chapter 11. The division of the *eretz* at Babel is therefore presented here as occurring four generations after the flood; although the Biblical genealogies frequently skip generations, and in this case, they must be compared with the information provided in 1 Chronicles.

10:26 *Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah*- More sons of Joktan are recorded than for any other in this genealogy. Yet his name means "made little"; perhaps we are to understand that the one who was somehow made little was the one who became great, in terms of descendants.

10:27 *Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah*- "Hadoram" meaning "high place", we again get the impression of unspirituality amongst these peoples. I have mentioned that this genealogy is explaining how indeed the descendants of Noah were scattered throughout the *eretz* promised to Abraham after Babel; where they later may have migrated to isn't in view here. But it is also noteworthy that the children of Joktan would appear to be located in the Arabian peninsular and what is now Yemen. The southern borders of the *eretz* are hard to define; perhaps we are to include these areas within it.

10:28 *Obal, Abimael, Sheba*- Most commentaries focus upon where these tribes ended up living later. But let's remember that we are here reading of how the descendants of Noah were scattered throughout the *eretz* promised to Abraham after the events of Babel. Where they may have migrated to afterwards is not what is in view here.

10:29 *Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan*- There is a "Havilah" in :7, which may suggest that the lines of Ham and Joktan intermarried. This again would be evidence that the curses of Noah didn't come into effect; for he presupposed that the lines of descent from his sons would be distinct, especially between Ham and the others. According to LXX notes, this "Jobab" is the Job of the book of Job.

10:30 *Their dwelling was from Mesha, as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east*- This could as well be translated "the mountain of ancient time". Perhaps the contrast is with Mount Zion; this was perhaps a centre of idolatry.

10:31 *These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their languages, in their lands, after their nations*- As noted on :18, the point is being made that the splitting up of the families was on the basis of language; and chapter 11 will explain how that came about. Chapter 11 is not therefore strictly chronological, but as often in the Hebrew Bible, a step backwards to explain how a situation just described has come about. The way that language differences were eclipsed within the true Israel by the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is another case of where the Genesis curses for disobedience are mitigated for God's people.

10:32 *These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations. Of these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood*- As noted on :18, we have here a description of the scattered abroad ["divided"] descendants of Noah in the *eretz*, but now in chapter 11 we will read how that division or scattering abroad came about- through the division of languages at Babel.

GENESIS CHAPTER 11

11:1 *The whole earth was of one language and of one speech*- "Language" could possibly refer to one language root. I have suggested that the Genesis history concerns the *eretz* promised to Abraham, and the peoples living upon it. This is not to say that there were not other peoples living elsewhere on the globe, with their languages. But those in the *eretz* had one language root; and this was miraculously broken up into various dialects to the point of being confusing. The Hebrew for "speech" here is not the same word used for "speech" later on in this record - this word can more suggests a purpose/desire, often a wrong one. The implication is that this one desire was to build the tower of Babel; the confounding of languages affecting all inhabitants of the earth shows that all the families of the earth were either in the Babel region or represented there. Truly it was a tower "which the children of men builded" (Gen. 11:5), bound together in unity by a common allegiance to this renowned king of Babylon.

If we take *eretz* as referring specifically to the land promised to Abraham, the idea could be that there were other languages on the earth; chapters 9 and 10 have explained there were already nations divided according to languages. But within the *eretz* there arose a policy of "one language" in order to unite the people who came to Shinar. Rather like Russian became the "one language" of the disparate peoples bound together within the Soviet Union. Thus we read that "it came to be" (:1) that they had one language. This was part of their intention to create "one name", one set of characteristics and values. Which were the antithesis of the YHWH Name. This was the essence of their sin- the making of an alternative Name, rather than the act of building a city and tower. The idea of a ziggurat was not to challenge the gods. Rather was the idea that at the top of it, there was an altar or some symbol intended to reach out to the god in heaven. This was seen

as a 'gate' for the gods to come down to men upon. Akkadian *babilu* means 'gate of the gods'; but this was it seems turned into 'Babel', 'confusion'. And Yahweh alludes to this by saying that He will indeed come down- in judgment. They created their own system, their Name, their city, and their tower reached out to their god. They built the city from fear, "lest we be scattered abroad on the surface of the whole earth". The Hebrew has been rendered “so that we will not be captured and carried away to other lands”. They clearly feared invasion and scattering into exile. The connection of course is with how Israel were to later do this, reaching out to other gods, rather than to Yahweh; making their own Name, rather than accepting His Name. Babel would have required many slaves to build; and we see from Gen. 10:8-10 that this was one of a series of cities founded by Nimrod, who was a warrior and "hunter", possibly of men. So we have the impression of an entire system and "name" developing, based upon aggression and conquest, seeking to solidify and defend itself through building a city and reaching out to their god through the ziggurat tower. We note that Nimrod was from Ham, who was cursed as a slave (Gen. 9:25; 10:6-8). It was as if he wished to uproot his Divine destiny by hunting and forcing others into slavery. So we can understand the reasons why Yahweh was to judge his system. They all had the same language, but they were cursed with division- which is typical of how God curses those who displease Him. "Babel" means 'confusion'. The divisions between them were so legendary that it was the name folks gave to the ruined city. Division and destruction are connected throughout the Bible. A house divided falls. And it is why any divided community is in fact experiencing God's displeasure. Having destroyed those who were attempting to make *their* name great, Yahweh will go on to choose Abram and make his name great (Gen. 12:3) through inserting the central part of the Yahweh Name into 'Abram', making him 'Abraham'. This is one of the connections between the Babel account and the story of Abraham which begins straight afterwards. The Babel builders wanted to make their name great, as do all unbelievers in some way. Whereas God's people ant to make *His* Name great, and to subsume themselves within that Name. The record of Babel leaves the earth's peoples divided and judged. But the purpose of God through Israel was to reunite them. Sadly Israel forsook the Name of their God, and became elitist and xenophobic, rather than including the Gentiles within the Yahweh Name. And so "Israel" was redefined to refer to all baptized into the seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus. And that is why the table of nations in Gen. 10 is alluded to in the record of representatives of "all nations" who were baptized in Acts 2. All three branches [Shem, Ham and Japheth] are represented in the Acts 2 list. The point of Acts 2 is that the people of different *languages* were united in Christ by baptism into the Name. Babel was undone- for those within the Israel of God. But yet again, the "Israel" of God divided and became exclusive and divisive. All who uphold that division amongst the seed of Abraham have therefore not grasped the intention of God in actually uniting people. Israel were a nation taken out of another nation (Dt. 4:34). The nations were to come in to them- not them to the world. The fulfilment of the promises to Abraham will therefore only be when representatives of "all

nations" have entered into "Israel" and are united therein. And the Lord Himself predicates the time of His return upon the Gospel going into "all the world... to all nations" (Mt. 24:14), to all those in the table of nations of Gen. 10. Paul therefore states that the 'coming in' of "the full number of the Gentiles" will lead to the Deliverer coming to Zion; "and in this way all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:25-27). The coming "in" of the Gentiles, into the Hope of Israel, thereby creates the true Israel, which shall thereby be saved.

11:2 *It happened, as they travelled east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they lived there*- Moses' words in Genesis deconstruct later Babylonian myths. Perhaps the clearest case of this is in the record of Babel. The Babylonian myths boasted of the building of the city of Babylon and its tower / ziggurat. The tower of Babel was built in a plain (Gen. 11:2); and both Strabo and Herodotus mention that Babylon was built in a wide plain. The record of the tower being built with bricks is so similar to the Babylonian *Epic Of Creation*, Tablet 6, lines 58-61, which held that "For a year [the gods] made bricks" to build the ziggurat of Babylon. Their myths claimed that after the deluge, humanity came to Babylon and the Anunnaki deities, who had supported Marduk in his battle, built the city. But Gen. 11:5 labours that it was "the sons of men" who built Babel. Cassuto describes the Genesis record as "a kind of satire on what appeared to be a thing of beauty and glory in the eyes of the Babylonians" (Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary On The Book Of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992) Vol. 2 p. 227).

The 'coming down' of Yahweh to destroy man's evil intentions at Babel, points forward to His future intervention to judge the wickedness of men. The record of this in Gen. 11 is set against the background of Gen. 10. "As *they* journeyed from the east...*they* found a plain..." (Gen. 11:2) is in the context of the record of the growth and rapid expansion of the tribes of the *eretz* in Gen. 10. We recall that Adam was banished eastwards from Eden; this impression of eastward movement may suggest they were getting further and further from the sanctuary in Eden, and also moving eastward from Ararat ['holy mount']. I have suggested that the ark rested on mount Zion; eastward from there would lead to Babylon, or Babel.

"Travelled" means specifically to take up tent pegs, and the word is used multiple times later in the Pentateuch for the travellings of the Israelites in the wilderness. And it was at exactly that period when Moses was composing the Pentateuch, with the nomadic Israelites as the primary audience. The warning was not to commit idolatry as these earlier rebels had done; and to accept that keeping on a journey was part of God's plan, rather than seeking to remain in one place. And in essence, that lesson needs to be learned by us today.

They halted their migration in a plain, the Hebrew suggesting a flat area bounded by rivers- which would fit Babylon. They had been commanded to spread over the land and subdue it; but like Adam with the same commandment, they decided not to. The descendants of Noah, which after a few generations would have numbered maybe 30,000 people, wanted to resist this; just as the early Christians resisted the command to take the Gospel into all the earth, despite the gift of languages giving them the opportunity to overcome language barriers. We see in these observations the power of conservatism within human nature; the desire for stability, the old and familiar, rather than the new. The Lord commented upon this (Lk. 5:39). No matter how liberal and open minded we may consider ourselves to be, there is an almost overpowering inertia within us.

11:3 *A man said to his neighbour*- The origin of the sin punished at Babel was a man suggesting something to his neighbour. The record of the lies of Cain and the sins of the people at the time of the flood and later at Babel all clearly locate human beings as responsible for the very sins which the pagan myths blamed upon the gods, with the implication in the Gilgamesh Epic that man was created an inevitable sinner by nature and therefore not fully culpable for his sin. Such ideas have in their essence re-appeared in mistaken Christian theologies of later millennia. Sin and death were blamed upon the gods. Thus Gilgamesh was told by Siduri: “When the gods created mankind, they allotted death to mankind, but life they retained in their keeping” (Tablet 10, col. 3, 3-5). In these kinds of pagan ideas we see the essence of common ideas about Satan; the blame for sin and the human condition that arises from it is blamed upon some superhuman being.

Come- Three times in this record (Gen. 11:3,4 and 7) we read the phrase "Come" or "Go to" (AV) in the contexts of the men 'going to' in the building, and of God 'going to' in His dramatic intervention. It cannot be coincidence that this rare idiom occurs twice close together in James 4:13; 5:1. The context there is of warning believers not to build their own 'Babels' of wealth and monuments to human achievement, seeing that they would be suddenly destroyed by the Lord's coming. This in itself points to a latter-day application of this Genesis record- indicating that weak believers will get caught up in the latter day Nimrod's unity movement, and will benefit from it materially?

Let’s make bricks, and burn them thoroughly. They had brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar- The record of the tower being built with bricks is so similar to the Babylonian *Epic Of Creation*, Tablet 6, lines 58-61, which held that "For a year [the gods] made bricks" to build the ziggurat of Babylon. Their myths claimed that after the deluge, humanity came to Babylon and the Anunnaki deities, who had supported Marduk in his battle, built the city. But Gen. 11:5 labours that it was "the sons of men" who built Babel. Cassuto describes the Genesis record as "a kind of satire on what appeared to be a thing of beauty and glory in the eyes of the Babylonians".

The building materials here listed are appropriate to Babylon. I suggested on Gen. 10:9,10 that it was Nimrod who began the building project, and who was the *rosh* or head of the tower which was to be exalted to heaven. There is in the Babylon area a ruined tower which the Arabs call 'the tower of Nimrod'.

"Let us make brick" is literally 'let us make ourselves Laban'. 'Laban' meaning 'white' came to be associated with 'brick' because the bricks were presumably made from white clay. This created the picture of a dazzling white tower, gloriously reflecting the desert sun - which suggests that the tower was a piece of religious symbolism, perhaps a mock temple. This impression receives Biblical confirmation in Zech. 5. This chapter describes the corruptions of the Jewish and Christian apostasies; chapter 4 speaks of the building of the true temple in Jerusalem, whilst chapter 5 matches this with a description of a false temple being built "in the land of Shinar" (Zech.5:11). 'Shinar' being used rather than 'Babylon' must be in order to take us back to the tower/temple which men built "in the land of Shinar" in Gen. 11:2.

The religious associations of the tower are strengthened by the similarity of this tower built by the first king of Babylon on a plain and the statue built by Nebuchadnezzar on the plain of Dura, also in Babylon. It may be that the locations are identical. And there is a continuity of theme to be found in Arab leaders (kings of Babylon) showing a distinct liking for large monuments and religious imagery expressed in big building projects. Saddam Hussein, claiming to be the latter day Nebuchadnezzar, tried to rebuild Babylon and fill the area with quasi-religious towers and obelisks glorifying himself. "Let us make ourselves Laban" (v. 3) continues the Arab connections, seeing that Laban's persecution of Jacob typifies that of Israel by the Arabs, especially in the last days.

There are other references to the persecution of Israel in the Babel record - the using of bricks and mortar to build a huge piece of religious symbolism recalls the work of Israel in Egypt (the same Hebrew word for 'bricks' occurs in the Exodus record). "Slime had they for mortar" (Gen. 11:3) also contains echoes of Israel in Egypt. "Slime" is the same word as "mortar" in Ex. 1:14, and "mortar" in Gen. 11:3 is the word translated "pitch" concerning how Moses' bulrush basket was made (Ex. 2:3). This conjures up the picture of Amram bringing home some mortar from the building site in order to make that ark. These echoes of Israel under persecution are hard to make sense of until it is recognized that the context of this Babel passage is the account of Arab growth in Gen. 10, and that Babel was built under Arab auspices. Bearing in mind the certain Arab domination of Israel in the last days, it is surely justifiable to see in this record a hint of a latter day Arab-led coalition, which will perhaps express its grandeur in physical terms by the building of a structure.

This colossus being built of baked clay and mortar and being effectively destroyed by the Lord's 'coming down' inevitably connects with the feet of the statue which Daniel

interpreted, also seen in Babylon. The feet were made of "miry clay", "mixed" (Heb. 'Arab'). Is. 41:25 also springs to mind, speaking of the second coming, "He shall come... he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay". It has been suggested that the image of Daniel 2 can be interpreted in a primarily Arab context, and we have shown that the Babel-builders are also primarily Arab. "*They* journeyed from the east... *they* said... *they* builded" in Gen. 11 refers to the people of the *eretz* listed in Gen. 10.

11:4 *They said, Come, let's build ourselves a city, and a tower-* The phrase "city and tower" is so often found in Babylonian writings with reference to Babylon; but the phrase is used of Babel in Gen. 11:4. The temple of Marduk in Babylon had a sanctuary, the Esagila- "the house whose head is in heaven" and a tower called Etemenanki, "the house of the foundation of heaven and earth". Marduk supposedly lived on the seventh storey. The Babylonian inscriptions speak of the ziggurat tower as having its top in Heaven. The Genesis record deconstructs all this. The tower of Babel was built by sinful *men* and not gods; the one true God came *down* to view the tower- its top did *not* reach to Heaven, and there is a powerful word play on the word Babylon, meaning 'the gate of Heaven' in their language, and yet 'Babel', the equivalent Hebrew word, means 'confusion'. What the Babylonians thought was so great was in God's eyes and those of His people the Hebrews simply confusion and failure. The Genesis record goes on to show how that it was Abraham who had a great name made for himself (Gen. 12:2), whereas the Babel builders failed in their desire to make a permanent name for themselves. God's intention that mankind should spread out and fill the earth after the flood did eventually triumph over the builders of Babel-Babylon who tried to thwart it. Zeph. 3:9-11 allude to the Babel record- at the time of Judah's restoration from Babylon, it was God's intention to undo the effects of Babel and "change the speech of the peoples to a pure [united] speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve Him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering". Those dispersed would then gather as one, i.e. Babel would be reversed.

Our Lord appears to refer to the temple as "a tower" in Mt. 21:33, supporting the previous suggestion that there was a religious aspect to this tower. It is hard to avoid emphasizing that in our last days Arab leaders are eager to rebuild Babylon and other historic cities, seeing them as a token of their unity and common connection with a glorious Babylon of old which subdued Israel. The original Babel was built with "slime" (Gen. 11:3); the Hebrew seems to refer to bitumen, literally meaning 'that which is brought up,' and today it is Arab oil money which is financing such building schemes.

There is good internal reason to think that the Pentateuch likewise was re-written in places to bring out the relevance of Israel's past to those in captivity. Consider the use

of the word *pus*, 'scatter'. It was God's intention that mankind should scatter abroad in the earth and subdue it (Gen. 1:28); but it required the judgment of the tower of Babel to actually make them 'scatter' (Gen. 11:4). Thus even in judgment, God worked out His positive ultimate intentions with humanity. And this word *pus* is the same word used with reference to Judah's 'scattering' from the land into Babylonian captivity (Ez. 11:17; 20:34,41; 28:25). The intention, surely, was to show the captives that they had been scattered as the people had at the judgment of Babel / Babylon, but even in this, God was working out His purpose with His people and giving them the opportunity to fulfil His original intentions for them.

Whose top reaches to the sky- This is a poor translation - the A.V. putting "may reach" in italics indicates that these words are not in the original. The Hebrew for "top" is *rosh*, familiar to students of Ez. 38:2, which correctly translates it as "chief prince". The chief leader of this tower was to reach unto and into heaven, and I suggested on Gen. 10:9,10 that Nimrod was this individual. Every Bible-minded student will race to Is. 14, where another king of Babylon says the same: "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also in the mount of the congregation (i.e. the temple mount), in the sides of the north (Jerusalem, Ps. 48:2)... yet thou shalt be brought down... that (his children) do not possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities", as Nimrod had done (Is. 14:13,14,15,21). The connection with Is. 14 confirms that this tower had religious symbolism, and that with the image of Dan. 2 suggests that the chief prince (*rosh*) of the image is based on Nimrod, the first king of Babylon. Daniel, of course, also made it clear that the head of the image was the king of Babylon, who was then Nebuchadnezzar.

When we read that the summit of Babel was to touch the heavens (Gen. 11:4), we find that the Hebrew phrase refers usually to persons, elevating their head. There are many uninspired parallel accounts of the building of Babel in contemporary literature- the Enuma Elish speaks of how the builders “raised high the head of Esagila toward the Heaven”. Clearly the tower was seen as headed up by a person, just as was the image of Dan. 2 and also that built by Nebuchadnezzar. These all indicate that the Lord Jesus will return to destroy a human system headed up by a specific, antiChrist individual. The Canaanite tribes were noted for the very high walls of their cities - "unto heaven" (Gen. 11:4 cp. Dt. 1:28). This shows a continuity of theme between Babel and the tribes of Canaan. Significantly, God decided that nothing would be "restrained" from these people if their tower were completed - using the same Hebrew word translated "walled up" in Dt. 1:28 concerning the cities of Canaan.

The whole prophetic meta narrative of the Bible is in many ways a tale of two cities- Babylon and Jerusalem. There are times when Babylon masquerades as Zion- a false city of God with a false Messiah leading her. Babylon / Babel was a city built to reach unto Heaven, in contrast to the true city of God which comes down from Heaven (Gen.

11:4 cp. Rev. 21:2). And there are times when Zion in her apostacy has appeared as Babylon. But in the final conflict of the last days, these two cities will be literally pitted against each other. Zion will briefly succumb under the might and pride of Babylon, to rise again in eternal glory. It was in Babylon where Nimrod first built the tower of Babel, the first organized rebellion against God; and it was there that God first entered into open judgment of flesh and humanity *en masse*. And it is here likewise that His purpose with sin and His true people will likewise be fulfilled.

And let's make ourselves a name- The new religious system was to replace God's Name with their own. The image of Dan. 2 is fundamentally concerning the domination of Israel (the earth / land), and we have connected that image with the tower of Babel. The building of the tower is also linked to the persecution of Israel through various allusions to Exodus. The motive for building Babel (i.e. dominating Israel in the typology), is to stop the builders being scattered and to make them a common name (Gen. 11:4). Prophecies like Ps. 83, as well as an awareness of current Arab politics, indicate that the motive for the final Arab invasion of Israel will be in order to unite the naturally disparate Arab peoples. But it is twice emphasized that the Lord's 'coming down' resulted in their being "scattered abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth" (Gen. 11:8,9), using the very language which they used in v. 4 - "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." This clearly connects with the little stone destroying the desolating image and scattering the remains of it worldwide.

Lest we be scattered abroad on the surface of the whole earth- Their conscious intention was to disobey the command to Noah's descendants to spread throughout the *eretz* and subdue it. The memory of the Flood would still have been reasonably fresh with the generation of Babel. After the Flood the nations were "divided in the earth" (Gen. 10:25,32); so perhaps the Canaanites building the city and tower so that they would not "be scattered abroad upon the earth" was a conscious effort to resist the judgments brought about by the Flood and its effects. We have shown that the Flood particularly represents the judgments of the last days, and in the typology of Gen. 11 it is these which the builders of Babel consciously try to avoid. This raises the question of how they will be so convinced that these judgments really are imminent. A display of the cherubim over Jerusalem (or a similar "sign of the son of man in heaven"), or, of course, the actual second coming of the Lord, seem the only feasible explanations of their convictions.

11:5 *Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower*- As if He had to search and come to have a closer look; this 'language of limitation' may refer to the Angels rather than God personally. "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded" – surely this language of limitation must be concerning the Angels,

seeing that God is aware of all things. The Angelic response was "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language" (Gen. 11:5,7). This recalls the Angels' words of Gen. 1:26 "Let us make man in our image"- see notes there.

Which the children of men built- See on Gen. 11:2 above.

11:6 *Yahweh said, Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is what they begin to do. Now nothing will be withheld from them, which they intend to do*- The intentions of the people were clearly far more than simply building a tower. That was but a beginning- towards a fake kingdom of God on earth. The Hebrew for "begin" here is also translated "to profane", again showing the distinctly religious aspect of their actions in building the tower. But God wants to save; and so He didn't allow such a system to fully develop. But it was not that God was as it were on the back foot; He didn't want to allow the earth to reach a point where He would have to mass destroy as He had done at the flood. As ever, His judgments were to save, ultimately, rather than to punish for its own sake.

With the world supporting them, and with a unity of mind never before experienced, the latter day Babel-builders will be able to gleefully relish the prospect of completely destroying the Jews and building their own religious system. Dan. 12:1 describes this period as "a time of trouble (for Israel) such as never was since there was a nation". "Since there was a nation" may well refer to the time of Babel, when the nations became more clearly defined. If this is indeed a Babel allusion, then the suggested connection between the building of Babel and the persecution of Israel is indeed confirmed. Yet Babel appears to be a symbol of apostate Israel in Is. 24:1: "The Lord maketh the earth (land) empty, and maketh it waste... and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof". The judgments to come upon the Babel builders will also come upon the faithless Israel of the last days.

11:7 *Come, let us go down*- The same kind of language found in Gen. 1:26; see notes there.

And there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech- The languages of the peoples in the *eretz* were and are confused, words from one language are found in the others, but with different meanings. Arabic and Hebrew would be the classic example. And it was this closeness yet distance which created the interpersonal problems with which we are now familiar, and which led to the dispersal of the peoples from Babel. But comparing, say, Chinese with an Amazonian language doesn't yield that same sense. Again, it is the situation within the *eretz* which is always in view here. In God's bigger purpose, the misunderstandings and divisions between persons were used to set the scene for Abraham's calling. And He works similarly today.

There is a definite similarity between the account of God's intervention at Babel and that of His 'coming down' to Sodom. "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower

(and 'noticed' how evil their aims were)... Let us go down..." (Gen. 11:5-7). This is matched by "I will go down now, and see whether they (Sodom) have done altogether according to the cry of it... and there came two angels to Sodom" (Gen. 18:21; 19:1). We have our Lord's authority for seeing this 'coming down' of the Lord to Sodom as typical of the second coming; the designed similarity with His 'coming down' to Babel indicates that we can read that incident likewise.

11:8 *So Yahweh scattered them abroad from there on the surface of all the earth. They stopped building the city*- As noted on ::4, the scattering abroad was God's intention, so that the *eretz* would be subdued. They had built Babel specifically so that they would not be scattered. So here we see God using judgment and division between persons in order to achieve His purpose. And likewise the endless divisions amongst God's children, with each making their own missionary efforts, has in a strange way resulted in the wider spread of the Gospel.

How God 'came down' to destroy their plans is revealing as to His methods in the last days. There is no indication in Gen. 11 that the tower was actually destroyed, indeed, "Therefore *is* the name of it called Babel" (Gen. 11:9) implies that at least part of the building was still standing when the record was written. It was the very action of confounding their language that resulted in their scattering, "*so* (i.e. because of the confounding of their language) the Lord scattered them abroad" (Gen. 11:7,8). "They left off" building (Gen. 11:8) uses a Hebrew word meaning strictly 'to grow flabby', implying a gradual cessation rather than a momentous destruction. Likewise the persecutors of angel-protected Lot in Sodom (a certain type of the last days) "wearied themselves" in their efforts as a result of the Lord's 'coming down'. One of the 'plagues' that God threatens the Arab invaders of Israel with is that "a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour" (Zech. 14:12,13). This is how previous invasions had been overcome (Jud. 7:22; 2 Chron. 20:23). Ps. 83 perfectly describes the Arab unity as they attack Jerusalem in the last days (vs. 3-5, 12), but concludes with the Psalmist praying that God would destroy them as He did Oreb and Zeeb (v. 11) - who were defeated as a result of God making their troops turn on each other (Jud. 7:22-25). It will largely be through this means that the image will be broken up and scattered worldwide, as the Babel builders were. In its continuous historic fulfilment, the different parts of the image subdued each other; for them to stand together in the last days shows that a unity must be placed upon them by their head and also the feet upon which they stand; only for this unity to be destroyed by the Lord's coming.

11:9 *Therefore its name was called Babel, because there Yahweh confused the language of all the earth. From there, Yahweh scattered them abroad on the surface of all the earth*- The stress that "there" the confusion occurred makes us wonder how

exactly it occurred. The act of confusion occurred at a specific point in space and time, and yet affected all the descendants of Noah; who by that time might have been around 30,000. Perhaps all of them listed in Genesis 10 were present at Babel, which would mean that a fair "city" already existed there. They would have scattered from each other due to their misunderstandings and arguments- and yet this was God's scattering of them. His judgments work in accord with human freewill. Thus God threw Pharaoh into the Red Sea; but he himself charged in there of his own free volition.

11:10 *This is the history of the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood*- The genealogies of Genesis 11 reveal how some human lives repeat according to the same outline schema. See on :13,14. Abraham and Shem both had sons at 100 years old. And it is the very nature of Christian fellowship that God has arranged that our human lives likewise have elements of amazing similarity of pattern.

11:11 *Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and became the father of sons and daughters*- It should be noted that the Septuagint gives different ages and inserts other generations in genealogies such as this one. Yet the Septuagint is usually the version quoted by the inspired New Testament writers, including for passages where the Masoretic Text reads quite differently. This has large implications for the theory that Adam was created 4000 BC, and the six thousand year plan theory.

11:12 *Arpachshad lived thirty-five years and became the father of Shelah*- As noted on :11, the LXX differs here, adding in a generation, of Cainan. And this version is quoted in Lk. 3:36. And according to the LXX genealogies, Adam was not born 4000 years BC.

11:13 *Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and became the father of sons and daughters*- The genealogies of Genesis 11 reveal how some human lives repeat according to the same outline schema. See on :10,14. Both Arphachsad and Shelah each lived 403 years after the births of the eldest sons.

11:14 *Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber*- Shelah, Peleg and Serug were each 30 when their first sons were born. See on :13.

11:15 *And Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and became the father of sons and daughters*- We note the decreasing lifespans as the generations proceed after the flood. We are left with the impression of everything going downhill, morally and physically- until the Lord starts again with humanity, through calling Abram.

11:16 *Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg*- Eber is mentioned four times here in :14-17, matching the special emphasis given to him in the genealogy of chapter 10. This was surely because he was the one whose name carried over as "Hebrew". The genealogies provided here are not mere background information. When connected with those in Genesis 10, we are left with the impression that God chose one brother over another in the development of His purpose. Thus Peleg and not Joktan was to be the chosen brother. Just as the line of Shem was chosen over that of his brothers. We get no more information about the 'not chosen' line. No intrinsic moral reason is given for this. We are left with the impression of God's sovereign choice. And this sets the path towards God's choice of Abraham, of Jacob over Esau etc. The calling was ultimately of God's sovereign choice. And Paul will later cite this way of 'calling' as the parade example of God's grace. We cannot deny our calling; we have been called, whereas others have not been. And it is for us to respond, as well as never forgetting that responsibility.

11:17 *Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and became the father of sons and daughters*- Peleg was so named because around his birth, the *eretz* was divided; a reference to the division at Babel. See on Gen. 10:25.

11:18 *Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu*- As noted on :10,13, the genealogies of Genesis 11 reveal how some human lives repeat according to the same outline schema. Peleg, Serug (:22) and Shelah (:14) were each 30 when their first sons were born. We too can find uncanny similarities between our lives and those of others in the faith; or between our lives and Biblical characters. The same Divine hand is at work.

11:19 *Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and became the father of sons and daughters*- The mention of "daughters" here, when this isn't always noted in the genealogy, perhaps suggests that they were significant to the early audience of the Pentateuch. But seeing that significance is now lost, we have no more details.

11:20 *Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug*- The common approach of seeking to extract meaning from the Hebrew names is in my judgment mistaken. They yield nothing- "Reu" means "friend" and "Serug" means "tendril"- apparently. And who knows what the names originally meant.

11:21 *Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and became the father of sons and daughters*- The exact periods given suggest that Moses had access to some oral tradition, which under inspiration he now sets in stone, as it were.

11:22 *Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor*- For the significance of having a child at 30, see on :18.

11:23 *Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and became the father of sons and daughters*- As noted on :20, there is generally no significance in the meaning of the names. But as we get closer to Abraham, we note that "Nahor", "Terah" and "Haran" all have associations with idolatry.

11:24 *Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah*- As noted on :23, the meanings of Abraham's immediate ancestors all have associations with idolatry, confirming the note in Josh. 24:2 that Abram and his ancestors were idolaters. Out of that background, God chose a man who had the potential to be different. Another reading of "Terah" is that it means "One who tarries / remains", which would fit with his remaining in Haran and not going further towards Canaan.

11:25 *Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and became the father of sons and daughters*- Nahor therefore died at 148, the shortest liver among the post-flood patriarchs. We wonder why exactly that was... seeing that his grandson Abram was to be the one chosen. It perhaps made Abram reflect upon the brevity of life and the failure of idolatry to offer real salvation.

11:26 *Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran*- Abram is mentioned first, although Haran was the firstborn (:29). This is a common theme in Genesis- that the younger and weaker is elevated by God's grace to the place of the firstborn.

11:27 *Now this is the history of the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran became the father of Lot*- This information is given twice (:26), to set the scene for the momentous event that was to happen- just one man was going to be chosen out of this family, and through his agreement in faith, God was to set up a line leading to salvation of all peoples. We note that there is no hint of an unbroken line of spirituality extending down the generations from Noah to Abram. Quite the opposite. We get the impression of a slide into disbelief and apostacy; and instead of destroying the *eretz* again, God by grace chooses a singular individual and invites him to be the father of a faithful tribe, which shall expand to fill there *eretz* and indeed the whole planet, on account of Abram and his seed.

11:28 *Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldees*- As noted on :25, these early deaths in Abram's family experience may have all been part of the scene setting required to make Abram open to the idea of new life and realistic salvation. "Ur of the Chaldees" has been excavated, and archaeologists present it as perhaps the most developed and sophisticated city on the globe, and certainly in the

area. Every indication is that Abram was from a wealthy family, living in luxury. But that was no barrier in itself to receiving the call.

The note is made that Haran died earlier than his father, leaving us to understand Lot (Haran's son) as the one without a father who took to Abram as his father. Abram could not have children by Sarai. And so it was natural to adopt Lot. The nephew, Lot, who lacked a father, became the effective son of Abram, the man who lacked children. But the command to separate from all family required this to be broken; and Abram would be given his own actual children. But Abram remained with Lot until Lot took the initiative to separate from Abram. We see in these things how the call of the Gospel is a deep and totally fundamental call to separation, even from some of the closest ties that bind, and from those things which we consider our necessary compensation for that which we lacked. Lot was not Abram's real son, just as Eliezer wasn't, nor was Ishmael. Abram, like us, was tempted to imagine that he had something to fill the voids in his life. But God's true blessings are the real thing, and no secular attempts can ever equal them. Thus the unfilfilled of our age may imagine that they have found some compensation, some filling of the void, in a hobby or career. But the blessings of the Gospel are the only and ultimate fulfilment and filling of the voids.

11:29 *Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, who was also the father of Iscah*- Polygamy was widespread, especially amongst the wealthy. That Abram had apparently only one wife would have been noteworthy. This is not to say that he didn't have others; the record zooms in upon Abram and Sarai. Likewise Isaac is presented as Abraham's only child, when we know from Gen. 25 that Abraham had a number of children by concubines; and Ishmael had already been born to him. "Iscah" is understood by some as another name for Sarah, seeing that she and Abram had the same fathers (Gen. 20:12). The question remains as to why she is given a different name here; and yet if she isn't Sarah, then we wonder why one woman should be singled out for mention, when hardly any other women apart from Sarah are mentioned in the genealogies. Such behaviour was condemned under the law of Moses; but we are presented with a man who was in an ongoing situation which broke the law, who attained a righteousness greater than the law. Never was there any hint that Abram should have ended his marriage to Sarah because she was his half sister; and this may have significance for those who consider that marital failure must be put right by separation from current partners.

11:30 *Sarai was barren; she had no child*- This must have been another factor in Abram's background which prepared him for the call he was to receive. His hopes would have been dashed; but in the promises he received, there was to be hope of a huge family and a "seed". But as with us, the promises of God in the Gospel are only attractive

if firstly we have been through experiences which make them attractive. Seeing he married his half sister (Gen. 20:12), the lack of a child is not surprising. But through all the miscarriages and broken hopes, they were being prepared as fertile ground upon which the seed of the Divine calling would fall. "Sarai" means 'princess'; but she had no child. It was the perceived role of a princess of a nation to bear children, who would become the kings of the nation. But she had none. She was surely suffering from the 'king who was never crowned' syndrome. And yet through her, a huge seed was to come. She was to become 'Sarah', the mother not only of many children within her nation, but of many nations. And this is how God works; for so many feel they are the kings or queens who were never crowned. Life didn't go as expected. But this was used by God, as it has been in countless members of her seed. So many sense they were born and intended to something far better and more significant than they end up getting in life. They will not get that in this life; but they will, if they are Abraham's seed.

11:31 *Terah took Abram his son*- That Terah "took" Abram shows that the call of the Gospel of the Kingdom did not make him free from the ties that bind. The same word is in :29 for Abram 'taking' a wife. But the Gospel is a freedom from those ties; we are not to be taken, but to move freely in response to God's call.

Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife- The Samaritan Pentateuch adds here that Nahor and Milcah also went with them. This would highlight the disobedience of Abram to the call to leave his family. That Nahor did emigrate to Haran is confirmed in Gen. 24:10; Haran is called "the city of Nahor". The fact has to be faced that Abram was called to leave his country and kindred (his fellow countrymen), but when he left Ur his countrymen came with him. And additionally, "*Terah took* Abram... to go into the land of Canaan". Abram did not respond *immediately* and *completely* to God's command. The call of Abram is an essay in partial response. Yet we know he had faith. Terah was an idolater (Josh. 24:2); the command to leave was given to Abram, not Terah. Because God was going to promise Abram a massive new family stemming from *him*, he therefore had to come out from his own natural family. He was going to be promised many descendants- therefore he had to separate himself from his "father's house" or posterity. He was to be promised a land for eternal inheritance- therefore he had to leave his own native land. And in this life, Abram's seed must separate themselves from their present, worldly inheritance if they are to receive the promised blessings. It was therefore imperative that to receive the promises, Abram must separate from his natural family and land inheritance. There seems little doubt, in the light of this, that it was God's intention for Abram to leave Ur *and* his natural family, just taking his wife and their children with them. Yet Abram did not do this. And yet he had faith!

Heb. 11:8 (Gk.) implies that *as soon as* God called Abram, he got up and left Ur. But a closer examination of the record indicates that this wasn't absolutely the case. It is

stressed that both Abram and Sarai left Ur because "Terah *took* Abram his son... and Sarai his daughter in law" (Gen. 11:31). Abram had been called to leave Ur and go into Canaan. But instead he followed his father to Haran, and lived there (for some years, it seems) until his father died, and then he responded to his earlier call to journey towards Canaan. The Genesis record certainly reads as if Abram was dominated by his father and family, and this militated against an immediate response to the call he received to leave Ur and journey to Canaan. At best his father's decision enabled him to obey the command to leave Ur without having to break with his family. And yet, according to Heb. 11:8, Abram immediately responded, as an act of faith.

Abraham believed God, and "when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed" (Heb. 11:8). Therefore when his father announced that they were emigrating to Canaan, Abram would have realized that this was the call from God to get up and leave. Unlike the rest of Terah's unrecorded family, who would have mocked such a crazy plan, Abram willingly submitted. But how was he to leave his kindred and father's house? For they were coming with him! Indeed, Terah "took Abram". Thus Abram had faith in God's promise, yet may have balked at the command to leave his country and family. Providentially arranged circumstances then resulted in his aging father taking him, implying some degree of compulsion, and leading him out of his native country. Whilst not fully understanding how he could leave his father's household whilst they looked set to be accompanying him on this journey to a strange land, he went ahead in faith. It is emphasized that *God* " brought out" (s.w. to lead, pluck or pull out) Abram from Ur (Neh. 9:7; Gen. 15:6,7). The calling came through Abram's hearing of the word of promise, and providentially arranged circumstances encouraging his faithful response to it.

Abraham's attachment to his father and father's house is even indicated in his name, Ab-ram- meaning "my father is exalted" (Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (London: S.C.M., 1963) p. 152). In that family, Abram's father named his son like this because he wanted his son to exalt him- not break away from him, as God required of Abram. Abraham's connection with his father is shown in the various possible meanings of the name Abram. If 'Abram' were used as a Western Semitic word, it would mean "he is exalted through his relationship to his father"; 'Abram' in Akkadian would mean "he loved the father" (Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary On The Book Of Genesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992) Vol. 2 p. 267). Yet Abraham gave up all this for the sake of God's promises to him; he lost it all in order to gain the new family which God offered him in return, just as all his seed must do. And later Scripture seems to refer to these meanings of the word 'Abram'- for Is. 41:8 and 2 Chron. 20:7 speak of him as "the friend [lover] of God". He had once 'loved' his father's house, but in response to the promises he left them, and loved God; and thus God loved him, and Abram became Abraham, the 'exalted father'.

There are marked similarities between the record of the exodus from Ur, and that of the call of Abram to leave Haran:

Gen. 11:31	Gen. 12:5
Terah took	Abram took
Sarai...Abram's wife	Sarai his wife
Lot the son of Haran	Lot his brother's son
They went forth from Ur	They went forth (from Haran)
To go into the land of Canaan	To go into the land of Canaan
They came unto Haran	Into the land of Canaan they came.

These similarities may mean that the same processes occurred in each move- a word of promise made, Abram struggling to show his abundant faith in that promise and call, and the providence of God acting to make his expression of faith possible. There may also be the hint that when Abram left Haran, he still had the same fundamental problem as when leaving Ur- he had still not fully left his kindred and father's house. It has been pointed out that around the time Terah and Abraham left Ur, the city was threatened by and then destroyed by the Elamites. It could well be that the motive for leaving Ur in the first place was therefore mixed- it was fleeing from a material threat more than plain obedience to a Divine command. This would explain why the family settled in relatively nearby Haran, and remained there for so long. See on Gen. 20:13. It's a very strange 'co-incidence' (if that's indeed what it is) that Noah, Peleg and Nahor all died in the same year- when Abraham was about 50 years old, living in Ur. Whilst we have no evidence that these men were all living together, it's not impossible that they were. Perhaps they died in some calamity in Ur. So it could well be that the motive for leaving Ur in the first place was therefore mixed- it was fleeing from a material threat more than plain obedience to a Divine command. This would explain why the family settled in relatively nearby Haran, and remained there for so long.

They went from Ur of the Chaldees- NIV "Together they set out" shows the failure to separate from family as required. This failure is stressed, really insistently. Some versions get it right when they render "he [Terah] took them out"; LXX has "and (Terah) brought them out". Despite Abram's failure, he later perceives that *"God* took me... out", and Stephen in Acts 7:4 repeats this. And Gen. 15:7 (and Neh. 9:7)has God recognizing this: "I brought you out of Ur...". The message is clearly that God had a number on Abram, and took him out when Abram himself failed to come out.

To go into the land of Canaan. They came to Haran and lived there- Terah and his family departed "to go into the land of Canaan" (Gen. 11:31 AV). These are the same Hebrew

words as in the command to Abram: "Get thee out of thy country" (Gen. 12:1). We can therefore conclude that Abram received this call to quit his country, but didn't obey it, until some unrecorded situation led his father to announce the family's emigration to Canaan. Abram was therefore very slow to obey the call. Note too that the command to Abram had been to leave his land and also his "kindred and... father's house". This he didn't do- for he left Ur with his father and brothers, i.e. his kindred. His brother Haran died, and his father then died in Haran, where they temporarily lived on the way to Canaan. We see here how God seeks to almost make us obedient. And Gen. 15:7 records that it was God who brought Abram out of Ur- even though Abraham failed to rise up and be obedient in his own strength, God manipulated family circumstances to make him obedient to the call; and in essence He does this for us too. "Lived there", really "settled there", uses a Hebrew term which definitely means to permanently reside for a long period (s.w. Gen. 26:17; Ruth 1:4; 2 Sam. 15:29; 2 Chron. 28:18). But it is the same term used for how the people of Shinar, mentioned earlier in the chapter, refused to obey the command to go out and fill the earth, but rather settled in Shinar (compare Gen. 1:28; 9:1; 11:2,8,9). And Abraham's disobedience is presented as similar- all building up the impression of his salvation by grace rather than obedience. This is the connection between the account of Babel, and that of Abraham.

11:32 *The days of Terah were two hundred five years. Terah died in Haran*- Abram evidently found it so hard to sever the family ties, and move straight on from Haran. The call of Abram required breaking with family. Perhaps Terah was too old and ill to move on further (he died at 205, a great age by post-flood standards), and Abram found it hard to leave his old and ill father in a strange city. Or perhaps Terah's strong influence on Abram meant that he found it just too hard to go against him. How he must have wrestled with the pain of leaving his family and father! Yet he believed God's promises, and he knew that these things were necessary if he was to attain the promised land. Many a convert to Abraham's seed in these last days has been through the same process. The call to "come out" of mystical Babylon is surely rooted in the call for Abram to "come out" from Ur and Haran. Whilst this evidently occurs at the time of baptism, when these same Abrahamic promises are made to us personally, our whole lives are a process of 'coming out' from the world. As we do so, our appreciation of God's promises is progressively expanded, as God works with our faith.

GENESIS CHAPTER 12

12:1 *Now Yahweh had said to Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's house*- Abram was told "Get out..." of Ur; and obediently "they *went forth* to go *into* the land of Canaan: and *into* the land of Canaan they came" (Gen. 12:1,5 AV). Holiness means a separation *from* and also *unto*. This must be the pattern of our lives, until finally at the Lord's return we are again called to

go out to meet the bridegroom; and we will *go in* with Him to the marriage (Mt. 25:6,10). The New Testament preachers urged men to turn "*from* darkness *to* light, and *from* the power of satan *to* God" (Acts 26:18); *from* wickedness *to* God, *to* the Lord (Acts 3:26; 15:19; 26:20; 9:35; 11:21).

The impression can be given that Abraham was a giant of faith, and as "father of the faithful", thereby requires colossal responses of faith from us who are his seed. But the reality was that Abraham didn't respond as he might have done, just as we don't; and God by His grace led Abraham to respond simply because He wished to save Him. God told Abram to leave Ur, his family and relatives (Gen. 12:1). The requirements were to leave Ur and to leave his relatives- and neither of these requirements were fulfilled much by Abraham, but rather by God working to enable them to be met. That this call refers to Ur not Haran is made clear in Acts 7:2-4: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land". The impression is given of immediate, obedient response. But in fact it was his own father Terah who took him and the rest of the family out of Ur. He didn't break with his family- he went with them. Presumably he didn't obey the call to leave them as an individual; so God arranged that Abraham at least obeyed the requirement to leave Ur, and later worked to ensure he left his family. It was God who caused him to wander from his father's house (Gen. 20:13)- not his own strength of obedience to the call to individuate before God.

Immediately Terah died, Abram may have felt he had truly left his "kindred" and eagerly moved on towards the promised land of Canaan (so Gen. 11:32-12:4 implies). It is likely that many of Abram's "kindred" would have come along with Terah, responding themselves to the call of Abram. Presumably they settled in Haran after Terah's death. It is even possible that the family were from this city originally, seeing that Abraham's brother was called Haran. We saw earlier that just before leaving Haran, Abram was further told to separate from his "father's house" too, i.e. *all* of his father's household. This must have included Lot. Abram could understand separation from his idolatrous father and the rest of the family retinue; yet Lot was "a righteous man" ; Abram evidently rated Lot's spirituality (Gen. 18:23,32). Again, Abram was in a quandary. He had left all but one of his father's house in Haran. Was he really intended to separate from his father's house to the extent of leaving Lot too? It is likely that Abram often agonized about Lot. There he was in Canaan, knowing that his seed would inherit this land, which was then full of Canaanites (the record twice emphasizes, in Gen. 12:6 and 13:7). But Lot, part of his kindred and father's house, was still with him. We saw that the Hebrew for "kindred" implies one born in ones own country. A closely related word is found in Gen.11:28, describing how Haran, Lot's father, "died in the *land of his nativity*, in Ur". If

Lot's father lived and died in Ur, it is fair to assume that Lot was born in Ur. So Abram knew he must separate from Lot, his "kindred"- but how? What reason could he give Lot? Yet he had faith in what God had told him; therefore he *wanted* to leave Lot, but just found it hard to do. And so God made a way.

In the near East, each family had their own gods. When a man became head of the family, he had the right to choose his own god; there was no requirement that he maintained the same god as the previous head of the family. The choice of a god was confirmed by a covenant; the Amorites and Arameans therefore called their family god "The Lord of the house", and the sons of the family often were named with "theophoric names", reflecting the name of the family's god (W.F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (New York: 1957), p. 246; Angel Gonzales, *Abraham: Father of Believers* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) p. 19). Against this background, therefore, it was a radical thing for Yahweh to appear to Abraham and order him to do something as radical as break from his family (Gen. 12:1). It was God who chose Abraham, not Abraham who chose Yahweh, contrary to the accepted norm of the man choosing a family god when his father or previous head of the family died. The surrounding nations or tribes were comprised of various families each with their own god; nations had no one fixed god. When we repeatedly read of how Yahweh was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that Yahweh is the God of all the families and tribes of Israel, we are therefore encountering a new paradigm. There were to be no other gods in Israel apart from Yahweh. He was to be the sole national God; the unity of Yahweh, and His being the sole national God of Israel, was therefore a new concept in the near East. And we can better understand the way that both the Lord Jesus and Paul saw in the unity of God a call to unity amongst His people; for this had been the intention from the start. The unity of God isn't so much a numerical statement as a call to profound unity. But it could only become real for Abraham, as it can for us today, if we leave, come out from, the culture and worldviews which surround us.

Yahweh's call of Abraham to be His, taking the initiative which Divine grace does when calling someone, was therefore radical. The Biblical record states simply that Yahweh spoke and Abraham believed with no proof or prior relationship. The rabbinic midrash and the Koran embellish upon this silence with various tales of Yahweh's prior relationship with Abraham- perhaps psychologically motivated in the desire to make Abraham's faith and obedience the more understandable and normal. Whether or not there was any previous encounter between Yahweh and Abraham is beside the point- the Biblical record invites us to see God as taking the initiative, and Abraham faithfully responding. This is characteristic of God's call; Saul out looking for lost cattle, the disciples mending their nets- are suddenly called, and some respond well and others like Saul for ever try to slip out of it.

All this would've made life difficult for Abraham, as it does for us. The Midrash at Bereshit Rabbah 38:13 tells tales of Terah accusing his son Abraham before the gods for having destroyed idols, and Abraham being thrown into a fiery furnace for rejection of his father and his father's gods.

To the land that I will show you- Abraham was progressively set up by God so that his spiritual growth would be an upward spiral. Initially, he was told to walk / go to a land which God would shew him (Gen. 12:1); when he got there, he was told to "arise", and "walk" through that land of Canaan (Gen. 13:17). And Abraham, albeit in a faltering kind of way, did just this. But this was to prepare him for the test of Gen. 22:3 in the command to offer Isaac. His obedience this time isn't at all faltering. He "arises" and 'goes' [s.w. "walk"] "unto the place of which God had told him" to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:3). This is exactly what he had been called to do right back in Ur- to arise and walk / go to a land / place which God would show him (Gen. 12:1). And so our obedience in one challenge of God leads us to obedience in others. One experience is designed to lead us to another. Nothing- absolutely nothing- in our lives is senseless chance. All- and this takes some believing- is part of a higher plan for our spiritual good, in our latter end. Time and again we see this in Abraham's life. He was taught that he really could be a blessing to others by the circumstances which God arranged relating to Lot being blessed / saved for his sake.

12:2 *I will make of you a great nation*- The first promise to Abraham was actually conditional- if he did these things, then "I will make of you a great nation". If he left his natural kindred, then God would give him a huge new family. But he hardly fulfilled those conditions, and yet still the promises were ultimately fulfilled to him. And he is set up as the "father of the faithful". We all know that really our faith is pathetically weak, and this recognition can cause some to stumble altogether. Although Abram is here promised to become "a great [singular] nation", he was also promised to become a father of many [plural] nations, and his name was changed to Abraham in reflection of this (Gen. 17:5). The vision was indeed of 'one nation under God' which would unite the nations. The Abraham history is introduced by an account of the nations, who just before his time were "divided" (Gen. 10:25) and "confused" even further at Babel. Part of the blessing promised to Abraham was that through his seed, and through God's purpose with Him, the divided peoples of the earth would be reunited into one, great nation. God chose Abraham's seed in order to restore His relationship with all nations, and thus through "Israel" to unite them again.

We may note that in :2,3 there are seven distinct blessings:

- I will make you a great nation

- I will bless you

- I will make your name great

- You will be a blessing

- I will bless those who bless you

- I will curse whoever curses you

- All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

"I will..." is an allusion to the YHWH Name, "I will be who I will be". And He will bless who He promises to bless. Seven being the number of totality and completeness, we have here a picture of the entire Name, essence and being of God being completely behind His determination to fulfil His promises to Abraham and his seed. No wonder Paul perceived that we have the Gospel in the promises to Abraham. For that determination to bless, to give and fulfil promises, was to require the death of His only begotten Son.

I will bless you and make your name great- The making of his name great was initially fulfilled in the change to Abraham, meaning 'father of a multitude'. But the only ultimately great name is that of Yahweh; the same words are used about His Name being made great (2 Sam. 7:26; 1 Chron. 17:24; Ps. 34:3; 69:30). Abram's name was to be made great on account of his identification with his seed who would carry Yahweh Name. The greatness of Abram's name was only because Yahweh's Name was put within it, making it Abraham. This contrasts with how the people of Babel had wanted to make themselves a name, and were judged for doing so. "Great", *gdl*, alludes to the "tower" of Babel, Heb. *mgdl*. The things of God's Name manifest in His people, Abraham's seed, were to be the eternal things- rather than the city and tower of Babel which was destroyed. The "all nations" who had united to build Babel were divided and scattered- but they were to be reunited in that the "all nations" would become one eternal nation within 'Israel'.

You will be a blessing- Whoever drinks of the water of life will have *within* them a spring that also gives eternal life (Jn. 4:15). The purpose of a spring is to give water to men. Experiencing the Lord's words and salvation *inevitably* leads to us doing likewise to others, springing from somewhere deep within. This was in fact one of the first things God promised Abraham when He first instituted the new covenant: "I will bless thee (i.e. with forgiveness and salvation in the Kingdom)... and *thou* shalt be a blessing" , in that we his seed in Christ would bring this same blessing to men of all nations by our witness (Gen. 12:2,3 AV).

There is no record of God authenticating His claims to Abram through miracles, fulfilled prophecies etc. Rather Abram is presented as a random Middle Eastern guy who heard the essence of the Gospel and believed it, and then acted upon that faith. Simple as that. Later, Abraham is commended for believing "against hope", when there was no visible reason to hope (Rom. 4:18). Faith is not therefore based upon empirical

evidence, as Heb. 11:1-3 clearly state. This is the mystery of faith, and an essay in the power of the Gospel of itself to elicit faith in its own message. That may at first blush sound circular reasoning; but the fact so many have believed a message which had no external authentication is proof enough- that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing on account of the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

12:3 *I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you-*

There are five mentions of "blessing" in Gen. 12:1-3, undoing the five mentions of "curse" in Gen. 1-11 (Gen. 3:14; 3:17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25). People from all families would be blessed in Abraham- because they 'blessed' Abraham. God's salvation program began with 'blessing' Adam (Gen. 1:22; 5:2); when that intention didn't work because of human sin, Noah was then chosen, saved and blessed (Gen. 9:1). That pathway too had come to a dead end with the apostacy of his descendants. And now God seeks to bless Abram, and all those who identified with him. In the first instance, the "families of the *eretz*" were those listed in Genesis 10. Whoever blessed Abram as he travelled around that territory would be blessed, and any who cursed him would be cursed. He need not fear that the inhabitants of that land would persecute him as a foreigner. And yet he and his descendants did so often fear that this would happen at the hands of the local inhabitants, and chapter 12 goes on to give an example of where he failed to believe this simple promise. He is hardly portrayed as brimming with faith and obedience, but rather one who clung on to God's clinging on of him. And this is really the lead characteristic of all who would later be his spiritual descendants.

The Abraham family should have focused upon the wonder of being blessed by God. But as we see in Gen. 27 and elsewhere, they placed too great a value upon human blessings. And this speaks directly to us too. To be humanly blessed appears of critical importance; but if we believe we have the Divine, Abrahamic blessing, then such blessings ought to be irrelevant.

There are examples of those who blessed the Abraham family being blessed; thus Laban blessed them (Gen. 24:31), and was in turn blessed (Gen. 30:27). But there are hardly any specific examples of those who cursed them being cursed. As ever, God's focus was upon the positive rather than the negative. "Blessing" in the Old Testament context largely referred to material blessings; but the language is taken over in the New Testament and applied to all the spiritual blessings we have in Abraham's seed, the Lord Jesus.

All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you- This is an evident allusion back to the cursing of the *adamah* / earth in Eden (Gen. 3:17). The implication was that the promised seed of the woman, who was to be the way of escape from that curse, was to somehow be "in Abraham". Although there's no mention yet of a specific son or seed, it

seems to me that God was setting Abraham up to meditate upon the promise of the earth being blessed "in him", and figure out that this must mean that he was to have a descendant or son who would be the Saviour. Perhaps the subsequent specific promises about this were as it were God's reward for Abraham following through with where God was leading him. Gen. 28:14 makes explicit that the blessing of the *adamah* was to be "in your seed". I firmly believe, indeed have experienced, the way in which God prompts our minds to think of something, to work something through, and then reveals this specifically, or confirms our understanding, directly from His word. In our day and context, it would seem that daily reading of God's word is what's required in order to 'allow' as it were this process to happen. This, surely, is how God seeks to work out the same process with us as He did with Abraham. Even if at the time of reading we feel we 'get nothing out of that chapter', there will be prompts to thought and later reflection which are all in God's longer term educational purpose with us. Heb. 11:33 says that the likes of Abraham obtained promises by their faith. Yet the Old Testament record clearly enough states that the promises were just given to them by God; they weren't requested by the patriarchs. Indeed, David was surprised at the promises God chose to make to him. Conclusion? God read their unspoken, unprayed for desires for Messiah and His Kingdom as requests for the promises- and responded.

Abraham was only explicitly promised the land of Canaan, not the entire planet. Perhaps in speaking of Abraham as “heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13) Paul is interpreting the promises that his seed would comprise “many nations” and that he would bring blessing on “all the peoples of the earth” (Gen. 12:2,3 etc.). In this sense, they would become his, and he would thereby inherit them. Thus Is. 55:3-5 likewise implies that Abraham’s promised inheritance was therefore not only the land of Canaan but by implication, the whole planet.

Grammatically, Gen. 12:3 can be read as passive ("be blessed", as AV, RV) or reflexive "bless themselves" (as RSV), i.e. implying those blessed have to do something to appropriate the blessing. In this we see how God will play His part, but we must play our part. And yet the covenant in Gen. 15 was one way, unconditional, from God to us. It's as if *His* part in our salvation is so much greater than our response. Yet there is still an obvious element of choice which we have to make. The way Gen. 12:1-3 is structured implies that Abraham receives an unconditional blessing, yet he therefore is to go forth and "be a blessing". And it's the same for us- and note how the "blessing" is interpreted as forgiveness in Acts 3:27-29. We are to forgive and generally bless others, in all forms of gracious generosity, as God has blessed us.
God promises to bless *them* (plural) who bless Abraham, and curse *him* (singular) who curse Abraham (Gen. 12:3). In other words, the blessings are to come specifically and individually to many people; whereas those who curse Abraham and his seed are just treated as one homogenous mass.

Gen. 12:3 LXX speaks of how all the tribes of the land of Israel will be blessed (i.e. forgiven) due to Abraham's seed, the Lord Jesus. This has yet to be fulfilled- but it will be if the tribes of the land (i.e. the native Arab peoples living between the Nile and Euphrates) repent and accept Messiah's forgiveness. The picture of Christ's Millennial rule in Ps. 72:8,9 is similar: " He shall have dominion from sea (the Mediterranean?) to sea (the Persian Gulf?) from the river unto the ends of the earth (land). They that dwell in the wilderness (the Arab peoples) shall bow before him" .

All nations of the land were to be blessed because of Abraham and his seed, his one special seed [Jesus] and also his natural descendants. His children were intended to be a blessing to the other nations who lived around them, especially in that they were intended to bring them to Abraham's God and Abraham's faith. Now this is not to say that ultimately, Abraham and his seed will not bring blessing on literally the whole planet. Rom. 4:13 interprets the promise of the land of Canaan as meaning 'the whole world'. But this was by later development, and on account of the universal blessing achieved by the sacrifice of Abraham's greatest seed, the Lord Jesus. In the first instance, the blessing was to be upon all the families who lived on the 'earth' / land (12:3). There is a paradox here. For those already living in the land promised to Abraham, their land would be taken from them but they would be blessed. God was telling Abraham: 'You will possess the land and all nations of that land will be blessed'. They were to give up their physical inheritance to receive a spiritual one- this was the ideal. Paul applies this idea to us when he says that if Gentiles have received the spiritual blessings of Abraham's seed, ought they not to give their physical blessings to that same physical seed of Abraham? This is how and why he tells Gentile converts in Rome to send donations to the poor Jewish brethren in Jerusalem: "For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things... I shall come in the fullness of the *blessing* of the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:27-29).

Gen. 12:1-3, the promises to Abraham, has a clear connection with the language repeatedly found in the table of nations in Gen. 10. "Country" (:1), "peoples" (:3), "nation" (:2) and "people/ race" (:1) are terms used throughout Gen. 10. The idea seems to be that all those nations are listed in Genesis 10 in order to help us understand what God promised Abraham. He was promised the inheritance of all the people, nations, countries and races of Gen. 10.

12:4 *So Abram went, as Yahweh had spoken to him. Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran*- The comment "So Abram departed [Heb. 'went'- s.w. Gen. 11:31; 12:1], as the Lord had spoken unto him" (Gen. 12:4 AV) is surely the beginning of the wonderful theme of righteousness being imputed to Abraham! For he did not break with his relatives as asked, and he "went" from Ur because his father decided to emigrate. Heb. 11:8 records things from a positive

perspective too, as if there was instant obedience from Abraham: "By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went". Truly, the Biblical record imputes righteousness to Abraham, and thus sets a pattern for all of us, the equally faltering and stumbling children of Abraham.

The promises to Abram in Gen. 12:1,2 were conditional upon his obedience- he would receive the new land and family if he separated from his natural family and land. But he was induced to do even this by God. So grace truly abounded. Likewise in Gen. 17:1,2 "Walk before Me and be blameless *so that I may establish My covenant* between Me and you and increase you greatly". Abram was not "blameless"; he was only *counted* righteous because of his faith. So the condition was set, but even the condition was not totally met by Abram unaided. And the covenant of Gen. 15 was without even these conditions. Although Abram did have faith, as Heb. 11 states, it was clearly weak and God imputed a lot of righteousness on the basis of a very small faith.

12:5 *Abram took Sarai his wife, Lot his brother's son*- Abram and Sarai would have effectively adopted the orphaned Lot. The experience of adopting would have been part of God's preparation of the psychological background, so that they would have appreciated all the more the idea of a son, seed and dynasty of their very own.

All their substance that they had gathered, and the souls whom they had gotten in Haran, and they went to go into the land of Canaan. Into the land of Canaan they came- Abram's leaving of Haran was still a great act of faith; he had "gathered" much in the years of staying in Haran. According to Jewish tradition, Abraham stayed 23 years in Haran. All he had to go on was a word from the Lord which he'd received some years ago whilst living in Ur. There's no reason to think that Angels regularly appeared to him and kept urging him to leave, or that he could read the Lord's word in written form as we can. Presumably that one word which he received worked in his conscience, until he said to the family "Right, we're quitting this nice life for a wilderness journey to some place I don't know". We can underestimate the power of "just" one word from the Lord. We're so familiar with possessing His entire word in written form that we can forget the need to be obedient to just one of those words, to the extent of losing all we once held dear... In this I find Abraham a wonderful example. He must, presumably, have wondered whether he really had heard right, whether the whole thing wasn't just a weird dream- just as we may wonder whether really we are supposed to take God's word as it is and allow it to radically upset our settled, mediocre lives.

We read of all the substance that Abram had *gathered* in Haran; the Hebrew for "gathered" implies an element of hoarding and materialism. It only occurs in passages concerning the patriarchs, as if to show that this was one of their characteristics. Gen. 31:18 comments on Jacob using his own wit and cunning to accumulate material wealth: "He carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had *gotten*, the cattle

of his getting, which he had *gotten*". The humanness of all this is strongly hinted at in Gen. 30:43: "The *man* increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels and asses". This list is identical to that in Gen. 24:35 concerning Abraham. Jacob and Sons left Canaan with "their cattle, and their goods, which they had *gotten*" (Gen. 46:6). Esau too piled up his possessions; Gen. 36:6 speaks of his sons, daughters, servants, cattle, beasts, "and all his substance which he had *got* in the land of Canaan". The way this Hebrew word for materialistic accumulation is used only about the Abraham family ought to be seen by us as a flashing light, pointing us to a definite characteristic in all of them. Against this background we can better appreciate Abraham's faith that he did now possess the land.

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12:6 *Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh*- God's promise to Abraham was made more specifically at "the oak of Moreh" (Gen. 12:6)- evidently a Canaanite shrine; and it's emphasized that "the Canaanite was then in the land". It's as if God's invitation to Abraham to have a unique relationship with Him was made amidst the calls and presence of many other gods, and in the thick of the Gentile world. Providence arranged that Abram travelled throughout the *eretz*; just as our experiences in this life give us peeks into the various aspects of our eternal inheritance. See on :9.

The Canaanite was then in the land- Moses' books were helping the wilderness generation to see where they were coming from historically. Passages like Gen. 12:6 now take on special relevance: "The Canaanites were then in the land". Moses was saying this as his people were about to enter a Canaan likewise occupied by Canaanites; the idea would have been *'Then* the Canaanites were there, just as they are *now*, and God shall be with us Abram's seed likewise'. He was bidding the people see

their connection with their father Abraham, who then lived with Canaanites also in the same land. See on Gen. 13:3.

12:7 *Yahweh appeared to Abram and said, I will give this land to your seed*- Abraham was told to leave Ur and all he had there, and journey to a land he would be shown. Trying to keep up a sense of eagerness and hope for the new life, he made tremendous sacrifices, and journeyed to Canaan. When he finally got there, he didn't realize he'd arrived. Then the Lord appeared to him and said that to *his seed* He would give this land (Gen. 12:1,7). To the human mind, this would have been a huge blow. He had given up all in the hope of a new life and inheritance, and now he is told that someone called his "seed" would inherit it. His response was to build an altar and worship, realizing he had served for nothing personally in this life, but with his mind filled with the glory and Kingdom of Christ, his future seed. God was so delighted with this attitude that later promises included Abraham personally, showing that because of his part in Christ, the seed, he would in fact personally have an inheritance too.

He built an altar there to Yahweh, who appeared to him- There may be an intended contrast between Abraham *building* an altar in recognition of the promises, at the same time as he *pitched* his tent (12:8)- as if to highlight the temporal nature of our present material situation in contrast to the permanence of the things we stand related to in God's promises. The building of altars was perhaps a public confession of faith; the surrounding peoples had their altars, but Abram and his family built altars to Yahweh, and left them behind them as a witness to their faith in the promises received and the relationship offered. Baptism would be one equivalent of this in our days- a public confession of faith in the same promises.

Commonly enough, the New Testament speaks of baptism as a calling upon the Name of the Lord. This must be understood against its Hebrew background- *qara' beshem Yahweh*, which originally referred to approaching God in sacrifice (Gen. 12:7,8; Ps. 116:4,17). God placed His Name upon places in order to make them suitable places for sacrifice to be offered to Him (Dt. 12:4-7,21; Jer. 7:12). Baptism was thus seen as a sacrificial commitment to Yahweh in solemn covenant.

Abraham only left Haran after his father died, suggesting Terah didn't want to travel further, and so Abraham didn't do so. He simply didn't leave his father's house / family. And when he does leave, he takes his family with him- Lot, Lot's family and Sarah, his half sister (Gen. 12:5). And yet God continues working with Abraham; after he leaves Haran, God appears and tells him that He wishes to give "thee", 'you' singular, the land (Gen. 12:7). In other words, the fulfilment of the promises was to Abraham personally, and that is why he was required to individuate from his unbelieving family in order to receive them. And because God simply wanted to fulfil the promises to Abraham, He arranged Abraham's separation from his family in order to fulfil those preconditions.

12:8 *He left from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to Yahweh and called on the name of Yahweh*- The weaknesses of the patriarchs provides great inspiration to our feeble faith when we consider how they are held up in such exalted terms. The geographical record of Abraham's entry to Canaan describes him as appearing at certain key points in the land. Those same areas became the key points in the conquest of the land in Joshua's time- it was as if Abraham was seen as the example for all Israel. Thus the people in their weakness pitched "between Bethel and Ai, to the west of Ai" (Josh. 8:9,14)- the very expressions found about Abraham in Gen. 12:8. The contrast between tent and altar is purposeful; the things of the Kingdom are permanent and set in stone, whereas our present life is temporary.

12:9 *Abram travelled, going on further toward the south*- As noted on :6, this was all part of God's purpose, of getting Abram to travel around in the *eretz* which he should eternally inherit, to perceive the length and breadth of what God had promised him. And the famine meant that Abram would have had to keep moving his flocks.

12:10 *There was a famine in the land. Abram went down into Egypt to live as a foreigner there, for the famine was severe in the land*- "Severe" is Heb. 'heavy'. God's grace shines through again and again. Abraham went down into Egypt because of how "grievous" or 'heavy' the famine was; and comes up out of Egypt, thanks to betraying his wife, "heavy" [same Hebrew word] with riches (Gen. 12:10; 13:2). Everything he did was blessed, despite his weakness. The land he had been promised was not immediately flowing with milk and honey- on first arrival, it was parched. We likewise don't experience the full Kingdom blessings now. The Abram family several times went down into Egypt because of famine; and the more spiritually perceptive realized that they would always come up out of it, after hard experiences there. "To live as a foreigner there" may imply that he lived as a foreigner in Canaan, and now in Egypt, there too he was a foreigner. The constant insecurity in Abram's life (despite his wealth) was to make him yearn the more for the eternal permanence of possession which was intrinsic to the gospel preached to him (Gal. 3:8). And it's the same for us.

Abraham went down into Egypt because of famine, and "went up from Egypt" (Gen. 13:1). Whilst there, Abraham's life and existence were under threat. Sarah, the female Hebrew, was spared [as were the baby girls of the Hebrews]. Egypt and Pharaoh's house were plagued, and then Pharaoh 'releases' or 'sends away' Abraham and his people (Gen. 12:20). This is the same word used for Pharaoh doing this to the Hebrews; and all the other details and language fits. We could therefore reason back and assume that Jacob and his family were wrong to have migrated to Egypt, as Abraham was apparently wrong to have gone there. At least they were wrong to have remained there after the famine. But we also see how the perceptive amongst Abraham's seed would have realized that their experience in Egypt, even in weakness, was connecting them to

Abraham and confirming them as his seed. Abraham was chosen as the representative of his seed exactly at a point of weakness, at perhaps the lowest recorded point of his entire spiritual journey. Abraham's weaknesses are therefore to encourage us as his seed to identify with him- and realize that his greatness was in his faith, and specifically his faith in righteousness being imputed to him. It is facile and fruitless, therefore, to simply present Abraham as an icon of faith and urge us to rise up to his level. Rather are we to see him in weakness as every man, and to follow his example of faith *in the face of personal spiritual weakness and failure*. He is indeed a stellar example of faith, but that faith is in God's grace to us despite our weakness- just as Abraham's was. Truly did the Angel at the burning bush tell Israel "I am the God of Abraham...". The same God would work with them in the same way. We also see how in the lives of God's people, there is an overruling, guiding hand in our history. Our history is not random, nor is it totally unique in its outline form. History, even of our weaknesses, somehow has the Higher Hand guiding it; just as that same Hand guided the histories of others. For us history is not "one damned thing after another" (Henry Ford), nor is personal life like that either. But that is indeed the perception of those who reject that higher hand, both in their own lives and in human history.

12:11 *It happened, when he had come near to enter Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman to look at*- "His wife" emphasizes that this is how God saw their relationship; even though He considered that marriage to a half sister was an abomination. But He accepted people where they were at, as we should. Abram's fear may have been because the middle aged Sarah was not only beautiful, but had lighter skin than the Egyptians, and was thereby attractive to them.

12:12 *It will happen, when the Egyptians will see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; they will kill me, but they will save you alive*- The fear of premature death was a reflection of his lack of deep faith in the promise just earlier recorded; that those who cursed him would be cursed, and he would be blessed, and ultimately given the land. At every turn, Abram is presented as of generally weak faith, although he did believe the overall representation of God to him, and that faith rose to a pinnacle in his willingness to offer Isaac, and his simple belief that really, his seed would become as many as the stars. But at this stage, his faith was weak when tested. And yet God still worked with him, as He does with us, and as we should with those whose faith is yet weak.

12:13 *Please say that you are my sister*- Throughout the records of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his children there is continual repetition in the manner in which the record is written. This repetition is of both experiences (e.g. lying concerning their wives: Gen. 20:3,13; 26:7) and of the language used to describe those experiences. The impression is that they didn't learn from history, just as we often do not- despite the wealth of Biblical history which we now have behind us.

That it may be well with me for your sake, and that my soul may live because of you- Straight after receiving the promises, Abraham goes down to Egypt [an act with spiritually negative overtones], and lies about his wife. Not only does he show a strange lack of protection for her, but his actions reflect a weakened faith in God's promises to him. For if Abraham was to have died at the hands of jealous Egyptians at that stage, how would the promises to him be fulfilled? In urging Sarah to deny she was his wife, Abraham comments to her in Gen. 12:13: "My soul shall live because of you". Ps. 33:18,19 appears to comment upon this: "Behold, the eye of Jehovah (Angelic language- and Abraham dealt with Angels] is upon them that fear him, Upon them that hope in his lovingkindness; to deliver their soul from death, And to keep them alive in famine (Abraham told the lie he did about Sarah because he trusted in Egypt to keep him alive in famine). Our soul hath waited for Jehovah: He is our help and our shield"- and it is God, not Sarah, who is described as Abraham's shield (same Hebrew word) in Gen. 15:1. Again, his faith is presented as weak; and yet he is set up as our example of faith.

12:14 *It happened that when Abram had come into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful*- Fears about possible futures are the very essence of lack of faith. In Abram's case, his fears were not baseless. But he went ahead, because he was not sure that he could remain in Canaan in time of famine. He probably could have personally survived, but his flocks wouldn't have done; and he couldn't bear to think of parting with all that wealth.

12:15 *The princes of Pharaoh saw her, and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house*- As so often in the record of Abraham's family, the surrounding world are presented as having more integrity than they did. Pharaoh's princes didn't rape her, they just commended her to their master. And she was taken into his house, but Pharaoh didn't sleep with her- presumably, new wives had to undergo a period of purification first, as the Mosaic law would also stipulate in some cases.

12:16 *He dealt well with Abram for her sake. He had sheep, cattle, male donkeys, male servants, female servants, female donkeys, and camels*- See on Gen. 14:22. As noted on :15, the Pharaoh appears of absolute integrity. He gave what was effectively a bride price to Abram, without having actually slept with Sarai. It would appear from :20 that Abram was allowed to keep all this. He apparently didn't suffer any consequences nor punishment for his undoubted sins and failures at this point. And sometimes, we don't. In this case, it seems Abram did well out of the whole experience. As if the experience of God's grace in blessing instead of punishing was intended to elicit in him a deeper understanding of God's grace.

12:17 *Yahweh plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife*- As noted on :13, situations and circumstances repeat over the course of Divine history. It is the same heavenly hand at work, and the intention is that we should

learn from the history. For a later Pharaoh was also to be plagued because of the presence of the Abraham family amongst them; but the lesson was not learnt.

12:18 *Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that you have done to me?*- The very words of God to Adam (Gen. 3:13). It was really God speaking through Pharaoh to Abram, just as He speaks to us through circumstances and unbelievers. The very same words are repeated to Abram later, by Abimelech, in the same context of lying about Sarah (Gen. 26:10). As noted on :17, circumstances and phrases recur in our lives, as the same Divine hand is at work to educate us.

Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife?- Both Pharaoh and Abram knew the answer: 'Because I was afraid'. And they are the very words on the lips of the condemned man in Mt. 25:25, just as they were on the lips of Adam in his condemnation (Gen. 3:10). But despite still not learning from the situation, Abram is still set up as our example of faith.

12:19 *Why did you say, 'She is my sister', so that I took her to be my wife? Now therefore, see your wife, take her, and go your way*- Again we see the integrity of the Pharaoh, in that he had apparently taken her to be his wife, but had not slept with her. "See your wife" implies 'perceive, recognize her as being your wife'. It was a stinging rebuke. Abram is not presented as a good husband in this respect. "Take her" may well refer to taking a woman as a wife; Abram is being told to go on his way openly committed to his wife. And yet he fails in this again, as does his son Isaac. I noted on :18 that the Pharaoh is effectively speaking on God's behalf here; but Abram didn't hearken to that voice.

12:20 *Pharaoh commanded men concerning him, and they brought him on the way with his wife and all that he had*- To bring someone on their way meant being generous to them and providing them with what they needed for their journey. This was again repeated (see on :17) by Abimelech (Gen. 20:14). To be generous to those who have wronged us leaves us with the upper hand; it is the intention behind the Lord's teaching that if a man takes your jacket, then offer him your undergarment. The spirit of demanding restitution and prosecution to that end is the very opposite of this.

GENESIS CHAPTER 13

13:1 *Abram went up out of Egypt: he, his wife, all that he had, and Lot with him, into the South*- As noted on chapter 12, the record stresses that Sarah was "his wife", despite the fact God viewed marriage to a half sister as "abomination". We note that Abram left Egypt not because the famine had finished, but because the Pharaoh had rebuked him. This confirms our suggestion on chapter 12, that Abram didn't need to go into Egypt; he went because the famine would've meant a diminution of his wealth if his cattle died. He placed himself in the way of temptation because of a desire to cling on to the

material "blessings" of wealth. He was "very rich" (:2), but the desire to maintain wealth levels is as tempting as the desire to attain them in the first place.

13:2 *Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold*- Abraham tells Sarah to say she is his sister, not his wife, and (by implication) let the Egyptians sleep with her rather than kill him. And straight after this, God blesses Abraham with riches (Gen. 12:11 - 13:2). This happened also with Isaac; God's blessing materially isn't always related to our righteousness. By contrast, Pharaoh was attracted to her, and took her into his house. But he didn't sleep with her, and was willing to allow a period of time to elapse before marrying her, in order not to insult her dignity (cp. Dt. 21:13). God's grace shines through again and again. Abraham went down into Egypt because of how "grievous" or 'heavy' the famine was; and comes up out of Egypt, thanks to betraying his wife, "heavy" [same Hebrew word] with riches (Gen. 12:10; 13:2). Everything he did was blessed, despite his weakness. Perhaps this was to elicit within him the understanding that "blessing" was not commensurate to spirituality, whilst we understand "blessing" in material terms. The "blessing" he really needed was something else... "Very rich" is literally 'very heavy'. The abundance of his blessing is laboured. But it was all by grace. The same term is used of how Israel went up out of Egypt at Passover, blessed by grace with "very much" (Ex. 12:38). As noted on chapter 12, Abraham at his weakest is presented as a type of Israel at the time of their deliverance. It is in his experience of grace that he becomes a pattern and example to his seed; and not in his obedience. Abraham would've reflected on how bad his behaviour had been, and yet how God had not only saved him but materially blessed him. He would have bowed his knees before God's grace. If God merely rewarded righteousness with material blessing, this appreciation of grace would never be. This is the error of the prosperity Gospel.

13:3 *He went on his journeys from the South even to Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai*- The reference to Abram pitching his tent between Bethel ['the house of God'] and Hai ['the house of ruin'] could imply that he was caught between the two- his faith was not firmly decided (Gen. 13:3).

The repeated references to the "journeys" of the people in the wilderness had as their basis the description of Abraham taking his journey through the desert to the promised land (Gen. 13:3); the very same two Hebrew words recur in the command to Israel to now 'take their journey' (Dt. 10:11), following in the steps of their father Abraham. See on Gen. 17:1.

13:4 *To the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first. There Abram called on the name of Yahweh*- This is the first we hear of Abram relating to God as Yahweh. Whatever his 'calling on the name' involved beyond sacrifice, he clearly made a special commitment to Yahweh at that time and place. And it was in response to grace; for he realized he had done wrong in going into Egypt to preserve his wealth, in lying about his wife... and out of it all, he had not been punished, rather both God and Pharaoh had

blessed him with wealth. And it was that which led him now to offer his animal wealth to God, and to devote himself further to Him. If God had punished him, the same response would not have been forthcoming.

13:5 *Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents*- It is stressed in the record that "Lot went with him" out of Haran (Gen. 12:4), and that in Abram's subsequent passing through the land of Canaan, "Lot... went with Abram" (Gen.13:5; 13:1). But Abram had been asked to leave his relatives. Abraham didn't separate from Lot of his own volition- he invites Lot to separate himself from him, rather than Abraham telling Lot that he was separating from him (Gen. 13:9). Abraham's subsequent concern for Lot, rescuing him from captivity and then begging God to save Lot from Sodom, show how Abraham certainly considered Lot his beloved family member. "We be brethren" was his position. "Lot separated from him" (Gen. 13:14) rather than Abraham separating from Lot, as was required by God's command to Abraham. As soon as Lot separates from Abraham, God repeats the promise to Abraham- that "thy seed", you singular, will inherit the land. To receive a new land and a new family, Abraham had to separate from his natural, earthly land and family. The fulfilment of the promises was conditional upon Abraham's individuation from his family, his separation from them and unto God- and God worked to enable this precondition to be fulfilled despite Abraham's weakness in separating from his own land and family. It was God who brought Abraham out of Ur (Gen. 15:7; Neh. 9:7)- not Abraham's obedience to the call to leave Ur. We see a similar grace in how Lot was told to leave Sodom, but he dithered in doing so; God "sent Lot out of Sodom" (Gen. 19:29), and eventually took his hand and dragged him out of the city, "the Lord being merciful to him" (Gen. 19:16).

13:6 *The land was not able to bear them, that they might live together: for their substance was great, so that they could not live together*- Wealth nearly always leads to division. The same words and situation recur when we read that Jacob and Esau could not live together because of their wealth (Gen. 36:7). The ideal is that brethren dwell together [same Hebrew words] in unity (Ps. 133:1). But that is only possible with the presence of the Spirit. The extent of their wealth is emphasized. The multiplication of their flocks is the more remarkable when we realize that there had been a major famine in the land (Gen. 12:10). And the more they needed pastureland, the more conflict there would be with the local inhabitants.

13:7 *There was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock*- Immediately Terah died, Abram may have felt he had truly left his "kindred" and eagerly moved on towards the promised land of Canaan (so Gen. 11:32-12:4 implies). It is likely that many of Abram's "kindred" would have come along with Terah, responding themselves to the call of Abram. Presumably they settled in Haran after Terah's death. It is even possible that the family were from this city originally,

seeing that Abraham's brother was called Haran. We saw on Gen. 12:1 that just before leaving Haran, Abram was further told to separate from his "father's house" too, i.e. *all* of his father's household. This must have included Lot. Abram could understand separation from his idolatrous father and the rest of the family retinue; yet Lot was "a righteous man"; Abram evidently rated Lot's spirituality (Gen. 18:23,32). Again, Abram was in a quandary. He had left all but one of his father's house in Haran. Was he really intended to separate from his father's house to the extent of leaving Lot too? It is likely that Abram often agonized about Lot. There he was in Canaan, knowing that his seed would inherit this land, which was then full of Canaanites (the record twice emphasizes, in Gen. 12:6 and 13:7). But Lot, part of his kindred and father's house, was still with him. We saw that the Hebrew for "kindred" implies one born in ones' own country. A closely related word is found in Gen. 11:28, describing how Haran, Lot's father, "died in the *land of his nativity*, in Ur". If Lot's father lived and died in Ur, it is fair to assume that Lot was born in Ur. So Abram knew he must separate from Lot, his "kindred" - but how? What reason could he give Lot? Yet he had faith in what God had told him; therefore he *wanted* to leave Lot, but just found it hard to do. And so God made a way.

Because the promises were to be made to Abram and not Lot, this separation was indeed necessary (although nothing should be inferred from this regarding Lot's spirituality or standing with God). It is stressed in the record that "Lot went with him" out of Haran (Gen. 12:4), and that in Abram's subsequent passing through the land of Canaan, "Lot... went with Abram" (Gen. 13:5; 13:1). Having been through so much together (they were together in the Egypt crisis, Gen. 13:1), it is unlikely that they would suffer from a personality clash. Yet the great wealth of them both resulted in "strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdmen of Lot's cattle" (Gen. 13:7). Abram reasoned that it would be a shame to let this incident between their employees drive a wedge between them personally; "for we be brethren" (note Abram's intense awareness that they were of the same household), and close spiritual friends too, it may be inferred (Gen. 19:8). Abram's subsequent concern for Lot indicates that they did not fall out personally over the problem.

And the Canaanite and the Perizzite lived in the land at that time- Moses' books were helping the wilderness generation to see where they were coming from historically. Passages like this and Gen. 12:6 now take on special relevance: "The Canaanites were then in the land". Moses was saying this as his people were about to enter a Canaan likewise occupied by Canaanites; the idea would have been *'Then* the Canaanites were there, just as they are *now*, and God shall be with us Abram's seed likewise'. He was bidding the people see their connection with their father Abraham, who then lived with Canaanites also in the same land. See on Gen. 13:3. We wonder why the Perizzites are mentioned specifically. It could be that they lived in the highlands and the "Canaanites" in the lowlands; or perhaps there were Perizzites in the particular locality where Abram was, and "Canaanite" was a more generic term.

13:8 *Abram said to Lot, Please, let there be no strife between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are relatives*- Abram must surely have recalled how he had been called to separate from his relatives, and had not done so. God had seen Abram's devotion to Him at the time of :4, and responded by empowering him to be the more obedient- by making Lot separate from him. "For we are relatives" or "brethren" (AV) is a fundamental truth- brethren should not have "strife" between them, because of their relationship within the family of God. There may have to be separation, of a kind, between them. But their essential brotherhood should never lead to strife. In Gen. 26:20-22 we read of how there was "strife" between Isaac and the local Canaanites; and each time, Isaac moved on, rather than engage in strife. When Jacob entered into "strife" with Laban regarding the stolen idols, he was only saved from it by Divine grace (Gen. 31:36 s.w.).

13:9 *Isn't the whole land before you? Please separate yourself from me*- Abram would have noticed Lot's desire to settle down in the cities of the plain. Now he saw that providence was giving him the means he needed to separate from his father's house completely. He knew that if Lot chose, of his own volition, to separate from him, then there would no longer be the emotional agony of him separating from Lot. Yet a third time the record emphasizes their separation, and implies that as soon as this occurred, the full Abrahamic land covenant was made, featuring Abram's eternal inheritance of the land: "The Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him... all the land which thou seest, to *thee* will I give it, and to *thy* seed for ever" (Gen. 13:14,15 AV). Again we see God's patience in the development of Abram's faith, and God's incremental response at each point of that development.

Abraham gives Lot the choice as to what land he would like to live in. Lot was the orphaned nephew of Abraham- such magnanimity would've been unheard of in those societies, for the elder to give the junior dependent such a choice. The elder in the relationship would've chosen the best for himself, and that was that. It seems to me that Abraham's unusual attitude in this matter was a direct outcome of his faith in the promise that the whole land really would one day be given to *him*. If we have the faith of Abraham... we won't fight for our corner in this world. It'll be *so* much easier to 'let go' as Abraham did, and take an attitude to material wealth and possessions which is radically counter-cultural in *our* societies. The way that Lot lifted up his eyes and looked around the land is matched by the way in which God then bids Abraham to likewise lift up his eyes and view the very same territory which Lot had just chosen (Gen. 13:10,14)- and was told that the land which Lot had chosen, along with all other land, would be Abraham's eternally.

If you go to the left hand, then I will go to the right. Or if you go to the right hand, then I will go to the left- We think of the Lord's depiction of the final judgment as a separation between right and left. It was as if Lot had the choice to decide, through his decisions

about material things in this life. Although he failed, placing himself on the left hand side, as it were; he still repented and will be saved. Just as Peter denied the Lord and was condemned, in a preview of judgment day; and yet repented and was saved.

Abraham was effectively offering land for peace. He was willing to allow Lot to have the best of the land, because he was persuaded that he was going to inherit that land for ever. But by offering it to Lot in this life, he showed that he believed it would be his at some future point beyond this life. It is the seeking of immediate material blessing which leads to so much strife between brethren. The way out of this is to believe that we actually have all blessings- and will receive them materially in the Kingdom. This means that for now, we are willing to sacrifice material advantage for the sake of peace with others. Living a quiet life, at peace with all men as far as we can, in certain hope of the Kingdom to come. It was exactly because Lot wanted the land right now that the promise of eternally inheriting it was given to Abraham- and not to him. Abraham would have looked out over the land Lot had chosen- and heard that this land was to be eternally his. Whilst Lot had it now- with many associated worries and difficulties.

Abraham's invitation to Lot is specifically to separate himself from Abraham. Yet Abraham had been commanded to separate from Lot. He clearly felt this was beyond him to do, and he leaves the initiative with Lot. He says that there should not be any strife between them because they were relatives- the very "kindred" he had been asked to separate from. Lot's initiative in the separation is recognized in :14: "Yahweh said to Abram, after Lot was separated from him". The wonder was that despite Abraham not himself separating from all his kindred, he was then given the promise of a seed and all the land- as if he had now met the precondition for receiving that promise. We again see how God fills up the gap of the preconditions required- in order to bless us. This was all in response to how Abraham did have at least some genuine faith, as Hebrews 11 notes. We marvel at how God set this up. Lot's decision to separate from Abraham was because of the colossal material blessing Abraham received on leaving Egypt (:2)- and all that was blessing given by grace alone, because he had badly sinned there, had not repented, and exited the situation with massive material blessings. By God's grace alone. And in the longer picture of his life, these blessings were used to bring about the situation whereby he could fulfil the preconditions required for yet greater blessing.

13:10 *Lot lifted up his eyes*- The Hebrew phrase "to lift up the eyes" is used very extensively about the Abraham family. Most Bible characters have the term used at most once or twice about them; but the Genesis record emphasizes this characteristic of this family. It's as if we're being bidden to really visualize them as a family, and to enable this we're even given an insight into their body language. Consider the emphasis on the way this family had of lifting up their eyes:
Lot lifted up his eyes (Gen. 13:10)

Abraham lifted up his eyes (Gen. 13:14)
Abraham lifted up his eyes and noticed the Angels (Gen. 18:2)
Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place of sacrifice (Gen. 22:4)
Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the ram caught (Gen. 22:13)
Isaac lifted up his eyes and saw camels coming on which Rebekah was riding (Gen. 24:63)
Rebekah, as part of a marriage made in Heaven, lifted up *her* eyes and saw Isaac at the same moment (Gen. 24:64)
Jacob lifted up his eyes and saw the vision of the speckled cattle (twice recorded- Gen. 31:10,12)
Jacob lifted up his eyes and saw Esau coming (Gen. 33:1)
Esau lifted up his eyes and saw Jacob's family (Gen. 33:5)
Jacob's sons lifted up their eyes and saw the traders coming (Gen. 37:25)
Joseph lifted up his eyes and saw Benjamin (Gen. 43:29)
Of course the classic epitome of this feature is when Abraham lifts up his eyes to Heaven and is asked to count the stars, and there and then believes God's word of promise that "so shall thy seed be". Yet *we* , as Abraham's family, his children by faith, are likewise asked [with the same Hebrew words] to lift up *our* eyes to Heaven and consider the stars, and take strength from the fact that their creator is our God (Is. 40:26; 51:6; 60:4).

And saw all the plain of the Jordan, that it was well-watered everywhere- During the famine, when the land was not well-watered, Abram and Lot had made the mistake of going down into Egypt (Gen. 12:11). They returned from Egypt not because the famine lifted, but because they repented for Abram's materialism and dishonesty. But Lot had failed to learn the lesson; well-watered areas attracted him, and he noted that the land looked like Egypt.

Before Yahweh destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of Yahweh- Sarah murmured that it was impossible for her to have "pleasure" in childbearing (Gen. 18:12). She uses the word *ednah*, related to the word *Eden*. Yet in the events of Gen. 19, she sees how the land around Sodom that was once "like the garden of Eden" (Gen. 13:10) is made barren and sowed with salt so that nothing could grow there (Gen. 19:25; Dt. 29:23). She was being taught that God can give and take away fertility on a huge scale, just as that land had only recently been dry in the famine (Gen. 12:11), but was at this time well watered.

Like the land of Egypt, as you go to Zoar- We suffer from the 'little of both' syndrome. Like Lot, we perceive that what we want is both like the garden of God (Eden) and also like Egypt; there is a tremendous dualism in our spiritual vision. Perhaps we are to understand that the area around Sodom was like Egypt. Abraham learns from his failure in Gen. 12- of going down into Egypt from lack of faith in the promises. Now, faced with

the choice of 'Egypt' [or something which resembles it], he chooses rightly. We see the growth of Abraham's faith; from a very faultering faith in Gen. 11 and 12, to the peak of faith in being willing to offer Isaac in Gen. 22. And yet the growth in faith was no smooth upward curve. For in seeking fulfilment of the promise of the seed through Hagar *the Egyptian* , Abraham was again going back to Egypt rather than trusting in the fulfilment of the promises to him in due course.

13:11 *So Lot chose the Plain of the Jordan for himself. Lot travelled east, and they separated themselves the one from the other*- "For himself" surely hints at selfishness. The Hebrew is literally 'chose him'. He chose his inheritance; whereas God chose the inheritance for Abraham, and gave it to him. The construction is only found elsewhere about men chosing for themselves unbelieving wives in Gen. 6:2. His travelling east connects with the descendants of Noah travelling east from Ararat and building Babel (Gen. 11:2), as well as the rejected Cain and Adam travelling east away from the sanctuary in Eden (Gen. 3:24; 4:16). As with Abram, we find the record emphasizing his weakness; but he is declared "righteous" ultimately (2 Pet. 2:7). That surely was an example of righteousness being imputed, just as it was to Abraham.

13:12 *Abram lived in the land of Canaan, and Lot lived in the cities of the plain, and moved his tent as far as Sodom*- We can trace Lot's slide towards the world. He began seeking better pastureland in the valley; he then "lived in the cities of the plain", then camped in his tent near Sodom; and finally moved into Sodom, put his tent in the loft, and became a judge within the city (Gen. 19:9). Whereas our pattern is to be Abram, who remained on the less fertile areas, and received the promise of eternal inheritance. Abram now lived in Canaan but Lot didn't. This shows that effectively Lot rejected Canaan for the world. And yet, despite his continual weaknesses, he is seen as a righteous man by the New Testament.

13:13 *Now the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinners against Yahweh*- Sodom being a type of latter day events, it is not surprising that Scripture provides a wealth of detail concerning Sodom. "Before the Lord" (AV) recalls the earth being "corrupt before God" prior to the flood (Gen. 6:11), another clear type of the last days. Indeed their sin being "before the Lord" may hint that Lot (or Abraham?) had preached God's requirements to them, and therefore they were consciously disobeying Him. Thus Rom. 3:19 speaks of the world becoming "guilty before God" by reason of their having the opportunity to know God's word (cp. Rom. 2:12,13). And yet sin is still sin, whether or not there is knowledge of God's word.

13:14 *Yahweh said to Abram, after Lot was separated from him*- This separation had been required when God first entered relationship with Abram. Now Abram had been led to obedience to it, the promises were enlarged. This suggests that there are certain waymarks of spiritual attainment which the Father sets, and then increments His relationship with us once we reach them.

Now, lift up your eyes- See on :10.

And look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward- He would have looked out over the areas just chosen by Lot; not only those areas, but wherever he surveyed, was to be given to him eternally. "The place" where Abram was could refer to an altar built there; it was in response to his devotion to Yahweh that he was given the promise.

13:15 *For all the land which you see, I will give to you, and to your offspring forever*- This was alluding to what He had initially told Abram back in Ur: "Get thee out... unto a land that I will *shew* (s.w. "see" in 13:15) you" (Gen. 12:1). It was as if God was saying: 'Well Abraham, this is it. This is the land I told you about'- and yet the best of it has now been given to Lot! The whole thing could have seemed some kind of cruel, just as many of our life experiences do. Abraham had given up all, made a long and dangerous journey, to receive a land from God- and when he arrives there, the best of it is given to his younger relative. But God's purpose was to focus Abraham's faith upon the fact that he would *eternally* inherit this land. And so it is with many of the twists and turns of our lives which can appear nothing but cruel fate to the unbelieving observer.

The "offspring" or "seed" (AV) was singular (Gal. 3:16). Sarah was still barren, and so this would have been enigmatic for Abram; it was perhaps through the enigmatic nature of the promise that Abram was led toward some conception of the Messiah, the same individual promised to Eve. Abram had children by concubines, according to Gen. 25; and Lot may have been counted as his adopted son. He would have wondered whether the promise referred to any of those options.

"Forever" introduces the idea of personal immortality. But it was promised here to only two persons- Abram and his "seed". This is how Gal. 3:16 reasons; and it is only by association with that "seed" through baptism into Him that these promises become true for us (Gal. 3:27-29).

13:16 *I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then your seed may also be numbered*- This had an initial fulfilment in Solomon being "King over a people like the dust of the earth" (2 Chron.1:9; 1 Kings 4:20). But the "offspring" was singular and not plural (Gal. 3:16). That individual was to be "made" innumerable. And that 'making' is through God's calling of individuals worldwide to be part of the offspring, who is Christ. The innumerable seed must be compared with the other strand of Biblical evidence that "few are chosen". Relative to the wonder of salvation, and Abram standing there as just one man, indeed they are "many", but "few" compared to the global population.

13:17 *Arise, walk through the land in its length and in its breadth; for I will give it to you*- God never let go of Abraham, even when Abraham didn't readily obey what God required of him. But Abraham didn't willingly "walk through the land"- because perhaps he doubted that he would be given it, or feared the local tribes. It's like saying to a child: 'Come and look at this! I am going to give it to you!', and the child doesn't even want to look. In this context we read of how Abraham "*dwelt* in the plain of Mamre"- that's stressed twice (Gen. 13:18; 14:13). Instead of travelling around in his land to see it, he tried to settle down. But God brought circumstances into his life which made him travel around the length and breadth of Canaan- thus Abraham had to pursue Lot's captors "unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus" before he recovered Lot (Gen. 14:15). Hobah is in the far north east of Canaan- Abraham had to go all the way there from Mamre in the centre of Canaan. For unknown reasons, Abraham also lived in Beersheba for a while (Gen. 22:19); he had a meeting with the local rulers at Shaveh, near Jerusalem (Gen. 14:17); and at the time of Gen. 16:14 Abraham was near Kadesh Barnea, in the very South of Canaan on the Egyptian border. One wonders whether the attraction of Egypt had led him there once more- in which case it was his own weakness which was used by God to ensure that he travelled to the very south of Canaan. Maybe the record includes all these geographical markers in order to demonstrate how Abraham did indeed travel around Canaan through providentially arranged circumstances, although not it seems as an act of direct obedience to the Divine command to do so.

The hope of a literal bodily reward has been understood by God's people from earliest times. Abraham was promised that he, personally, would inherit the land of Canaan forever, as surely as he had walked up and down in it. His faith in those promises would have necessitated his belief that his body would somehow, at a future date, be revived and made immortal, so that this would be possible.

Abraham was progressively set up by God so that his spiritual growth would be an upward spiral. Initially, he was told to walk / go to a land which God would shew him (Gen. 12:1); when he got there, he was told to "arise", and "walk" through that land of Canaan (Gen. 13:17). And Abraham, albeit in a faltering kind of way, did just this. But this was to prepare him for the test of Gen. 22:3 in the command to offer Isaac. His obedience this time isn't at all faltering. He "arises" and 'goes' [s.w. "walk"] "unto the place of which God had told him" to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:3). This is exactly what he had been called to do right back in Ur- to arise and walk / go to a land / place which God would show him (Gen. 12:1). And so our obedience in one challenge of God leads us to obedience in others. One experience is designed to lead us to another. Nothing- absolutely nothing- in our lives is senseless chance. All- and this takes some believing- is part of a higher plan for our spiritual good, in our latter end. Time and again we see this in Abraham's life.

13:18 *Abram moved his tent, and came and lived by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and built an altar there to Yahweh*- This was Abram's response to the command to walk up and down in the land. And it was negative. He tried to set up camp in one place, in fact in a centre of pagan worship ("the oaks"). But more positively, he built an altar to Yahweh there, a public statement of his faith. And that altar and his own "tent" are well contrasted. Just as the early church resisted the command to go out and spread the Gospel, and the descendants of Noah wanted to build Babel lest they have to obey the command to go out into the *eretz* and subdue it... so Abram tried to remain sedentary. And this is human nature; to prefer the fixed, the old and familiar, rather than the leadership of the Spirit.

GENESIS CHAPTER 14

14:1 *It happened in the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar, Arioch, king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of Goiim*- This chapter gives the impression that the local tribes within the *eretz* were divided into two groups which battled each other. The salvation of Lot out of this could look forward to a latter day deliverance of a weak but counted-righteous remnant in the last days, symbolized by Lot. For his final exit from Sodom is a type of the deliverance of the faithful remnant in the *eretz* of the last days (Lk. 17:32). Perhaps we are to see the *eretz* divided into two such groups of its non-Jewish inhabitants, perhaps split between shia and Sunni Islam. See on :7. "Tidal king of Goiim" refers to the Kurds, who may well have a major part to play in the latter day outworking of these things. "Ellasar" was not far from Ur of the Chaldees, and he may well have known Abram and Lot.

14:2 *That they made war with Bera, king of Sodom, and with Birsha, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, king of Admah, and Shemeber, king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar)*- The tribes in Palestine / Canaan, which was the area intended for initial Israelite settlement, are presented here as not invincible, and easily dominated by others. And even their dominators could be overcome by just one man, Abraham, with God behind him. This was all encouragement for the Israelites as they approached Canaan.

14:3 *All these joined together in the valley of Siddim (the same is the Salt Sea)*- The various clarifications that "the same is..." were for the benefit of the Israelites as they journeyed through these areas. The encouragement was that they too could easily be granted victory, and nothing between them and the promised Kingdom of God was really as invincible as it seemed.

14:4 *Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year, they rebelled*- Chedorlaomer was the leader of the group; as "king of Elam" he might point forward to some leader arising from latter day Elam, which is Iran. And yet the apparent leader of

the group was the king of Shinar or Babylon, who is mentioned at the head of the list in :1.

14:5 *In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer came, and the kings who were with him, and struck the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzim in Ham, and the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim*- Moses was writing for the Israelites about to enter Canaan; and they were afraid of the Rephaim [giants] in Canaan. They are here being encouraged that those peoples had been dominated by others in time past- even without the help and promise of Yahweh behind them.

14:6 *And the Horites in their Mount Seir, to Elparan, which is by the wilderness*- The very peoples through whom the Israelites were passing as they heard Genesis presented to them- had been overcome. They were not as invincible as they might appear. "Their Mount Seir" could suggest that the descendants of Esau received their inheritance; as Israel would if they remained faithful.

14:7 *They returned, and came to En Mishpat (the same is Kadesh), and struck all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that lived in Hazazon Tamar*- Kadesh was well known to the primary audience of Genesis, i.e. Israel in the wilderness. All up, the northern confederacy of four kings [for they came upon Sodom from the north] dominated seven other tribes. This is the kind of situation depicted in the various descriptions of the latter day beast dominating the *eretz* with various numbers of horns and heads subsumed beneath it.

14:8 *The king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (the same is Zoar) went out; and they set the battle in array against them in the valley of Siddim*- The four king confederacy names the kings; the Canaanite kings are not named. Perhaps this was to encourage the Israelites who first heard this history to see that "the king of" whatever Canaanite town was in their path was likewise able to be overcome. If specific names had been given, they may have been tempted to think that this was a historical victory against a particular individual; whereas the principle God wished to explain was of a more generic nature.

14:9 *Against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goiim, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings against the five*- The five kings and their armies could not repel the four king confederacy who overthrew Sodom. But Abraham, just one man with Yahweh behind him, could do so- and even take their prey out of their hands. This was to encourage the later seed of Abraham, who were the primary audience for the book of Genesis, that they too could easily achieve victory against these very same peoples and in the very same areas.

14:10 *Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell there*- These pits for bitumen they had dug themselves, and now they fell into them and died there, exactly as stated in Ps. 9:15.

And those who remained fled to the hills- Lot later fled to those same hills (Gen. 19:17,30). Perhaps he was amongst those who even now fled to the hills. He ought to have learned the lesson, rather than let history repeat itself.

Surely Abraham is our real example; who in the years of his pilgrimage chose the barren uplands, despising worldly advantage, and who could look at Sodom's burning with no feeling of desire or sense of loss. Abraham dwelt on the mountains, from where he could look down upon Sodom; if Lot had been in these mountains, he would not have suffered when Sodom was invaded this first time; it took the final coming of the Lord to make him flee to the mountains (Gen.19:10), i.e. to the area which Abraham had chosen at the first. If we can only see the world for what it is, then the equivalent of Lot's experiences will be unnecessary for us.

14:11 *They took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their food, and went their way*- Lot had gone to Sodom for materialistic reasons; and now he lost all that he had, even his own food, to teach him the wrongness of his decision that day when he looked toward Sodom and chose the well-watered lands in that direction. But still Lot remained in Sodom, and nearly lost his life and his salvation in its final destruction; he failed to learn the lesson. Just as so many believers are taught powerful lessons about the idiocy of being materialistic; and yet return to the same bondage.

14:12 *They took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who lived in Sodom, and his goods, and departed*- Lot suffered in the condemnation of Sodom when the neighbouring kings invaded- he was in the same situation as those who were warned to come out of Babylon lest they be consumed in her plagues. So he went through a condemnation process in this life- but later learnt his lesson and will be saved in the end. "Who lived in Sodom" could be read as a critical note; for Lot should not have ideally been there. We wonder why they bothered taking Lot with them, rather than killing him. I suggested on :2 that "Ellasar" was not far from Ur of the Chaldees, and that king may well have known Abram and Lot. Perhaps Lot agreed to join them, or mercy was shown to him because he was from their tribal area to the East, and he wasn't a local. But the fact he was taken with them rather than just ignored would suggest that he may have agreed to join in with them in confederacy. Again, we would see here a weakness in Lot. "And his goods" shows that although Lot had chosen the wealth of this world rather than Canaan (see on Gen. 13:12), he lost even that wealth. It brought nothing but trouble. It's not as if we receive a few years of pleasure now in return for rejecting the things of the Kingdom. Those years and that life is full of trouble and loss.

14:13 *One who had escaped came and told Abram, the Hebrew. Now he lived by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner; and these were allies of Abram*- One can't help but notice that God stressed to the later children of Abraham that since they had a covenant with Him, they were not to make covenants with the people who lived around them in the land- time and again God references His

covenant with His people, and in that context tells them not to make covenants with the peoples of the land (Ex. 34:10-12,15,27; Dt. 7:29; Jud. 2:1,2,20). Yet Abraham made covenants with those very people (Gen. 21:27,32)- perhaps indicating his lack of appreciation of his covenant relationship with Yahweh? However, "allies of Abram", *baalim beriyth*, can be translated 'lords of covenant', i.e. masters or possessors of a covenant with Abram; "literally: They being possessors of the covenant of Abram". This could mean that already, Abram had begun to share his covenant with God with others.

14:14 *When Abram heard that his relative was taken captive*- Even though Abram had been told to separate from his relatives, including Lot, and despite Lots' evident spiritual weakness, having made the wrong decision to move into Sodom... Abram still came to his help, and remembered his brotherly connection with him.

He led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued as far as Dan- The significance of 318 is unclear. But if read literally, it's clear that Abram was a not insignificant chieftain, having such a personal army comprised of those born within his family encampment. His encampment would therefore likely have numbered at least 2000, if there were 318 "trained men" born within the household. According to Gen. 25, he had concubines, and we wonder as to how many of these were therefore his blood relatives. However, he also describes Eliezer his manager as the "one born in my house" (Gen. 15:3), with some translations suggesting "the *only* one born in my household"; and the numerical value of Eliezer is 318. In this case "men" here in :14 and "servants" in :15 would be intensive plurals referring to the great man and servant in Abraham's household, Eliezer. He was accompanied by Aner, Eshcol and Mamre, his immediate neighbours, and their men (:24), but a case could be made that Abraham and Eliezer alone were capable of putting thousands to flight. This interpretation would explain why Eliezer is called "Eliezer of Damascus" and yet also one born within Abram's household (Gen. 15:2,3). He was perhaps called "of Damascus" in memory of his heroic almost singlehanded victory at Damascus (:15). Abram's virtually singlehanded victory is alluded to in the covenant which he now receives; for during the covenant making process, Abram singlehandedly drove away the birds of prey, representing the Canaanite tribes he feared would now take vengeance upon him for his victory at Damascus (Gen. 15:11). The Hebrew there implies that Abram alone drove them away.

The uninspired first century *Epistle of Barnabas* 9.8 claims: "[The Scripture] saith, "And Abraham circumcised ten, and eight, and three hundred men of his household." What, then, was the knowledge given to him in this? Learn the eighteen first, and then the three hundred. The ten and the eight are thus denoted - Ten by I, and Eight by H. You have [the initials of the, name of] Jesus. And because the cross was to express the grace [of our redemption] by the letter T, he says also, "Three Hundred." He signifies, therefore, Jesus by two letters, and the cross by one".

14:15 *He divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and struck them, and pursued them to Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus*- As suggested on :14, "servants" could be an intensive plural. This incident led to Abram travelling the length of the *eretz* promised to him. His love for wayward Lot was used by God in order to help Abram be obedient to the command to go up and down in the land. This is how God works; working along with our weaknesses and strengths, and the weaknesses of others, in order to help us in the path of obedience and development He intends.

14:16 *He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative, Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people*- Abraham's focus on material issues can be discerned from the double description of how he pursued after his captured nephew Lot, "and he brought back all the goods, and his brother Lot, and his goods" (Gen. 14:16 AV). Abraham's concern about the "goods" is perhaps significant. And yet given this mindset, it is to Abraham's credit that he utterly refuses to take even a "shoe latchet" of the spoil lest it be said that any man had made him rich- he knew that it was *God* who had made him rich (Gen. 14:23), and Abraham wanted the world to know that. See on :22.

14:17 *The king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley)*- This was where Absalom erected his pillar (2 Sam. 18:18), and Josephus locates it near Jerusalem. This would accord with Melchizedek king of Jerusalem attending the meeting (:18). Such a victory celebration in Jerusalem would fit well with the latter day things which these incidents point forward to.

14:18 *Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High*- Melchizedek is presented in Hebrews as a type of the Lord Jesus; a king-priest, who was not a Levitical priest, nor was his priesthood dependent upon his genealogy. The record is framed so that he abruptly appears on the scene; "without father [and] mother" alludes to this, as no genealogy is provided. Hebrews uses this to counter objections that the Lord was from the tribe of Judah, not Levi, and therefore could not be a priest. Likewise there is no reference to his birth or death, but that doesn't mean he was superhuman. He is framed by the record in this way. Likewise Abraham is presented as having an "only son", Isaac; when in fact he had other children by his concubines (Gen. 25), not least Ishmael.

Umberto Cassuto was one of 20th century Judaism's most erudite and painstakingly detailed Bible students. He demonstrated at length that the Canaanites believed there were various gods and demons responsible for the various events on earth, and that the Torah picks up these terms and applies them to God and His [all righteous] Angels. The examples he cites include the term "the most high God" (Gen. 14:18-20), "creator of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:19,22), and the idea of supernatural demons coming to earth and wrestling with men (Gen. 32:29,31). These ideas and terms are used in the

Torah and applied by Moses to God's Angels, and to God Himself. Cassuto went on to show that this kind of deconstruction of pagan myths about demons and 'Satan' is common throughout the Bible- e.g. the references to Israel's God Yahweh 'riding on the clouds' (Ps. 104:3; 147:8; Is. 5:6; Joel 2:2) are an allusion to how the surrounding peoples thought that Baal rode upon the clouds; the "morning stars" were understood as independent deities, but Job 38:7 stresses that they are in fact Yahweh's ministers.

The gift of bread and wine [which foreshadowed our present memorial meetings] was a sign of God blessing us. Hence it was “the cup of blessing”, which Paul says we also bless. There is a mutuality about it- we bless God, He blesses us. No part of this wonderful and comforting arrangement depends upon us not passing that cup to our brethren.

Melchizedek was apparently a believer in the true God, presumably a priest of a community of believers in Jerusalem. But there is no evidence that Abram had much contact with him before or after this incident. The almost manic insistence that believers *must* fellowship together at all costs rather falls apart before this consideration. Likewise I have argued that it was God's intention that Abram separate from all his relatives, including Lot. And God brought about the final division between them. Yet Abram refers to Lot as his "brother". They did not it seems "fellowship together" and yet were believers who shall share eternity together. This opens another window upon the divided state of the body of Christ today.

14:19 *He blessed him*- This is associated with the bread and wine of :18. The gift of bread and wine [which foreshadowed our present memorial meetings] was a sign of God blessing us. Hence it was “the cup of blessing”, which Paul says we also bless. There is a mutuality about it- we bless God, He blesses us. No part of this wonderful and comforting arrangement depends upon us not passing that cup to our brethren. Note how Paul speaks of the breaking of bread in 1 Cor. 10:16-21. He sees the bread and wine as gifts from God to us. It’s all about receiving the cup of the Lord, the cup which comes from Him. We should take it with both hands. It seems so inappropriate, given this emphasis, if our focus is rather on worrying about forbidding others in His body from reaching their hands out to partake that same cup and bread.

And said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth- This same title for God is used also by Abram in :22; perhaps God had taught them both the same thing in different ways and at different times. Or maybe Abram liked the phrase used by Melchizedek and used it himself, just as our language and phraseology is influenced by that of those whom we listen to.

The way Melchizedek blesses Abraham, as if Abraham is his inferior, is dwelt on in Hebrews 7. Abraham was inferior to Melchizedek- "consider how great this man was".

But the focus of the Genesis record is clearly upon Abraham, with Melchizedek briefly mentioned in passing. I suggest this shows that Abraham in his weakness is our example. The one who was not in fact the senior believer of his times is showcased as our pattern- because the significance of his example is in the fact that out of weakness he was made strong. Clearly God was in relationship with others at the time of Abram. But Abram, who had a very shaky start and was dragged kicking and resisting into God's purpose, was the one whose seed remained faithful. Whereas Melchizedek's spiritual descent is unrecorded, and presumably died out. It is a story of the spiritually weaker ending up the stronger, by grace.

14:20 *And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand-* "God most high" is a title Melchizedek uses three times; E.A. Speiser in *The Anchor Bible* commentary claims that this was a common title for a deity amongst the Canaanites. But the term is used about the one true God elsewhere (e.g. Num. 24:26). It could be that he accepted Yahweh as the highest God, but recognized the existence of others. This would explain why in :22, Abram defines this most high God as Yahweh. Abram uses the term which Melchizedek uses, thereby seeking to bridge build toward him, but defines the term accurately.

Abraham's military and political strength was now so established by this victory that he probably could have held a reasonable chance of subduing Canaan beneath his own political power. And Melchizedek seems to recognize this, when he observes that the God who possesses both sky [heaven] and the land [earth] has blessed Abraham with victory. But Abraham refuses to take any spoil, chooses to give a tenth to Melchizedek and goes back into obscurity. I suggest he did that because he believed that he would inherit the land due to Yahweh's promise, and not through taking it in his own secular strength. He could have been greater than Melchizedek, indeed he was so in military and secular terms after his victory; but Abraham shows humility in tithing to Melchizedek to emphasize that he is not seeking to dominate the land nor create himself as possessor of the land in this life.

"Delivered" is a form of the word "shield" which God goes on to use in Gen. 15:1. The promise of Gen. 15:1 is therefore a comment upon Abraham's attitude in Gen. 14. Indeed God has been Abraham's shield / deliverer: "And your reward will be exceedingly great". The 'reward' was therefore for Abraham's refusal of secular wealth and possession of the land. This would be the same lesson as taught in Gen. 13- that refusal of inheriting the land in this life was rewarded by the promise of eternally inheriting it.

Abram gave him a tenth of all- Hebrews interprets this as meaning that Abram as the ancestor of Levi was somehow inferior to Melchizedek, who is presented as being of a

higher order of priesthood than Levi. But in reality, Abram was not giving to Melchizedek personally. He was a priest of the most High God, whom Abram understood as Yahweh. And so Abram is tithing to Yahweh, from his side. Tithes given to priests were effectively gifts to the God whom the priest represented. Melchizedek, in the name of the Most High [Yahweh], three times pronounces a "blessing" upon Abram in :19,20. This was a reminder to Abram that the promised 'blessings' were yet future. And therefore Abram takes the cue, and rejects any immediate blessing- of land, people and goods. That was yet to come for him. The simple implication of the promises to Abraham is that we are not to seek blessing for ourselves now. We may have some foretastes of the future blessings, as Abraham had. But our blessing is ahead, and not now. And those blessings are given to us "by God Most High", and not by our blessing ourselves.

14:21 *The king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the people, and take the goods to yourself*- The king of Sodom considered that Lot and his family belonged to him, and should be given to him. This indicates further the degree to which Lot had sold his soul to Sodom. Now he had the opportunity to go his own way, to start life afresh; but he turned it down.

14:22 *Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth*- See on :20. This idea of owning nothing, not even ourselves, is only true of this life; the day of release from slavery will dawn, we will receive that true freedom and that true concept of personal possession- if *now* we resign it. Abraham really grasped this idea that we now can own nothing. He swore to Yahweh as "the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine..." (Gen. 14:22,23 AV). He knew that Yahweh is the owner of all, and *therefore* he was not going to yield to the temptation to increase what appeared to be 'his' possessions. Solomon likewise had the theory straight at least: "Labour not to be rich...wilt thou set thine eyes on that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven" (Prov. 23:4,5). The riches men seek don't exist, material possession is a pure fantasy.

Abraham speaks of how he is the servant of the God who is the *purchaser* of Heaven and earth, i.e. the land which God had potentially given Abraham (Gen. 14:22- the Hebrew translated "possessor" in the AV is usually translated 'buyer' elsewhere). Ps. 74:2 and Ps. 78:54 use the same word to describe how the land God gave Israel had been "purchased" by Him. Perhaps there is here a recognition by Abraham that God's gifts to us cost Him something. He had meditated upon the promise of the land, and concluded that God was giving him something which had cost Him. Perhaps this may even indicate that Abraham had reflected that the promise of the land was on account of God's willingness to purchase it through the death of the "seed of the woman" promised in Genesis 3... At the very least, we need to ask ourselves how much *we* have

meditated upon the implications of the same Abrahamic promises which have been made to us. And we likewise must avoid the assumption that because God owns all things, therefore it's painless for Him to give them to us. Poor people often assume that it's painless and effortless for a rich person to give them something- but actually it isn't. And we need to perceive the same about our wonderfully generous Father in Heaven. We are slaves now, owning nothing, but then we will be gloriously free (Rom. 8:21). So this idea of owning nothing, not even ourselves, is only true of this life; the day of release from slavery will dawn, we will receive that true freedom and that true concept of personal possession- if *now* we resign it. Abraham really grasped this idea that we now can own nothing. He swore to Yahweh as "the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine..." (Gen. 14:22,23). He knew that Yahweh is the owner of all, and *therefore* he was not going to yield to the temptation to increase what appeared to be 'his' possessions.

14:23 *That I will not take a thread nor a sandal strap nor anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'*- Abraham's belief in *God's* blessing of him is reflected in the way he is insistent to the King of Sodom that he will not take any of the spoil, lest anyone should think that man rather than God had blessed Abraham. It could be pointed out that this rather contrasts with his not returning to Pharaoh the things he gave him in return for Sarah becoming his wife (Gen. 12:16). Perhaps Abraham later reflected upon his failure in this incident, realizing he'd not displayed faith in *God's* blessing of him... and learnt his lesson when the same temptation occurred in Gen. 14 to be made rich by the men of this world. Our stumbling response to the same Abrahamic promises often develops in the same way. "Made rich" is the term used in Proverbs for how "the blessing of Yahweh makes rich". And this was exactly the point. The true wealth is in the Kingdom to come.

If Jesus is Lord, He owns all. Nothing that we have is our own. The Old Testament stressed that God's ownership of all precludes our own petty materialism, our manic desire to 'own'. Abraham refused to take "from a thread even to a shoelatchet" of what he could justifiable have had for himself; because Yahweh "the most high God [is] possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:22,23). But now, all that power has been bestowed by the Father upon the Son. Our allegiance to the Lord Jesus demands the same resignation of worldly acquisition as Abraham showed.

14:24 *I will accept nothing from you except that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. Let them take their portion*- Abram recognized that people live on different levels. For him, if God was possessor of all, then he did not wish to try to acquire possessions for himself. But he recognized that others in covenant relationship with him (see on :13) saw things on a lower level; that the spoil of your enemies was legitimate possession. As noted earlier,

this was a major step forward for Abram, who had strong tendencies toward materialism.

GENESIS CHAPTER 15

15:1 *After these things the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying, Don't be afraid, Abram*- The fear was initially of the retribution by other tribes of Canaan after the dramatic victory of Abraham at Damascus (see on Gen. 14:14). But there was also the fear of every believer- that the great promises of the Gospel appeared so far from fulfilment in man's daily reality. Remember that God only appeared to Abraham a few times in the course of a long life. Abram had been promised a unique function and role in the world, amongst humanity- but he didn't even have a child by his barren wife. This distance between daily reality and God's stated purpose for us can likewise induce some element of 'fear' in us. And the answer is in the covenant now being made more sure, which is what God has done for us too in Christ.

One of the strongest of the Abraham family's characteristics was fear, almost to the extent of psychiatric paranoia. Abraham (Gen. 15:1; 20:11), Hagar (Gen. 21:17), Lot (Gen. 19:30), Sarah (Gen. 18:15), Isaac (Gen. 26:7,24; 31:42, 53, Jacob (Gen. 32:7,11; 46:3; 28:17; 31:31), his sons (Gen. 42:35; 43:18,23; 50:21), Joseph (Gen. 42:18). This is really some emphasis. Fear and lack of faith are often associated (Dt. 20:8; Jud. 7:3; Mt. 25:25; Mk. 4:40; Lk. 12:32; Rom. 8:15; Heb. 13:6; 1 Jn. 4:18; 2 Tim. 1:7; Rev. 21:8). Again, this list is impressive. Yet despite their fear, their lack of total certainty *at times* that God would keep His promises , the patriarchs are held up as examples of faith. If their fear had not been recorded, would the record of their faith mean much to us? Unlikely. They had so much which militated against a life of faith: by way of hereditary characteristic, surroundings, past experience of life etc. Both Isaac and Jacob feared they would die well before they did (Gen. 47:9; 27:2); they feared death in that their future was ever on their mind. Yet evidently their fear was mixed with faith.

I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward- Abram was fearful that after his dramatic victory at Damascus (see on Gen. 14:14), the other tribes would attack him. But he is therefore promised that he would be shielded. And his refusal to enrich himself from the spoil was responded to by God promising "great reward" in compensation. Abram's refusal to enrich himself and focus simply on saving his brother was evidently very pleasing to God. "Reward" carries the idea of wages. God does pay back for devotion to His people, but not necessarily in material terms.

"And your reward will be exceedingly great" could however be God's response to Abraham's refusal of secular wealth and possession of the land in Gen. 14; see on Gen. 14:20. "Shield" is a form of the word "delivered" in Gen. 14:20. This would be the same

lesson as taught in Gen. 13- that refusal of inheriting the land in this life was rewarded by the promise of eternally inheriting it.

The promises to Abraham were extended in Genesis 15, with more specifics added about the "seed". But the context of the giving of those promises is again Abraham's weakness. After the conflict with the surrounding kings recorded in Genesis 14, Abraham is comforted: "Fear not, Abram: I am your shield" (Gen. 15:1)- as if Abram was starting to doubt in God's continued ability to protect him. God's assurances continued: "I am your exceedingly great reward" (Gen. 15:1). The Hebrew mind would've understood "reward" in this context to refer to children- Ps. 127:3 is explicit: "Children are the inheritance given by the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (s.w.). The "reward" is paralleled with the inheritance of children given by God. Jer. 31:16 likewise speaks of a woman bereft of her children being "rewarded" with more children.

15:2 *Abram said, Lord Yahweh, what will you give me, since I go childless, and he who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?*- It could be that this verse and :3 is a parenthesis. This is what Abram had been saying; and 15:1 is God's response to it. This kind of struture is common in Biblical Hebrew. But Abraham's words are the classic response of someone who wants children more than anything else. No promise of reward and material blessing will compensate for that hunger and gaping hole. The response is absolutely psychologically credible. But we must bear in mind that a chieftain like Abram may well have had children by concubines, and Gen. 25 lists some of them. But he genuinely felt childless. This is a window into how closely connected he felt to Sarai, and how he had accepted her barrenness and yet remained committed to her. We recall how unfaithful he had been to her when he first visited Egypt, and I commented there that neither God nor Abimelech punished him, but rather blessed him. That lack of a punitive discipline actually resulted in his becoming more committed to Sarah in the long term. And indeed it is clear from both Scripture and human observation that God often doesn't punish in this life on a measure for measure basis. Rather the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer- because all such shall be recompensed at the day of judgment. This provides a window onto how we ought to use or not use punitive response, especially in domestic and church life.

We wonder why Eliezer is called "Eliezer of Damascus" and yet also one born within Abram's household (:3). He was perhaps called "of Damascus" in memory of his heroic almost singlehanded victory at Damascus (see on Gen. 14:14,15).

Abraham doesn't just accept on faith God's assurances of :1. He speaks as if he somehow didn't believe that those promises meant that he personally would have a child; it's as if Abram were saying 'OK, I hear You, but whatever these promises of Yours mean, reality is, I am old and childless... can't You find a way to give me children?'. "Since I *continue* [Heb.] childless" indicates his frustration. God had already promised

to "give" the land to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 12:7; 13:15); and now Abraham complains that God hasn't 'given' [s.w.] him a seed. One can possibly detect an anger with God, at best a frustration, when he comments that all he has is his steward Eliezer ("this Eliezer of Damascus") as "the son of my house / family" (Gen. 15:2, Heb. *ben bayith*, son of my family)- as if to say 'All this You've promised me- is to go to *him*, is *this* guy to be this wonderful promised seed, and I for now get nothing? Was that the whole purpose of calling me out of Ur?'.

Indeed, Keil and Delitsczh suggest the correct interpretation and translation here as being: "Of what avail are all my possessions, wealth, and power, since I have no child, and the heir of my house is Eliezer the Damascene?". The Hebrew for "heir" can suggest the seizure of possession; thus Abraham could even be viewing Eliezer as effectively grabbing what he thought should be his personally.

In my opinion, Abraham's comment "this Eliezer of Damascus..." is another indicator of weakness in this undoubtedly great man. Eliezer is presented as a man of faith, of extreme loyalty to Abraham, with a wonderful humility in seeking the good of Isaac, the man who displaced him as heir of so much. His comment that God "led me- even me- straight to the house" (Translation of E.A. Speiser, *Genesis* (New York: Doubleday, 1964) and Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (London: Tyndale Press, 1967) p. 148) further indicates a commendable humility. Indeed, the way Eliezer refuses the greetings of polite custom in order to get on with God's work (Gen. 24:33) appears to be used by the Lord as a model for His preachers (Lk. 10:4). A window into Eliezer's faithfulness is provided by considering how Laban calls him "O blessed of the Lord", but Eliezer replies that in fact "the Lord has greatly blessed *my master*" (Gen. 24:31,35). His focus was not at all upon himself but rather upon Abraham his master. Yet Abraham appears to almost despise Eliezer, his bitterness at not having a seed by Sarah got the better of him at that moment- so it seems to me. There seems a designed contrast between Eliezer and Jacob. Eliezer with utter integrity says that God has given him "success" (Gen. 24:12) in seeking a wife for Isaac; whereas Jacob uses the same word in lying to his blind father about why he had so quickly brought venison: "Because God granted me success" (Gen. 27:20).

So Abraham was hardly at his spiritual best when God gave him the promises of Genesis 15. The first use of a word in the Bible is often significant- and the first time we meet the Hebrew word *nathan*, to give, is in Gen. 1:17, where we learn that God 'gave' the stars to humanity on earth. It's as if God is now testing whether Abraham will make the connection or not- for He takes Abraham out to see the stars, shining up there in the sky as proof that God really can give stars, has already done so and continues to do so... and challenges Abraham as to whether or not he can believe that truly, his seed *will* be given to him likewise, as many as those stars (Gen. 15:5). And Abraham made it through

the hoop. His awareness of the word of Gen. 1:17, that God really had given us the stars, his faith in the word, worked within him to bring forth the yet greater leap of faith- that really, so would his seed be. And God was thrilled. That man, standing there in the Middle Eastern night and beholding the stars, touched the heart of God by his internal attitudes... the sense within his heart that yes, OK, yes, somehow, yes, so will my seed be, somehow I *will* have my own child... And it was counted to him for righteousness. The same desperate struggle for faith was seen in the Lord in His final moments upon the cross- for He there reflected, according to Ps. 22:30, that a seed would indeed serve God, and it shall be accounted [s.w. "numbered" as in 'a seed which cannot be numbered'] for a generation. The childless Lord Jesus, with all against Him, facing His death with His lifework apparently a failure, His spiritual children [the disciples] having fled... was in the position of Abraham. And Abraham's faith surely inspired Him. And so it will each of us, when it seems that really life has failed, our efforts have got nowhere, family has broken up, children hate us, our best aspirations just never worked out... in those moments, in whatever form they come, we are to be inspired by Abraham. And we too can go out and view the stars which God has given, and keeps on giving, and believe again that ultimately He will give us the land, and in some form our seed will eternally endure.

Moses was bidding the people see their connection with their father Abraham, who then lived with Canaanites also in the same land. Gen. 15:1 introduces us to Abraham as a man who had God as his "shield"; and Dt. 33:29 concludes the Pentateuch by saying that Israel as a nation should be happy because *they* have Yahweh as their "shield". See on Gen. 13:3; Gen. 17:1.

15:3 *Abram said, Behold, to me you have given no seed: and, behold, one born in my house is my heir-* Abraham's faith in the promises is repeatedly held up as our example (Heb. 11:8,12,13 and elsewhere). Abraham "believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6) is quoted three times in the New Testament. But how *deep* was Abraham's faith? Immediately before Abraham's oft quoted profession of faith, he had said: "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless... behold, to me thou hast given no seed, and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir" (Gen. 15:2,3 AV). His faith in the promise of a seed was surely shaky at this time. Did he not have something of our Christian hypocrisy? Yet, sandwiched in between these two expressions of his partial faith, Abraham rises within his heart to a level of faith which so pleased God. "He believed in the Lord" seems to refer to an attitude deep within Abraham's heart, as he gazed up at the stars and reflected in God's promise: "So shall your seed be". God saw that, even if it was only a temporary peak, and was pleased with it; even though at the time, Abraham was weak in faith and even in a sense "ungodly", as Paul observes.

It may be that Abraham realized his own spiritual weakness at this time, if we follow Paul's argument in Rom. 4:3,5: "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory...(but) Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness... to him (alluding to Abraham) that worketh not, but believeth (as did Abraham) on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (like Abraham's) is counted for righteousness". Surely this suggests that Abraham felt *ungodly* at the time, unworthy of this great promise, recognizing he only had moments of faith, and yet he believed that although he was ungodly, God would justify him and give him the promise, and therefore he was counted as righteous and worthy of the promise. There is certainly the implication of some kind of forgiveness being granted Abraham at the time of his belief in Gen. 15:6; righteousness was imputed to him, which is tantamount to saying that his ungodliness was covered. In this context, Paul goes straight on to say that the same principles operated in the forgiveness of David for his sin with Bathsheba. It would actually appear that Paul is writing here, as he often does, with his eye on deconstructing popular Jewish views at the time. Their view of Abraham was that he was perfect, "Godly" in the extreme- and Paul's point is that actually he was not, he was "ungodly", but counted righteous not by his acts but by his faith. For documentation of Jewish sources, see S.K. Stowers, *A Rereading Of Romans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); A.J.M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons For Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988).

15:4 *Behold, the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, This man will not be your heir, but he who will come out of your own body will be your heir*- Abraham had been promised a son in Genesis 15; and yet there was no specific mention that this would be by Sarah. God had promised that "one born of your own bowels" would be his son (Gen. 15:4 AV). Yet according to Rom. 4:19, Abraham at that time did not consider the "deadness of Sarah's womb" to be a barrier. That indicates to me that he considered Sarah as his "own bowels". Note how in Semitic thought, Paul used the same idea when he asked Philemon to receive Onesiphorus as "mine own bowels" (Philemon 12). Another person could be considered "mine own bowels" if they were that close. When God promised Abraham that "of [his] own bowels" he would have a son, Abraham didn't selfishly think that this just meant that *he* would have a child. He considered his wife Sarah as his "own bowels", and so he assumed this meant that she would bear the child. In this we see a commendable unity of Abraham and Sarah; he thought of her as he thought of himself. In an age of polygamy and concubines, this was unusually wonderful. He could so easily have just gone off and slept with a woman to test out God's promise and have a child. And yet, as often in Abraham's life, he didn't maintain that level of spirituality. For he gave in to Sarah's badgering him to sleep with her slave girl Hagar, and the whole incident has been recorded with allusion to Adam wrongly hearkening to his wife. It has been pointed out that in case of a wife being infertile, the man usually took another wife and didn't just sleep with his slave girl. See on Gen. 16:2.

Progressive appreciation of the Lord Jesus can be seen in the lives of Paul, Peter and many others. Abraham's appreciation of the promises relating to the Christ-seed also grew over time. When the promise was first given, he seems to have assumed it referred to his adopted son, Lot. Thus Abraham offered Lot the land which had been promised to Abraham's seed (Gen. 12:7 cp. chapter 13). But after Lot returned to Sodom, Abraham looked to his servant Eliezer as his heir / seed (Gen. 15:2,3). Thus God corrected him, in pointing out that the seed would be from Abraham's own body (15:4). And so Abraham thought of Ishmael, who was a son from his own body (although Yahweh didn't specify who the mother would be). When Abraham's body became dead, i.e. impotent, he must have surely concluded that Ishmael was the son promised. But again, Abraham was told that no, Ishmael was not to be the seed; and finally God told Abraham that Sarah would have a child. Their faith was encouraged by the incidents in Egypt which occurred straight after this, whereby Abraham prayed for Abimelech's wives and slaves so that they might have children- and he was heard. Finally, Isaac was born. It was clear that this was to be the seed. But that wasn't all. Abraham in his final and finest spiritual maturity came to the understanding that the seed was ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ. He died in wondrous appreciation of the Saviour seed and the way of forgiveness enabled through Him. Note the huge paradox in the promises- a paradox of grace which comes true in some form for all those who receive them.

15:5 *Yahweh brought him outside, and said*- It must have been an Angel that led Abraham out of his tent to a suitable spot and made those promises.

Look now toward the sky, and count the stars, if you are able to count them. He said to Abram, So shall your seed be- According to Jewish midrash, Abram and his father Terah were leading diviners of the stars in Ur (See M.E. Stone and T. Bergren, eds., *Biblical Figures Outside The Bible* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998) pp. 151-175 for references). 'Terah' can mean 'brother of the moon', and Ur and Haran were noted centers of moon worship (M.W. Chavalas, 'Terah' in T.D. Alexander and D.W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary Of The Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Leicester: IVP, 2003) p. 829; V.P. Hamilton, *The Book Of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). In this case, the invitation to Abram to count the stars and discern there his future seed was a calling to reject his entire former world-view, to admit his helplessness in counting the stars, to throw himself upon God's grace rather than the strength of his own former education, wisdom, and inherited ability to discern the stars.

In Hebrew, to say something is multipled is to say that it is very great. Remember Paul's insistence in Gal. 3:16 that the "seed" here is singular, and refers to the Lord Jesus. He would be more numerous or multiplied than man could ever count. The same word is used in Ps. 71:15 where David says that he cannot tell / count up the greatness of God's salvation [which is Yahoshua, Jesus]; because it cannot be numbered. So the idea here

and in Gen. 16:10 may not simply be that many people would become in the singular seed; but that that seed would be multiplied greater than man could ever comprehend.

15:6 *He believed in Yahweh*- When we read that Abraham "put his trust" in God (Gen. 15:6 Heb.) we are to understand that he 'said amen' to God's promises. "Amen" comes from the same Hebrew root as *he'min*, to believe, or, more strictly, "to affirm, recognize as valid". He got to a specific point where he said "Amen" to God's word; and I wonder whether he said "Amen" out loud, as the crowning pinnacle of the belief in God which was going on within him. For this reason I suggest we say "Amen" at the end of a prayer, out loud. Maybe we need to reflect for a moment on what we have asked for from God, which promises of His we have pleaded in our prayer- and then 'Amen' it. We note that 'belief in Yahweh' is not mere theism, acceptance that 'there is a God'. Faith in God as defined here means faith that His promises of salvation to me- are true. They shall come true. Too often in the lives of believers, there is a failure to appreciate this basic definition of what 'belief in God' means. It does not simply mean acceptance of God's existence. It means belief that He will save. Which is why ultimately, there can be no real faith in God if we do not believe in Jehoshua, Yah's salvation, Jesus. In this sense "we through Him [Jesus] believe in God": "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. 1:21). Baptism is predicated upon such belief- not merely 'belief that there is a God'. Too often it happens that those who think they made a commitment of faith actually didn't fully do so- they were merely stating their belief in God's existence. Many people accept God's existence; but this is not the same as 'belief in Yahweh' as here defined.

Abraham's faith was clearly 'trust'. For that is what the original words for 'faith' really mean. "For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.' Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. (Rom 4: 1-5)". Abraham had "no works" at this point. He trusted that somehow, it would happen. And in our age of reason and rationalism, trust is seen as primitive and 'evidence' is always demanded. But faith means trust. It's as simple as that. We are like Mrs. Einstein, when asked if she understood her husband's [Albert Einstein's] theory of relativity: "Oh no. But I trust Bert ['Albert']".

Yet this peak of faith in Abraham is found between evidence of his weakness of faith. We've seen this in the early verses of Gen. 15. And now, having risen up to this peak of faith, we soon find him doubting again: "How shall I know that I shall inherit [the land]?" (Gen. 15:8). And again, this makes Abraham yet the more real to us, who likewise find it so hard to maintain peaks of faith. And yet Abraham's failure of faith in having Ishmael is evidence enough that his "faith" which is so focused upon in the NT was, in fact, incomplete and not total. Perhaps this is exactly why his 'faith', such as it was, is held up as our pattern. For our faith is likewise incomplete. Abraham is "father of the faithful" in

that we have his kind of faith- and it was incomplete and wavered at times. James 2:22 recognizes that Abraham's faith at this point was immature because he quotes Gen. 15:6 and then says that this faith was perfected / matured by the 'work' of offering Isaac.

Abraham believed God in Gen. 15, but the works of Gen. 22 [offering Isaac] made that faith “perfect”. Through his correct response to the early promises given him, Abraham was imputed “the righteousness of faith”. But *on account of* that faith inspired by the earlier promises, he was given “the promises that he should be heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13). That promise in turn inspired yet more faith. In this same context, Paul had spoken of how the Gospel preached to Abraham in the promises leads men “from faith to faith”, up the upward spiral (Rom. 1:17). James 2 is clear that when Abraham offered Isaac, "the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness'". So Abraham's faith was connected with works. Those works flowed out from his belief at this point in Gen. 15. A confession of faith / trust, e.g. at baptism, may take years to actually be tested in practice, and to be revealed in practice. But we shouldn't think that Abraham's justification with God was on account of his legalistic obedience. People like legalism, and want to keep laws, because that leads them to avoid personal relationship. We keep the taxation laws because we don't want a 'personal encounter' with a tax inspector, and likewise with road traffic laws. We are happier keeping "them" as a faceless, anonymous organization with whom we do not need to personally engage. And it can be the same spiritually. Personal encounter with God is all demanding. And people shy away from that behind the walls of legalistic obedience, just as Israel didn't actually want to see Yahweh on the mountain, but preferred Moses to go up to Him and return with some laws to keep. But in Abraham's case, and thereby our case, we enter the relationship first, by grace through faith, and are fully accepted by God at that point. And the obedience comes as a natural outflow from that relationship position.

The huge importance attached to faith in Gen. 15:6 would be pointless if obedience to the Law was what guaranteed the promise of inheritance the world- as Jewish theology taught about Abraham. The promise of the Kingdom would become irrelevant because Paul has demonstrated in Romans 1-3 that all men, Abraham included, are sinners, law breakers, and condemned before the judgment seat of God. Nobody would therefore inherit the promised Kingdom, and so the promise of it would have been pointless.

There is another option. It could be that in fact Abraham had not believed in Yahweh until this point. He had left Ur and Haran because of other influences upon him; he had allowed Lot to choose the better land because he didn't like family strife; he had gone up and down in Canaan because of circumstance and not because of obedience to the command to do so; he had gone into Egypt in disbelief of the promises. And yet God worked through and with him, because He foresaw that now at this point, Abraham

would believe. Rom. 4:5 interprets this incident as an example of how God justifies the "unGodly". "UnGodly" is how Abraham was viewed at this time. The argument in Romans 4 parallels Abraham at this point with David after his sin with Bathsheba, also being justified by grace through faith.

And He reckoned it to him for righteousness- The same word is used of how Rachel and Leah were "reckoned" strangers by their father, although they were in fact his daughters (Gen. 31:15). The idea is clearly that someone is counted as something they aren't. Likewise Lev. 7:18 uses the word of how a sacrifice, properly eaten and offered, was "reckoned" to the benefit of the sinner being atoned for. It may be that Abraham realized his own spiritual weakness at this time, if we follow Paul's argument in Rom. 4:3,5: "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory...(but) Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness...to him (alluding to Abraham) that worketh not, but believeth (as did Abraham) on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (like Abraham's) is counted for righteousness" . Surely this suggests that Abraham felt *ungodly* at the time, unworthy of this great promise, and yet he believed that although he was ungodly, God would justify him and give him the promise, and therefore he was counted as righteous and worthy of the promise. There is certainly the implication of some kind of forgiveness being granted Abraham at the time of his belief in Gen. 15:6; righteousness was imputed to him, which is tantamount to saying that his ungodliness was covered. In this context, Paul goes straight on to say that the same principles operated in the forgiveness of David for his sin with Bathsheba.

Paul says in Rom. 4:23 that this was “not written for his sake alone”. Where was it written? In some unrecorded Scripture? In God’s heavenly record book? Or is the allusion to the finality of the legal case now concluded, that ‘it was written’ in the sense of legally concluded, under the hammer, so to speak? The suggestion is that right now in this life, if we really believe God’s offered salvation, or perhaps, *for so long* as we believe it- we are written down as declared right before His judgment. In this case, Paul is interpreting the comment in Gen. 15:6 “And it was imputed unto him for righteousness” as a writing in Heaven, the court secretary writing down the outcome of the case. The Jews taught that justification would only be at the future day of judgment (see D. Moo *Romans* 1-8, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1991) p. 293). Paul is teaching that in fact we can be justified, declared right with God, here and now; and we ought to be able to know and feel that.

Paul’s whole ‘Abraham’ section in Romans 4 is written in the style of Rabbinic Midrash, with Gen. 15:6 as the verse being expounded. Paul’s point is that Jewish and Gentile believers can trace themselves back to Abraham because the family likeness is in faith not circumcision. Jewish proselytes were forbidden to call Abraham “our father” (C.K. Barrett, *From First Adam to Last* (New York: Scribner’s, 1962) p. 31).

There are some implied gaps within the record in Gen. 15:5,6: God brings Abraham outside, and asks him to number the stars [gap]; then He tells Abraham "So shall thy seed be" [gap]; and then, maybe 10 seconds or 10 hours afterwards, "Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness". Those 10 seconds or 10 hours or whatever the period was, are summarized by Paul as how Abraham "in hope believed against hope" (|Rom. 4:18). His no-hope struggled against his hope / faith, but in the end his faith in God's word of promise won out. "According to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be" implies to me that he kept reflecting on those words: "So shall thy seed be" (three words in Hebrew, *ko zehrah hawya*). And we too can too easily say that we believe the Bible is God's word, without realizing that to just believe three inspired words can be enough to radically change our lives and lead us to eternity. I'm not sure that Abraham's ultimate belief of those three words *ko zehrah hawya* just took a few seconds. According to Paul, he "considered... his body"- he reflected on the fact he was impotent (see Gk. and RV). *Katanoeo*, "consider", means to "observe fully" (Rom. 4:19). He took full account of his impotent state, knowing it as only a man can know it about himself. And he likewise considered fully the deadness of his elderly wife's womb, recalling how her menstruation had stopped years ago... but all that deeply personal self-knowledge didn't weaken his faith; he didn't "waver", but in fact- the very opposite occurred. He "waxed strong through faith... being fully assured that what [God] had promised, He was able also to perform". As he considered his own physical weakness, and that of his wife, his faith "waxed" stronger (RV), he went through a process of becoming "fully assured", his faith was progressively built up ("waxed strong" is in the passive voice)... leading up to the moment of total faith that so thrilled the heart of God. And so it can happen with us- the very obstacles to faith, impotence in Abraham's case, are what actually leads to faith getting into that upward spiral that leads towards total certainty. Abraham's physical impotence did not make him "weak" [s.w. translated "impotent" in Jn. 5:3,7] in faith- it all worked out the opposite. For his physical impotence made him not-impotent in faith; the very height of the challenge led him to conclude that God would be true to His word, and he would indeed have a child. For when we are "weak" [s.w. "impotent"], then we are strong (2 Cor. 12:10). Thus the internal struggle of Abraham's mind led his faith to develop in those seconds or minutes or hours as he reflected upon the words "So shall your seed be". He "staggered not at the promise" (Rom. 4:20), he didn't separate himself away from (Gk.) those three Hebrew words translated "So shall your seed be", he didn't let his mind balk at them... and therefore and thereby he was made strong in faith ("waxed strong in faith" Rom. 4:20 RV). This process of his faith strengthening is picked up in the next verse: Abraham was "fully persuaded that what [God] had promised, he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4:21). There was a process of internal persuasion going on- leading to the moment of faith, which so thrilled God and was imputed to Abraham for righteousness. And of course Paul drives the point home- that we are to have the faith of Abraham. As he believed that life could come out of his dead body ("dead" in Rom. 4:19, with a passive

participle, implies 'slain'), so *we* are to believe in the resurrection of the slain body of the Lord Jesus, and the real power of His new life to transform our dead lives (Rom. 4:23,24). Gal. 3:5,14 puts it another way in saying that if we share the faith of Abraham at that time, we will receive "the promise of the spirit through faith", the enlivening of our sterile lives. And this takes quite some faith for us to take seriously on board; for as Abraham carefully considered the impotence of his physical body, so we can get a grim picture of the deadness of our fleshly lives.

It was radical for Abraham to be told that God would impute righteousness to him. For in those times, righteousness was a concept associated with a person remaining within their existing communal relationships. Von Rad quotes contemporary documentation to this effect: "A man is called righteous who conducts himself properly with reference to an existing communal relationship... just [justified] is the man who stands with his community" (Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (London: S.C.M., 1963) p. 180). The whole message to Abraham of justification by faith and imputed righteousness must be seen against this backdrop. The same radical call to break away from our surrounding society and its worldviews and concepts of righteousness is required by all who have received the same promises made to Abraham.

Abraham's weakness at the time of the Genesis 15 promises is perhaps behind how Paul interprets the star-gazing incident in Rom. 4:3-5. He is answering the Jewish idea that Abraham never sinned (see on Rom. 4:2). He quotes the incident, and God's counting of righteousness to Abraham, as proof that a man with no "works", nothing to glory before God with, can believe in God to "justify the ungodly", and thereby be counted righteous. Understanding Abraham's mood as revealed in Gen. 15:1-4 certainly helps us see the relevance of all this to Abraham. And it helps us see Abraham more realistically as the father of us all... and not some Sunday School hero, well beyond our realistic emulation. No longer need we think "Abraham? Oh, yeah, Abraham... faith... wow. But me... nah. I'm not Abraham...". He's for real, truly our example, a realistic hero whom we can cheer and pledge to follow. For Abraham is an example to us of God's grace to man, and a man in all his weakness and struggle with God accepting it and believing it, even when he is "*un*godly", rather than a picture of a white-faced placid saint with unswerving faith:

"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, hath found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not toward God. For what saith the scripture? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. 4:1-5).

It is in the very struggle for faith that we have that we show ourselves to have the family characteristic of Abraham. That moment when the "ungodly", doubting, bitter Abraham

believed God's promise is to be as it were our icon, the picture we rise up to: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:6,7).

The struggle within Abraham at the time is brought out by Paul in Rom. 4:18-24, which seems to be a kind of psychological commentary upon the state of Abraham's mind as he stood there looking at the stars in the presence of God / an Angel ("before him [God] whom he believed", Rom. 4:17): "Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, So shall thy seed be. And without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was reckoned unto him; but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned, who believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead".

It may be that Abraham realized his own spiritual weakness at this time, if we follow Paul's argument in Rom. 4:3,5: "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory... (but) Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness... to him (alluding to Abraham) that worketh not, but believeth (as did Abraham) on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (like Abraham's) is counted for righteousness". Surely this suggests that Abraham felt *ungodly* at the time, unworthy of this great promise, recognizing he only had moments of faith, and yet he believed that although he was ungodly, God would justify him and give him the promise, and therefore he was counted as righteous and worthy of the promise. There is certainly the implication of some kind of forgiveness being granted Abraham at the time of his belief in Gen. 15:6; righteousness was imputed to him, which is tantamount to saying that his ungodliness was covered. In this context, Paul goes straight on to say that the same principles operated in the forgiveness of David for his sin with Bathsheba. It would actually appear that Paul is writing here, as he often does, with his eye on deconstructing popular Jewish views at the time. Their view of Abraham was that he was perfect, "Godly" in the extreme- and Paul's point is that actually he was not, he was "ungodly", but counted righteous not by his acts but by his faith.

15:7 *He said to him, I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give you this land to inherit it*- As demonstrated in my notes on Gen. 11:31-12:4, Abram didn't respond very fully to the command to separate from his relatives and leave Ur. Gen. 11:31 is clear that his father took him out of Ur. Abram admits himself that it was God who caused him to wander from Ur (Gen. 20:13, see note there). Here again we see

God's grace. Abram was called, but didn't want to respond, and God "brought" him out, almost making him obedient. The inheriting was to be in the Kingdom age, according to the New Testament; it was to be an eternal inheritance, requiring Abraham to be immortalized. Yet to receive that promise, Abram had to leave Ur and enter the land in his life. And so it is with us- we enter the Kingdom in a limited sense in this life, and that is the guarantee that we shall receive the eternal inheritance.

15:8 *He said, Lord Yahweh, how will I know that I will inherit it?*- This is hardly the language of full faith. Without the New Testament commentary upon Abraham, we would not perhaps consider that Abraham displayed great faith in the majority of Divine interactions with him which are recorded in the Genesis record. The faith which was counted to him for righteousness was a weak faith, and as such, he becomes an example of faith which we can relate to.

15:9 *He said to him, Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon*- As noted on :10, the entire procedure here was contrary to how mutual covenants or religious sacrifices were made at the time. There was no priest or altar. These were not required- because this was a one-sided, unilateral covenant of grace from God directly to Abram, and it didn't require such instruments of mediation. The "three years old" feature may perhaps point forward to the Lord's three year ministry, as it was through His life and death that the new covenant [which is the promises to Abraham] was confirmed. The dove and pigeon were the offerings of the poor in later Mosaic legislation. Rich and poor, male and female, were all represented within the Lord's future sacrifice, which was clearly in the Father's mind at this point.

15:10 *He brought him all of these, and divided them in the middle, and laid each half opposite the other; but he didn't divide the birds*- The idea of the dead animals in the ceremony of Gen. 15 was to teach that 'So may I be dismembered and die if I fail to keep my promise'. Jer. 34:18 speaks of how Israelites must die, because they passed between the pieces of the dead animal sacrifices in making a covenant. But here in Gen. 15, it is none less than the God who cannot die who is offering to do this, subjecting Himself to this potential curse! And He showed Himself for real in the death of His Son. That was His way of confirming the utter certainty of the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant which He has cut with us (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:17). The "blood of the covenant" doesn't mean that the blood of Jesus *is* or was the covenant; the covenant is a set of promises to us, namely the promises to Abraham and his seed. The blood of Jesus is the token of that covenant, the sign that this is all so utterly and totally true for each one of us. The Lord died, in the way that He did, to get through to us how true this all is- that God Almighty cut a sober, unilateral covenant with us personally, to give us the Kingdom. It's as challenging for us to believe as it was for Abraham and his earlier seed: "This divine-human bond gave to Israel its most distinctive religious belief,

and provided the basis of its unique social interest and concern. Outside the Old Testament we have no clear evidence of a treaty between a god and his people". What the theologian calls a unique basis for "social interest and concern" we can re-phrase more bluntly: We simply can't be passive to such grace, we have no option but to reach out with grace to others in care and concern- and we have a unique motivation in doing this, which this unbelieving world can never equal. Yet if unbelievers can show the huge care and self-sacrifice which they do- we ought to be doing *far* more, seeing we have an infinitely stronger motivation.

15:11 *The birds of prey came down on the carcasses, and Abram drove them away*- These birds represented the pagan nations which Abram so feared would take vengeance upon him for his dramatic victory at Damascus described in chapter 14, which is the background to this covenant. Abram singlehandedly drove them away, one man made thousands flee (see on Gen. 14:14). The Hebrew here implies that Abram alone drove them away.

15:12 *When the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. Now terror and great darkness fell on him*- It's perhaps significant that Abraham laid out the required animals, and drove away the birds that kept trying to feed on the carcasses- but then, Abraham falls asleep, and can't do this any more. And the birds are warded off instead by the burning torch- the same Hebrew words are used about the cherubim (Ez. 1:13; Ex. 20:18), and the idea of a burning torch is used to describe the Lord Jesus on the cross (Jn. 3:14-19 Gk.). It's as if again Abraham had to be taught that all these promises and the covenant ensuring them were all of grace and not his own strength. For he would lay down in the sleep of death, the horror of great darkness, and it will be the grace and glory of God which fulfils the covenant and preserves Abraham's seed from the birds of prey- and not Abraham's own efforts.

The "horror" that Abram experiences is a lack of faith in Yahweh's opening encouragement to him, to "fear not" (:1). All the way through, we see his weak faith, and God's grace. It could even be that Abram here has a nightmare, in which all his faithless fears come true; the pendulum swings from faith (:6) to unbelief. But in that low swing, God makes a unilateral covenant of grace with him, just as many of the Kingdom prophecies were given to Israel at low points on their spiritual graph.

The Lord, it seems to me, *feared death more than any other man*. He knew that death was separation from God, the wages of sin. Different people have varying degrees of fear of death (e.g. the unrepentant thief was totally resigned to it). It would seem that the Lord had the highest conceivable level of unresignation to death, to the point of being almost paranoid about it- even though He knew He must die. Two prototypes of the Lord had similar experiences. Abraham suffered “an horror of great darkness" (Gen. 15:12), in an event rich in reference to the crucifixion. And Job’s sufferings were the very

things which he “greatly feared" (Job 3:25). The Lord stood as a lamb dumb before His shearers; and the lamb is struck dumb with fear. This all makes the Lord’s death *for us* so much the more awesome.

15:13 *He said to Abram, Know for sure that your seed will live as foreigners in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them*- The contrast was with Canaan, which was to be "their" land.

They will afflict them four hundred years- Ex. 12:40,41 says that they were in Egypt for 430 years. God is not as it were watching His back, always seeking to forestall possible criticism by petty men; the 400 figure is approximate. Or perhaps we have here an example of where a time period is amended; in this case, because Israel needed another 30 years to come towards the maturity God sought in them before the exodus. The period is described as four generations in :16, so perhaps a generation then was about 100 years.

15:14 *I will also judge that nation, whom they will serve. Afterward they will come out with great wealth*- Note how it was the Egyptian people who were judged (Gen. 15:14), but elsewhere we read that it was their gods which were judged; their idols (“gods”) are used by metonymy to stand for those who believed in them. The “gods” are spoken of for a moment as real and existing, in order to show Yahweh’s total superiority over them to the point that they didn’t exist. Likewise “demons” is sometimes put by metonymy for those who believed in them (e.g. Mk. 2:32,34). The promise of material wealth was likewise a concession to the weakness of how Abram perceived things at that time.

15:15 *But you will go to your fathers in peace. You will be buried in a good old age*- His fathers were idolaters (Josh. 24:2), so to 'go to your fathers' is simply an idiom meaning that as they returned to dust, so would Abram. But he would have the blessing of long life, seeing that the blessings had a primary application; but his long life was but a dim reflection of the eternal life promised to him. Our present experience of the Kingdom of God is likewise but a fraction of that which awaits us at the Lord's return.

15:16 *In the fourth generation they will come here again*- See on :13. A generation at the time was judged as 100 years.

For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full- God is not passive and overlooking of unrepented sin, even though His patience and the high threshold level He sets before releasing judgment may make it look like this. Even with very sinful men, their continual sins still register in the feelings of God. The way God progressively senses the weight of accumulated sin is reflected in His description of the Amorites' iniquity filling up; or Israel marrying Gentiles "to increase the trespass of Israel" (Ezra 10:10). God sees some wicked men as more wicked than others; for He is sensitive to every one of their sins (e.g. 2 Kings 17:2). "For three transgressions and for four" of Israel or the Gentiles, God would still punish Jew and Gentile alike (Am. 1,2)- i.e. He still feels the fourth sin, He

doesn't become insensitive after the third sin. And this doesn't only apply to His people; but to all sin, committed by anyone, anywhere. Thus Herod "added yet this above all" when he imprisoned John after also sinning with another man's wife (Lk. 3:20). We have an uncanny ability to become numb to sin the more we see or do it. But not so Almighty, all righteous God. This is a feature of His nature that needs meditation. "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob [i.e. Himself, so important is this], Surely I will never forget any of their works" (Am. 8:7). "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness" (Hos. 7:2). Sin is serious.

God's anger will come up in His face against this world (Joel 3:2,13,16; Ez. 38:18-22; 39:17,20); and the world will be angry with God and His people in an unsurpassed way. The nations will be angry, and the wrath of God also will rise (Rev. 11:18). When their iniquity has reached a certain level, then judgment will fall (cp. Sodom and the Amorites, Gen. 15:16).

Apostate Israel are described in the very language of the adversaries / Satans of God's people. Because they acted like the world around them, from which they had been called out, they were ultimately judged by God as part of that world. The Jews forbad or hindered the apostles from preaching to the Gentiles "to fill up their sins... for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess. 2:16). This is quoting from the LXX of Gen. 15:16 about the Amorites.

15:17 *It came to pass that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch passed between these pieces*- The way God confirmed the covenant here was an example of grace. The covenant God made with Abraham was similar in style to covenants made between men at that time; and yet there was a glaring difference. Abraham was not required to do anything or take upon himself any obligations- only God passed between the pieces, not Abraham. Circumcision [cp. baptism] was to remember that this covenant of grace had been made. It isn't part of the covenant [thus we are under this same new, Abrahamic covenant, but don't require circumcision]. The promises to Abraham are pure, pure grace. Yahweh alone passed between the pieces of the animals, represented by the flaming torch- presumably in the form of an Angel as a pillar of fire. There's no record of Abraham being asked to pass through them as was usual custom. The promise of God was therefore unilateral- pure grace. And yet by its very nature, such unilateral grace from God cannot be received passively. Although there was no specified response from Abraham, clearly enough he simply *had* to respond to such grace. It's been pointed out that Abraham was blessed by God, and yet the Hebrew form of the promise implies that he was commanded to therefore go forth and "be a blessing"- and his intercession for Lot and Sodom, his rescue of Lot in Gen. 14, were providentially arranged for him to practice that. A similar

construction (an imperative verb string *hyh* + a noun) occurs in Gen. 17:1, "be blameless / perfect".

God's covenant commitment to us is amazing. Here, He made a one-sided commitment to Abraham. The idea of the dead animals in the ceremony was to teach that 'So may I be dismembered and die if I fail to keep my promise'. Jer. 34:18 speaks of how Israelites must die, because they passed between the pieces of the dead animal sacrifices in making a covenant. But here in Gen. 15, it is none less than the God who cannot die who is offering to do this, subjecting Himself to this potential curse! And He showed Himself for real in the death of His Son. That was His way of confirming the utter certainty of the promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant which He has cut with us (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:17). Usually both parties passed between the dead animals- but only Yahweh does. It was a one-sided covenant from God to man, exemplifying His one-way grace. The Lord died, in the way that He did, to get through to us how true this all is- that God Almighty cut a sober, unilateral covenant with us personally, to give us the Kingdom. We simply can't be passive to such grace, we have no option but to reach out with grace to others in care and concern- and we have a unique motivation in doing this, which this unbelieving world can never equal. From one viewpoint, the only way we can not be saved is to wilfully refuse to participate in this covenant.

According to the research of E.A. Speiser, it was the *weaker* of the two contracting parties that passed between the dead animals, in order to show that they wished to die as those animals had done if they broke the covenant (E.A. Speiser, *Genesis* [The Anchor Bible] (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 112). By entering into covenant relationship, God was allowing Himself to be weak; although He cannot die by nature, He was willing to envisage Himself dying, such was His desire to demonstrate to us [for we too have had the Abrahamic promise made to us] how sure and certain His covenant is.

15:18 *In that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram, saying, To your seed I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates*- The northern and southern borders are never clearly defined, perhaps because the extent of inheritance was to some extent open. The more they believed and responded, the more they would inherit. And it's the same with us.

15:19 *The Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites*- The ten tribes listed here in 15:19-21 as possessing the *eretz* may connect with the ten horns of the beasts of Daniel and Revelation, the ten latter day invading nations of Ps. 83 and Ez. 38, and the ten toes of the image of Daniel 2. All these speak of a latter day confederacy dominating the *eretz*, which is to be overcome by God's true Israel and their Messiah.

15:20 *The Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim*- The rephaim or giants were the ones which Israel feared the most. But they are listed here as just one of a number of equally powerless tribes.

15:21 *The Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites*- "The Canaanites" indicates that the ten tribes presented as inhabiting the *eretz* promised to Abram were in areas other than Canaan. Canaan was only part of the *eretz* promised, and we can conclude that if Israel had possessed Canaan, they would have been empowered to possess the entire area. God's scale of operation is therefore on a sliding scale, controlled, as it were, by our vision, faith and obedience.

GENESIS CHAPTER 16

16:1 *Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar*- Perhaps given to her whilst in Egypt, one of the "female servants" of Gen. 12:16, where Abram had wrongfully denied his marriage to Sarah. Hagar likely didn't have too high an impression of Abram because of that.

We note that Hagar was from Egypt. In Gen. 12, Abram had chosen Egypt over the promises of God, and had gone down there and acted faithlessly. But in Gen. 13 he refuses Sodom, which appeared fertile "like the land of Egypt" (Gen. 13:10), believing instead that the promise of all the land would come true for him at some future point. But now he slips back, again, to trust in the fertility of Egypt, or in this case, an Egyptian. The barrenness of Canaan during famine therefore matches the barrenness of Sarai. But trusting Egypt was not the answer. We see the growth of Abraham's faith; from a very faultering faith in Gen. 11 and 12, to the peak of faith in being willing to offer Isaac in Gen. 22. And yet the growth in faith was no smooth upward curve. For in seeking fulfilment of the promise of the seed through Hagar *the Egyptian* , Abraham was again going back to Egypt rather than trusting in the fulfilment of the promises to him in due course. Our trust in the world and secular strength likewise goes up and down as our faith grows. It's a jagged graph. We can well speculate that Hagar was given to Abram by the Pharaoh during the shameful incident in Gen. 12. For the note is made that Abram was given "female servants" by Pharaoh, and he took those gifts with him when he left Egypt (Gen. 12:16). So the point is made that if Abram had not gone down into Egypt, he would not have acquired Hagar, and this particular source of temptation would have been absent. Any concession to the flesh makes obedience harder in the longer term.

16:2 *Sarai said to Abram, See now, Yahweh has restrained me from bearing. Please go in to my handmaid. It may be that I will obtain children by her*- A recurrent weakness of the patriarchs is their attempts to as it were force God's hand when it came to which of their children should continue with the covenant blessings. As Abraham used his handmaid to try to produce the promised seed, so Jacob, Rachel and Leah did. God had

told Abraham clearly that the covenant would continue through Isaac rather than Ishmael, and that circumcision was the sign of that covenant; and yet Abraham remonstrates with God: "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" (Gen. 17:18), employing the idea of 'living before God' in a covenantal sense. When God again repeats His purpose with Isaac, Abraham goes and circumcises Ishmael, as if he was to still participate in the covenant God wished to continue through Isaac (Gen. 17:23). The fact that Abraham's circumcision of Ishmael is specifically recorded highlights his insistence on trying to make God's promises fulfil as *he* would like them to. Isaac did the same, insistent upon giving the covenant blessing to Esau rather than Jacob; Jacob likewise did something similar when he tried to reverse the blessing upon Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:18).

The 300 or so Nuzi tablets record history, legal codes and case history of situations contemporary with Abraham; and the comment has been made that deciding to sleep with your wife's slave girl was almost unheard of. So it seems to me that Abraham again gave in, in a moment of weakness; but didn't take another wife, because he really clung on to his faith that he would have a child by Sarah. The whole incident with Abraham and Hagar seems to me to reflect weakness in both Abraham and Sarah. Neither of them ever refer to her by her name, but rather by her title, "handmaid", as if she were just an object. Yet God and the inspired narrator refer to her by her name, Hagar, as if recognizing the value of her person in a way that Abraham and Sarah didn't. It seems to me that Israel's later experience re-lived that of Hagar- flight into the wilderness of Sinai, miraculously provided with water, found and preserved by an Angel. God heard the cry of Israel's affliction at the hands of the Egyptians, just as He heard the cry of the mother and child whom Sarah had afflicted. This deliberate coincidence was perhaps to make Israel realize on a national scale how wrongly their forefather had treated Hagar- and it has some relevance to modern Israel's treatment of the Arabs. For Israel suffer and will yet suffer what they have put Hagar's descendants through.

Abram listened to the voice of Sarai- "Through faith even Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed" (Heb. 11:11 RV). At this time she apparently lacked that faith. "Even Sarah herself" is clearly making a point, holding up a flashing light over this particular example. There is every reason to think, from the Genesis record, that Sarah not only lacked faith in the promises, but also had a bitter, unspiritual mind. The account alludes back to Eve's beguiling of Adam when it records how "Abram listened to the voice of Sarai" in acquiescing to her plan to give her a seed through Abram sleeping with his slave girl. The whole thing between Sarah and Abraham seems wrong on at least two counts: firstly it reflects a lack of faith in the promise; and secondly it flouts God's ideal standards of marriage. Sarai seems to have recognized the error when she bitterly comments to Abram: "My wrong be upon you" (16:5). Her comment that "the Lord has restrained me from bearing" would suggest that she thought she hadn't been chosen to

bear the promised seed. Yet because of her faith, says Heb. 11:11, she received strength to bear that seed. Although it could be there that it is Abram's faith that is in view.

The theme of Abraham's weakness encountered in chapter 15 continues over into chapter 16- where Sarah asks Abraham to sleep with her servant girl in order to have a child. Why did Sarah ask Abraham to do this, at this stage in their lives? Why not earlier? Surely the promise of a seed had restimulated her pain regarding her barren state. Yet Abraham had previously worked through with the Lord the possibility of Eliezer, one born in his household, being the promised seed. And God had clarified that no, Abraham's own child would be the heir. It's as if Sarah could believe that Abraham's impotence could be cured, but not her barrenness. I can only take this incident- and the less than honourable treatment of Hagar afterwards- to be another trough in Abraham's faith graph. It's been pointed out that all historical and cultural evidence from the time points to Abraham's action as being most unusual. In the case of a barren wife, the man chose himself a second wife. It's almost unheard of in contemporary records for a man to have his wife chose him a woman to have a child by- let alone for it to be one of her slave girls. This historical background provides a window into Abraham's faithful commitment to Sarah- for it's significant that he's not recorded as taking another wife. Instead, his fine faith and character slips up in a moment of weakness by giving in to Sarah for a moment.

16:3 *Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife*- The idea may be that Hagar was not a casually chosen woman. The ten year period may have begun after the family re-entered Canaan from Egypt, where Hagar was presumably added to the household. Sarai had not previously suggested Abram sleep with her. The receipt of the promises about the seed in chapter 15 would have restimulated Sarai's awareness that she was barren, and so she came up with this idea. The whole story, as ever in Biblical history, is so psychologically credible that it adds yet another strand of internal evidence in the momentous proposition that the Bible is indeed the inspired word of God.

We note that 'becoming his wife' meant 'having and raising a child together', which is and has been effectively the practical definition of marriage in many cultures. The legalistic obsession with on paper documentation is something which was popular in the Western world in the 20th century, but isn't and hasn't had the same meaning for most of the world's population over time. See on :8.

16:4 *He went in to Hagar, and she conceived. When she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes*- This again is psychologically credible; see on :3. Clearly God was working through the plan, because it is statistically unlikely that a woman conceives after one act of intercourse. The idea seems to be that she conceived

immediately. God had a purpose with Ishmael and his descendants. Although what Sarai suggested was wrong, and Abram was wrong to obey her voice, God still worked through it by granting immediate conception. And we too experience His unending activity with us; and we likewise are to continue trying with others. The Hebrew for "despise" is often translated "curse". It was far more than rolling her eyes. It was the ancient superstition that a woman was barren because she was cursed by God.

16:5 *Sarai said to Abram, This wrong is your fault*- This could mean that the cursing of Sarai by Hagar was Abram's fault for obeying Sarai's suggestion. This is psychologically credible. Or it could be that Sarai is accusing Abram of impotence (supported by Rom. 4:19 "his own body now dead"), and on that basis blaming Abram for the whole saga. This passing of blame, including blaming others for doing what we have told them to do, is absolutely imaginable and has the hallmark of psychological veracity.

The "wrong" in view is *hamas*, violence; this is the extent of the persecution Sarai claimed from Hagar. The Hebrew word *hamas* [basically meaning 'physical violence arising from wicked plans'] is quite common in Scripture, and the usages speak of how God is provoked by *hamas* to bring judgment upon the enemies of His people (Gen. 6:11-13; Mic. 6:12; Zeph. 1:9) and also to intervene in order to save His people (Ps. 18:49; Ps. 72:14). How amazingly appropriate that an organization actually called *hamas* has arisen in these last days to do violence to Israel! If Biblical history means anything to us, clearly enough God's intervention in appropriate judgment and salvation cannot be far off. Hagar's persecution of Sarah- typical of the Arab-Jew conflict- is described here as her *hamas*.

I gave my handmaid into your bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes. Yahweh judge between me and you- Once again, this is so true to psychological reality. It's a classic case of transference, transferring our sins and the guilt for them onto others. It's why people condemn others for the very things they themselves do. The church leader who harangues a member for adultery may well do so because he himself is having an affair. It is beyond hypocrisy; it's transference of guilt onto another and vicariously punishing personal guilt by punishing another for that same thing. Or it can be that someone falsely accuses another person of the very thing they are themselves doing, and then seeks to punish them for it. This again is transference, and Sarai blaming Abram in this matter is just a classic example. She wants Yahweh to judge him, transferring her guilt and subconscious recognition of the need for judgment onto him.

16:6 *But Abram said to Sarai, Behold, your maid is in your hand. Do to her whatever is good in your eyes*- As noted on :5, Sarai had transferred her guilt onto Abram. But Abram is wisely asking her to take it back and deal with it.

Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her face- Hagar was so persecuted by Sarah that she "fled from her face". "Harshly" translates the same Hebrew word, *hamas*, that has just been used of how Egypt would abuse the Israelites in hard bondage (Gen. 15:13; Ex. 1:11,12), and it is elsewhere used about rape and torture. Such behaviour, condoned and allowed by Abram, would warrant a prison sentence in our days. God's attitude to Hagar seems to reflect a certain amount of sympathy for the harsh way in which Sarah had dealt with her. These years of bitterness and lack of faith came to the surface when Sarah overheard the Angel assuring Abraham that Sarah really would have a son. She mockingly laughed at the promise, deep within herself (Gen. 18:15). Yet according to Heb. 11:11, she rallied her faith and believed. But as soon as Isaac was born, her bitterness flew to the surface again when she was Ishmael mocking. In what can only be described as unrestrained anger, she ordered Hagar and Ishmael out into the scorching desert, to a certain death (humanly speaking). Again, one can sense the sympathy of God for Hagar at this time. And so wedged in between incidents which belied a deep bitterness, lack of faith and pride (after Isaac was born), the Spirit in Heb. 11:11 discerns her faith; on account of which, Heb. 11:12 implies ("therefore"), the whole purpose of God in Christ could go forward.

The law of Moses often seems to allude back to the weaknesses of the patriarchs. Lev. 19:34 warns about mistreating the *hagger* living amongst God's people- the stranger, refugee, foreigner. This is a related word to 'Hagar'- it has the same consonants. Clearly the message to Israel was to not treat foreigners as Sarah had treated Hagar. Again we see Sarah presented in a very negative light. She comes over as wanting Abraham to have the child Ishmael for herself, and then blames Abraham for the domestic tensions that arise. Hagar is brought to Abraham by Sarah; and the record clearly presents Hagar as being used by Sarah and Abraham as if she were not a person but a thing. And yet Hagar is repeatedly described as 'seeing' things. "She saw that she had conceived... her mistress was despised in her eyes...". And she 'sees' the Angel in the wilderness. She has eyes to perceive that she has looked upon God with her eyes and lived, God has seen her as she saw Him. She was not a thing, but a perceptive person with eyes and feelings. Sarah is portrayed as the abusive slaveowner.

Abraham and Sarah doubt God's promise of a seed, and so Sarah pushes Abraham to have an affair with Hagar her servant. When Hagar gets (understandably) full of womanly pride at her conception, Sarah persecutes her and drives her out to certain death in the wilderness. True believers aren't good or nice people! God seems to take Hagar's side, He hears her affliction, He looks upon her, and makes a covenant with her (Gen. 16). Hagar believes God's promise to her, and praises Him for it. Sarah laughs at God's promise to her as being a joke (Gen. 18:12-15). And even worse, when she is reprimanded for doing this, she flatly denies she ever laughed.

I labour these weaknesses of Sarah because she is all the same set up as the mother of the faithful. But her faith was not in that she was a stellar example of spirituality. Rather that she as a weak, not very nice, bitter person- kept in with God's program for her and was used. In fact there is no particular example of her faith in the record. Abraham offered Isaac and believed the promises, but there is no corresponding account for Sarah. So her faith was in that she in her heart kept with God despite this surface level indifference, and despite serious misbehaviour. She is another example of someone with whom God almost forced through His purpose.

16:7 *The angel of Yahweh found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur*- See on :13. The same word translated "harsh" concerning Sarai's abuse of Hagar (:6) is later used in the Pentateuch of how in the case of such "harsh" domestic abuse, God would hear the cry of the abused (Ex. 22:22,23), just as He did with Hagar both now and at the later incident (Gen. 21:16,17). God comes over as very much on Hagar's side, and paints Sarai as a domestic abuser whose husband fully allowed her to behave in this way.

What Sarah did was wrong. Because it is descibed in terms of what Egypt did to Israel later. A Hebrew here oppresses an Egyptian, so that she flees into the wilderness"on the way to Shur"- the route from Egypt to Canaan. And Hagar finds grace in the wilderness, as did Israel. Israel also went into the wilderness of Shur and needed water (Ex. 15:22 "Then Moses ordered Israel to set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water"), and they too are described as having been found by God, through an Angel, in the same wilderness (Dt. 32:10; Hos. 9:10); Israel too found grace in the wilderness (Jer. 31:2). The parallels indicate that God had a purpose with Hagar and Ishmael, and He blesses Ishmael in terms which are clearly based upon the blessing of Abraham's seed. The message is perhaps that anyone who is the seed of Abraham, despite their Gentile connections and broken relationship with the Hebrews, can still inherit the Abrahamic blessing. There is not simply Divine fondness for those who would later become the Arab peoples; it indicated even in Old Testament times that although Israel were His chosen people [by grace alone], He was even then open to working with others. And the similarities with Israel also being "found" in the same wilderness were to demonstrate that Israel had been chosen by grace alone, and were not at all superior to Hagar's seed. The allegory of Gal. 4:25 presents Israel after the flesh as Ishmael, as if to cement the point being made; that natural Israel were not in fact any better than Ishmael.

16:8 *He said, Hagar, Sarai's handmaid*- Hagar is repeatedly seen as Sarai's maid ("my maid", :5, "your maid", :6), rather than Abram's wife. And yet as noted on :3, she was also seen on another level as Abram's wife. It was an anomalous situation, just as many marital situations today are. But God's sympathy is with her and He works through that

situation, rather than turning away from it. God addresses Hagar by name. This is about the only example in the Bible, and indeed [so it has been observed] in all the contemporary literature, where any God directly addresses a woman by name. We get the strong impression that God feels sorry for Hagar and takes her side, recognizing she is indeed a 'hagar', a foreigner, a stranger. This in turn highlights His grace towards Sarah. He is the God who is gracious towards both the abused *and also the abuser*. In our age, the abuser is shown no grace at all.

Where did you come from? Where are you going? She said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai- The questions begged the answers: 'From Egypt, and back to Egypt', for she was apparently making for the southern highway back home. Hagar doesn't engage with those questions at the time; she only saw the present reality. But perhaps God is suggesting to her that He has a higher purpose for her than merely being an Egyptian servant girl who was to return there. He wanted to make her, some random slave girl from Egypt, used as a pawn in a game... into something very special. It's just His way, His grace, His sensitivity to the little ones. Whether or not she will be saved isn't the issue; God was still sensitive to the loser and the abused.

16:9 *The angel of Yahweh said to her, Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands*- "Submit" translates the same Hebrew word translated "harshly" in :6. Hagar was asked to submit to the abuse, just as the same word is used of the harsh bondage and abuse which God required Israel to be subject to in Egypt (s.w. Gen. 15:13). Revolt and exodus from abuse is not always God's immediate plan. But He didn't want her to return to Egypt, and fade away into Egyptian society as an anonymous single mother; He wanted to make of her seed a great nation; see on :8. This is His way, His grace. But just as Israel had to be afflicted in Egypt for this to happen, so Hagar had to be afflicted by Sarai. But she was to understand that God had given her the power of choice- her submission was to be of her choice, not because of Sarah's power over her. Had she refused that, she would not have received the promises to Abraham repeated to her (:10). And the promise to Ishmael went on to say that through submission to Sarah, there would come freedom for Ishmael. He would break free from the oppressive Sarah, and become a strong nation independent of her. This was God's way of bringing the oppressed, nobody of a refugee, fleeing, single mother, pregnant slave girl- to power and freedom. She perceived the wonder of all this when she marvels that 'You God, see [pay attention] to *me*'. But the path lay through submission in faith and hope. It seems Hagar and Ishmael didn't really choose to continue covenant relationship with Yahweh, because they failed to control their anger with Sarah and her line through Isaac. That anger consumed them, and obscured their relationship with the God of Abraham. This so often happens with the abused. Their understandable anger with their abusers stunts their spiritual development. And the fact their abusers have some relationship with God

is hard for them to accept. To the point many refuse any relationship with the same God. They fail to separate God from His people.

16:10 *The angel of Yahweh said to her, I will greatly multiply your seed, that they will not be numbered for multitude*- The same language as the promises to Abraham which were only later given in Gen. 22:17. This promise wasn't given immediately to Abram perhaps because God wanted to humble him and Sarai with the thought that the slave girl Hagar was to have a mighty seed. Maybe once they were humbled to accept that, the similar promise was given to their seed.

16:11 *The angel of Yahweh said to her, Behold, you are with child, and will bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because Yahweh has heard your affliction*- Ishmael means 'Whom El hears'. God was open to Hagar and Ishmael, He heard and saw them- He was open to relationship even with those not in the chosen seed. God tells Hagar that He "heard thy affliction" (Gen. 16:11 AV; LXX "humiliation"), as if her situation and cry of desperation was received by Him as a prayer. The fact the Lord is mediating our prayers before the Father's throne ought to influence us as to what type of people we are. For who we are, not only our prayers, is reflected before Him in Christ. Our lives are in that sense our prayers. It was usual for the father to name the child, but Hagar, the abused, sexually used slave girl names her child. And Abraham goes along with it- Abram named the child Ishmael (:15). So Hagar is sent back into the abusive situation with an elevated status, with God's word behind her.

16:12 *He will be like a wild donkey among men. His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him*- Jeremiah describes wayward Israel as a wild ass (Jer. 2:24), perhaps inviting comparison with Ishmael, the wild ass man (Gen. 16:12). I have elsewhere given many other Biblical examples of how God's apostate people are described in terms of those who are *not* God's people. And Gal. 4:25 is clear that the natural seed of Israel were paralleled in God's mind with Ishmael, which is why the promises of material blessing were spoken to both seeds in the same terms (Gen. 22:17; Gen. 16:10).

He will live opposite all of his brothers- Literally, 'to the east of', which would mean that Israel's warring half brothers would be located exactly where they are today, to the east of Palestine.

16:13 *She called the name of Yahweh who spoke to her, You, God, see me, for she said, Have I even stayed alive after seeing Him?*- The Hebrew word for "fountain" in :7 is literally "eye", and is the same word translated "eyes" in :5. It was as if that fountain of water was really God's eye, and Hagar perceives that by saying that God saw her, as if that fountain of water was God's eye.

The Hebrew language reflects certain realities about the nature of God's ways. The common Hebrew word for 'to see', especially when used about God's 'seeing', means also 'to provide'. Abraham comforted Isaac that "God will see for himself [AV 'provide'] the lamb" (Gen. 22:8 RVmg.); and thus the RVmg. interprets 'Jehovah Jireh' as meaning 'the Lord will see, or provide' (Gen. 22:14). The same word is used when Saul asks his servants to "provide" him a man (1 Sam. 16:17). When Hagar said "Thou God seest me" (Gen. 16:13) she was expressing her gratitude for His *provision* for her. What this means in practice is that the fact God sees and knows all things means that He can and will therefore and thereby provide for us in the circumstances of life; for He sees and knows all things.

There is reason to think that Abraham was humble enough to learn from Hagar's observation, that God had seen her and she had seen Him. For at the pinnacle of his faith when he offered Isaac, he in turn names the place 'Yahweh Yireh', Yahweh has seen / will see, and will provide. The idea is identical to that spoken by Hagar, that God had seen / provided for her, and she had seen God. And we note that Isaac himself chose to settle at Hagar's well, 'the well of the living one who sees me' (Gen. 24:62 "the well Lahairoi"; Gen. 25:11). In all this we see a tacit recognition that they had learnt something from Hagar, the slavegirl whom the family had used and abused.

16:14 *Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi. Behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered*- "It is" again indicates that Moses was writing primarily for the wilderness generation, who would have 'beheld' that well on their journeys.

16:15 *Hagar bore a son for Abram. Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael*- The language twice stresses that "Hagar bore", and yet the son was Abram's. There was to be no question that this child was in a sense the legitimate son of Abram. As noted on :11, Ishmael means 'Whom El hears'. God was open to Hagar and Ishmael, He heard and saw them- He was open to relationship even with those not in the chosen seed. The fact Abram named the child was a statement that he considered the child his very own. That was standard procedure in the society of those days. This is the extent to which he went to try to find a surrogate, secular form of fulfilling God's promises. God has set eternity in the human heart, but man seeks to fulfil it in ways which are secular and pathetic, compared to the real thing. Which is His absolute gift of the real thing, in this case, a child by his legitimate wife Sarah.

16:16 *Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram*- According to Rom. 4:19, Abram's body was "dead", he was impotent, by the time of the promise of Isaac 13 year later. And yet Gen. 25 lists other sons of Abram, by Keturah and other concubines. Perhaps he had slept with other slave girls before that; or maybe the failure with Hagar led him to fail likewise with other such women, in a desperate attempt to

force through God's promised purpose on Abram's own terms and in his own strength. Just as one case of taking a lower level leads us so easily into others.

GENESIS CHAPTER 17

17:1 *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, Yahweh appeared to Abram, and said to him, I am God Almighty*- The Hebrew word *shaddai* (Almighty) is often linked in the Pentateuch with the idea of fruitfulness and provision of good things (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25). The Hebrew root *shad* is the word for 'breast'. The references in Genesis speak of the Almighty making the promises; elsewhere we see that the promises were made by the Angels. Thus the Angels were perceived as providers of all good things, which would explain why the book of Job so frequently uses 'shaddai' as the word for God; and why one of the purposes of the book is to correct the wrong idea of *shaddai* as a giver of only good things, perhaps through the desire to contrast the true God with other contemporary fertility gods who were thought to provide all good things.

The promises to Abraham promised "blessing", and this is interpretted in the New Testament as the blessing of forgiveness of sins and salvation. The Divine title "El Shaddai", God Almighty, is often associated with the blessings promised to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3; 49:25). But a case can be made that "shaddai" is related to the Egyptian and other Semitic verb *shadi* , to save, or as a noun, *shady*, Saviour (1). It has been observed that the Egyptians and other Semites connected their personal name to that of their god by this idea of *shad*- [name of god]-*shad*-[personal name], i.e., 'God so and so saves me' (2). El Shaddai, God the Saviour, is revealed as such through the promises of spiritual blessing, i.e. salvation, which were made to the fathers.

Walk before me, and be blameless- It could be that :1,2 are an appeal to Abraham to dedicate himself more fully to God, an to accept that He is indeed "almighty". The last we have heard of Abraham is 13 years previously, when Ishmael was born as a result of Abraham's lack of faith in the fulfilment of the Divine promises (Gen. 16:16). Perhaps he backslid during those years. The idea of walking before God is understood by Abraham in :18 as meaning being in covenant relationship. We enter that covenant by baptism now, or in those days, by circumcision. But to abide in the covenant meant living in daily life as if in God's presence, before Him, in the light of His face.

Mt. 5:48 alludes here: "Be perfect...". But the command "Be perfect" (AV) can be translated "Be perfected" (Gen. 17:1). There's some support for this when we consider the inspired commentary upon the promises to Abraham in Heb. 11:39,40: "[He] received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they

without us should not be perfected". "The promise" and being "perfected" are thus paralleled. In this we may have in Gen. 17:1 another promise to Abraham- to 'be perfected', and this could only come true through God's perfect righteousness being imputed to him. The New Testament informs us quite simply that Abraham believed the promise of being in the Kingdom, and he was therefore 'justified', or counted righteous (Gen. 15:6). But God led him in appreciating what those promises really implied. If he was going to live eternally in God's Kingdom, then he would only be there because God counted him righteous. And so it seems to me that God developed Abraham's mind further by promising him in Gen. 17:1 that he would indeed "be perfected", which could only have come about through God imputing righteousness to him. It could be that when Abraham "believed" the promise of the Kingdom in Gen. 15:6, he didn't realize that in Heaven, God was so thrilled with his faith that He counted Abraham as righteous, in order to fulfill the promise of giving him eternal life. And then in Gen. 17:1, God communicated this to Abraham in the promise that He would 'perfect' him. And God patiently works with us likewise, as we struggle to really, really believe that we will live eternally in His Kingdom; and as we progressively realize throughout life that this can only be possible by the Lord's perfection being counted to us.

The Hebrew certainly reads as if Abraham had to be "perfect" and walk before God, and then, God would make a covenant with him and multiply him. Abraham falls to his face; and then God announces that actually, He will make the covenant anyway, and the promises which are part of that covenant, Abraham should consider as having been fulfilled already, they were so certain of fulfilment. The promises to Abram in Gen. 12:1,2 were conditional upon his obedience- he would receive the new land and family if he separated from his natural family and land. But he was induced to do even this by God. So grace truly abounded. Likewise in Gen. 17:1,2 "Walk before Me and be blameless *so that I may establish My covenant* between Me and you and increase you greatly". Abram was not "blameless"; he was only *counted* righteous because of his faith. So the condition was set, but even the condition was not totally met by Abram unaided. And the covenant of Gen. 15 was without even these conditions. Although Abram did have faith, as Heb. 11 states, it was clearly weak and God imputed a lot of righteousness on the basis of a very small faith.

As Abraham was commanded to "be perfect", so Israel were told: "*You* [after the pattern of father Abraham] shall be perfect with the Lord" (Dt. 19:13). Moses' books were helping the wilderness generation to see where they were coming from historically. Abraham was to be their personal example, as he is for the new Israel. See on Gen. 13:3.

17:2 *I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly*- What began as promises from God to Abram now become a covenant between God and Abraham. Abraham perceived the wonder of it all- that the God of the cosmos should

chose to make a covenant with him personally, as in Gen. 15. Nothing specifically is asked of Abraham apart from, axiomatically, believing it. He was to walk before God (:1), in His presence, and allow himself to be perfected (see on :1), to keep in the Divine program and not resign from it.

17:3 *Abram fell on his face. God talked with him, saying*- The Hebrew translated "fell on his face" is exactly the same as that translated "his countenance fell" in Gen. 4:5,6 (see too Job 29:24). Another reading of this incident could therefore be that Abraham's face fell on hearing that the covenant would be conditional upon his walking perfectly- but then God made the covenant anyway with him, and therefore in verse 17 he falls on his face and laughs with joy. This, perhaps, is the more likely, realistic reading; and it also avoids the problem of Abraham falling to his face twice with no record of him standing up again.

17:4 *As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you. You will be the father of a multitude of nations*- Consider the wording: "Behold, my covenant *is* [present tense- right now, i.e. Abraham didn't have to prove himself "perfect"] with thee, and you shall be [future] a father of many nations... your name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations *have I made thee*" (Gen. 17:4,5 AV). The Abrahamic promises, which we too have received, are a reflection of unconditional love and grace on God's part, just as we observed in Gen. 15. At the end of all the Divine announcements, we read that Abraham again falls on his face and laughs for joy (Gen. 17:17).

Perhaps by Angelic invitation (as with Daniel), Abraham had stood up from the floor to hear God's promises from the mouth of the Angel- and now he collapses again. The sheer *wonder* of God's grace in these promises is simply *so* great. What is conditional upon our walking 'perfectly' has been given to us anyway, by grace- for righteousness has been imputed to us as it was to Abraham. As a side comment, it seems to me that surprised laughter occurs when we encounter a difference between the expected, and an unexpected reality that takes us pleasantly by surprise. That observation would indicate Abraham's seeing by faith the reality of what God had promised; and yet it would also suggest that prior to this, Abraham was not really expecting God to completely fulfil the implication of the promises.

17:5 *Neither will your name any more be called Abram, but your name will be Abraham*- Abram means 'high / exalted father', and can mean "he is of exalted i.e. good ancestry". Yet Abram's name was changed. He had been commanded to break with his family when he was first called, and as we noted on Gen. 11:31-12:4, he didn't do that. He left Ur not in obedience to the calling to leave Ur and his family, but rather because his father took Abram with him. He likewise didn't separate from Lot until God arranged circumstances which meant that Lot separated from *him*. Now the Divine program went

further, in changing Abram's name, away from the exaltation of his own father. He was to grow up, at 99 years old, to come of age, to no longer be living out parental expectation. He was to be the father of a new family, as 'Abraham' implied, and to sever all connection with his human ancestry and family. The way ‘Abram’ was changed to ‘AbraHAm’ and ‘Sarah’ to ‘SarAH’ shows how God wishes to mix syllables of His Name with that of men. Jacob was changed to Isra-el, mixing God’s name with that of his father. This is indeed mutuality between God and man- and it demands so much. No longer was Abram all about exalting his own father; he was himself to be a father. We too as Abraham's children pass through this sense of redefinition; we are new creations, no longer just defined by our place in a line of genetics or ancestors, but making a radically new start, producing spiritual children who in that sense shall continue the line which we begin by the sowing of the Gospel seed.

It has been pointed out that Abram or Abiram was one of the most common names in the near East- it was common in Babylon as Abirami, and in Egypt as Abu-reheni or Abram (J.B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1950) p. 242, p. 329 note 9). Into this very common name- as normal and common as the names we bear in our societies- was added the Name of Yahweh. Abram became Abraham. The central letter of Yahweh's Name became the central letter of Abraham's. But Abram means 'my father is exalted', or more strictly as W.F. Albright suggests 'I am exalted with regard to / because of my father'. To jettison this name was to trash all Abraham and his culture held so dear- definition in terms of their father, where they came from. The call of the Lord Jesus in our age is in essence no different- to reject father and mother and instead follow Him, to be His. Not in the sense of hating them, but in being new persons, carved out as a totally new family. The 'h' in the middle of Yahweh's Name was now inserted into the middle of Abraham's name; Abram became Abraham, father of a multitude, a new family. Some miserable philological critics have claimed that 'h' was an unknown sound in the near East of Abraham's time (Angel Gonzales, *Abraham: Father of Believers* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) p. 26). And maybe they're right, in which case 'h' would've been a new sound. It would be rather like importing the single Russian letter pronounced 'shch' into the English alphabet. The answer to the question 'What's your name?' would've been arresting and challenging to Abraham's contemporaries: 'Abraham' would've sounded strange and new to them. There will be something equally challenging and arresting to the world surrounding Abraham's seed as people come to know our name, to perceive who we really are.

By doing this, forcing Abram to move away from his father, God was again coaxing Abraham to fulfil the preconditions which God has set for fulfilling His promises of a seed. Abraham was asked to leave his homeland to receive another, eternal land; and to break with his natural family to receive another seed, far more glorious. But like Abraham's natural seed, the Jews, Abraham was more interested in the promise of the

land than in the promise of a seed. Jewish theology has a lot to say about the land being 'theirs'; but little interest in the promises of the seed. And strong resistance to any idea that it refers to the Lord Jesus. Abram was called alone. And asked to quit with his natural family. But he didn't. It was his father who took Abram with him to leave Ur; and only when his father died in Haran, did Abram leave Haran and go to Canaan. And he didn't separate from Lot his nephew- until Lot separated from him. He didn't change his name of his own accord. 'My father is exalted' was how he still chose to be known, until God changed that name. And God only speaks of "Abraham" afterwards, whereas in the change of Jacob to "Israel", we find both "Jacob" and "Israel" are used later. It could be argued that he ought to have split from his half sister Sarai; but he didn't. Her barreness went with the territory of trying to get your half sister pregnant. God's later extensions of the covenant were all specifically to Abraham- and not to Sarah. Abraham's behaviour with Hagar reflects a lack of faith in the promise of the seed. And in seeking a wife for Isaac, Abraham wants Isaac to *not* return to the land beyond Euphrates. Abraham wants Isaac to cash in on God's land promise. But he desperately wants Isaac to marry into his own natural family who were in that land of his origin. It is pointless to try to argue that Abraham was seeking a spiritual seed for his son from amongst the people of God. Abram's family were idolaters- this is clearly stated in Josh. 24:2,14,15: "Your fathers lived of old time beyond the River, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods... Put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve Yahweh... choose this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell". Laban and his daughters were idolaters, as the record makes clear. Laban was clearly not a spiritual man. But Abraham was eager that his son married into that family. Clearly not for spiritual reasons, but as a means of somehow retaining his connection with his family of origin- whom God had called him to separate from. But God tried to break Abraham away from them by changing his name- in order to fulfil His wonderful promises about the seed.

For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations- The promise was that Abram would become one great nation (Gen. 12:2). The plural here could therefore simply be an intensive plural, meaning 'one great nation'. Paul notes the past tense, the "prophetic perfect" in Hebrew, and comments that God speaks of things which are not as if they are, so certain is His word of fulfilment (Rom. 4:17). This is why there is a sense in which we are already saved, the now but not yet.

Although Abram is promised to become "a great [singular] nation" in Gen. 12:2, but here he was also promised to become a father of many [plural] nations, and his name was changed to Abraham in reflection of this (Gen. 17:5). The vision was indeed of 'one nation under God' which would unite the nations. The Abraham history is introduced by an account of the nations, who just before his time were "divided" (Gen. 10:25) and "confused" even further at Babel. Part of the blessing promised to Abraham was that

through his seed, and through God's purpose with Him, the divided peoples of the earth would be reunited into one, great nation.

It has been observed that the name "Abraham" was unused by anyone until after the time of Christ; although 'Abram' was a very common name, according to the inscriptions. People wished to be the father of their own personal nation; but the idea of being a father of many nations was unknown. The desire to unite all nations within one nation was known only on the basis of domination and subjugation. The message of the promises to Abraham was radically and uniquely different. It was not about one man having a personal dynasty; it was about the creation of new nations united in one man, Abraham's seed.

17:6 *I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you. Kings will come out of you*- The extreme fruitfulness contrasts with Sarai's barreness and Abram's impotence; just as the promises of the Kingdom are in such contrast to our present experience. So far, not many literal kings of nations came from Abraham- just kings of Israel and perhaps some Edomite kings. This stands out very clearly to the thoughtful reader. Who, then, are the kings? The conclusion is that the entire seed shall be kings. And this will come true in the Kingdom of God on earth when we shall be kings and reign on earth (Rev. 5:10).

Blessings of many children, a specific seed / son who would bring glory and blessing, and a name change... are all frequently found in records of wedding blessings (Claus Westermann, "Promises to the Patriarchs," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Keith Crinn et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 692). In making those promises to Abraham, in mixing the letters of His Name with that of Abram... Yahweh was entering a marriage covenant with Abraham the impotent, the childless, the humanly hopeless. And He does the very same for each of us who are baptized into that same Name and become recipients of the very same promises. What was weird and *so* counter-instinctive in this wedding- was the token of the marriage covenant. Abraham was to mutilate his male generative organ as a sign that God would generate him a great seed and family. Academics are divided as to whether such circumcision was in fact a common practice at the time [in which case it would fail to be a very unique token], or whether this was actually a radical and unusually intimate and shocking requirement from God (This is the view documented by J.G. Janzen, *Abraham And All The Families Of The Earth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) pp. 50,51). The unique nature of God's covenant with Abraham, that he *alone* had God known of all families of the earth, suggests to me that the latter view is likely to be correct. And remember time and again, that these same promises, this same covenant, is made to us in Christ (Gal. 3:27-29). Our response to what God has promised us requires us to likewise respond in a counter-cultural and counter-instinctive way. To give up this world in order to gain it, to lose now in order to win ultimately and eternally.

17:7 *I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations*- There is the sustained implication that the personal relationship between Jesus and each of His followers is totally personal and unique. The Abrahamic covenant is made personally with every member of the seed "in their generations" (Gen. 17:7). The records of the renewing of the covenant to Isaac and Jacob are but indicators that this is the experience of each one of the seed. This means that the covenant love of God and the promise of personal inheritance of the land is made personally, and confirmed by the shedding of Christ's blood, to each of us. Paul appreciated this when he spoke of how the Son of God had loved him and died for him personally, even though that act of death was performed for many others (Gal. 2:20).

For an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and to your seed after you- God promised Abraham that through Christ, His seed, blessing would come on people from all nations, with the result that God would be the God of Abraham's multitudinous seed: "To be a God unto... thy seed... I will be their God" (Gen. 17:7,8 AV). The seed is Christ, and the "God" is Yahweh. Let's not confuse them. In Revelation 21:3 this fundamental promise is alluded to; God Himself will be our God then; we will see Him and have a personal relationship with Him. This would mean that this idea of personally being with God is a fundamental part of the Gospel preached to Abraham.

"A covenant is of force over dead [victims or sacrifices]... it is never held to be of force while he who is the appointed [sacrifice] is alive" (Heb. 10:17 Bullinger). Over that dead body of the Lord Jesus, the personal covenant to each of us (Gen. 17:7) came into real, living operation.

Paul spoke of how those who join themselves with unbelievers (and marriage must surely have been in his mind) had to retract or repent of that relationship, and *then* God would receive them and *be their God* (2 Cor. 6:14-17). He was referring back to the Abrahamic promise of Gen. 17:7, that God would be the God of Abraham's seed. Is not the suggestion that those who unrepentantly make covenant with the world have broken their covenant with God?

17:8 *I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the land in which you are travelling, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession. I will be their God*- God promised Abraham that through Christ, His seed, blessing would come on people from all nations, with the result that God would be the God of Abraham's multitudinous seed. The seed is Christ, and the "God" is Yahweh. Let's not confuse them. In Rev. 21:3 this fundamental promise is alluded to; God Himself will be our God then; we will see Him and have a personal relationship with Him. This would mean that this idea of personally being with God is a fundamental part of the Gospel preached to Abraham.

David could praise God simply because He was "my God" (Ps. 118:28)- an allusion back to the Abrahamic promise. Of course, the *main* fulfillment of this promise will be in the Kingdom; but in principle, the promise has *already* been fulfilled to Abraham's seed- i.e., us! *This earth on which we live is ours!* We are rulers of all we survey. All things *are* ours (1 Cor. 3:21). We are just strangers here, waiting for the call to rise up and take what *is now* ours. This is fundamental. We are brainwashed by capitalist materialism to think that we must work our hearts out to achieve *ownership* of things and land now; so we can put a fence round it and say it's ours, buy a security system or rent a guard to make sure it stays ours, buy insurance to make sure no 'act of God' will take it from us... all this is quite contrary to the most essential teaching of the promises to Abraham. Personal 'ownership' of property and possessions may well be something which is inescapable for us; but let's never forget that actually all things are ours, and we buy these things with the same feeling Abraham must have had when he had to buy *part of his own land* in which to bury his wife. It was *his* land, but he hadn't at that time received it. And so with us, with the whole world and all that is in it.

The most oft repeated feature of the promises to Abraham can for that very reason be easily overlooked. Notice how the personal pronouns are the key words: "I will establish *my* covenant...between *me* and *you* and *your* descendants... to be *your* God... I will be *their* God" (Gen. 17:6-8). God Almighty is committing Himself to Abraham and Abraham's seed in a way so insistent and so awesome that only contemplation of it can elicit the true sense of wonder which we ought to have at being in covenant relationship with God Almighty. The fact that the basis of our relationship with God is an eternal covenant means that we do not drift in and out of fellowship with God according to our awareness of Him. We are His people. Every hour of every day.

"I will be their God" doesn't only speak of God's unique personal relationship with each of the seed. It also reflects God's self resolve ["I *will be*"] and determination to almost force through His purpose with the seed; as we see demonstrated in how He did this with Abraham.

The definitions of the promised territory vary. The *eretz* promised was originally the land between the Nile and Euphrates; but the northern and southern borders were never well defined. Now, it is specifically Canaan, a small part of that territory. The tribal allotments found in Joshua are also not precisely Canaan but somewhat more in some areas, and they do not extend to the Nile nor Euphrates. The tribal cantons as described in the later chapters of Ezekiel are also hard to specifically define. And Rom. 4:13 says that God promised Abraham "the world". The exact material definition of our future inheritance is therefore not so important, the essence is the promised blessing of forgiveness (Acts 3:25,26) and relationship with God, now and for ever. It could of course be that God amended His descriptions and definitions of the promised land in

accordance with what He thought His people at the time could realistically rise up to and relate to. And we must consider what this may imply for us.

17:9 *God said to Abraham, As for you, you will keep My covenant, you and your seed after you throughout their generations*- The eternity of God's covenant was on account of the fact that He foresaw generations of individuals wishing to enter the covenant and accept it. This is why we will often meet in future Biblical history the idea of the covenant being renewed with individuals. God gave the covenant, but men choose to "keep" it, or, as Israel often did, to break it; or, as Ishmael did, to just reject it as unimportant to them.

"You will keep my covenant" was a prediction rather than a command, in line with the words we shall soon read in Gen. 18:19 AV: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment". And likewise when in 17:21 we read that "My covenant will I establish with Isaac"; this was a prediction, rather than a statement that He would establish the covenant with Isaac rather than with Ishmael (see note there).

17:10 *This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your seed after you*- "The blood of the covenant" in later Judaism came to refer to the blood of circumcision and it could be that the Lord was seeking to draw a comparison between circumcision and the breaking of bread; for the token of the new covenant is to take the cup of the covenant. For this is how His words would have sounded in the ears of His initial hearers (See A.J.B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper In The New Testament* (London: S.C.M., 1952) p. 33). This is how vital and defining it is to partake of it. These very words were used by the Lord in introducing the emblems of the breaking of bread (Mk. 14:24). This is how important it is. We are showing that we are the covenant, special Israel of God amidst a Gentile world.

Every male among you shall be circumcised- As explained on :12, we are missing the point if we consider that only males could be circumcised and thereby be in covenant. The fact women could be in covenant without circumcision was glaringly obvious- and it highlighted the point, that circumcision of itself was nothing, it was what it represented which was so critical. Paul makes this point in Romans 2- circumcision is nothing of itself, it was what it represented which was and is critical to covenant relationship with God, namely, the cutting off of "the flesh" and a transformed mind. This is why the circumcised Israelites were asked to circumcise their hearts (Dt. 30:6; Jer. 4:4). The surrounding tribes practiced various cuttings of the flesh, on both male and female, to identify themselves. God's people were different; there was to be a highly intimate and deeply personal cutting on the males, hidden from the view of anyone else. The question 'And what about the women?' was purposefully built into this. The physical sign of circumcision did not publically define membership of God's people, because it was so concealed. The conclusion was therefore that literal circumcision was not the

sign of identity; it was a circumcised heart which was the sign. And so the New Testament likewise insists that if we have not the spirit of Christ, the mind of the Spirit, the possession of the Spirit and God's operation upon our hearts- then we too are not part of His people. Spiritual mindedness, the presence of the Spirit in our hearts, is therefore the crucial defining feature of God's people. And this at times cuts across the boundaries caused by differing interpretations of this or that passage of scripture, or issues of theology. To cite this verse as evidence that God or His word is somehow anti-women is to miss His subtlety. God is not so primitive.

17:11 *You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin. It will be a token of the covenant between Me and you*- Col. 2:12 presents baptism as the equivalent in our day if we wish to enter the new covenant, which is based upon the same promises to Abraham. But there is more to new covenant relationship than simply the ritual of baptism. Circumcision spoke of a cutting off of the flesh in the most private and intimate place. We always read of circumcision as being done to a person. Water baptism enables us to receive the birth of the Spirit, whereby the Lord will work through the Spirit to change our hearts, to cut off our flesh in the most private and personal recesses of human hearts.

17:12 *He who is eight days old will be circumcised among you, every male throughout your generations, he who is born in the house, or bought with money from any foreigner who is not of your seed*- Cuttings of the flesh as a sign of tribal affiliation were common amongst the surrounding tribes, as they are to this day in less developed tribal areas of the world. The signs are always public and immediately evident- you can tell instantly that a person belongs to this or that tribe by a cut in the ear or nose or cheek, or the removal of certain teeth, or the painting of a certain symbol on a visible part of the body. But circumcision was not at all outwardly evident. It was not mere tribalism; it taught that God's demands were upon the most private part of human life. Women also could be in covenant, and they must have wondered what was required for them. They would've quickly figured that lack of physical cutting was not to say they weren't in covenant, and that therefore, the real token of the covenant was not circumcision in itself, but what circumcision represented- the cutting off of the flesh in our most personal areas.

17:13 *He who is born in your house, and he who is bought with your money, must be circumcised. My covenant will be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant*- Circumcision was the token of covenant relationship (:11), just as baptism is today. And yet just as there were household baptisms in Acts, when the head of the household decided to enter the same new covenant, so here it appears that there was no volition exercised by those who received circumcision. This at first blush strikes us as strange.

Perhaps the idea of "must be circumcised" was that Abraham's family life was to be based around covenant relationship with God, and those who didn't want to participate would have to leave the household.

We wonder why circumcision was chosen. Perhaps the idea was that the identification sign of God's people was going to be invisible, known only by the circumcised male and his wife. We likewise are externally indistinguishable from secular society; it is our circumcision of the heart which indicates everything to God. And it was a sign at the most intimate point on a man's body. Possibly the idea also was that God's covenant was to be reflected more than anything in sexual matters and intimate behaviour. Passages like Lev. 18 stress the need for Israel to have radically different sexual behaviour from that of the surrounding world. Those passages taught that this area of life was to be controlled by covenant relationship with Yahweh; and circumcision was the sign of that covenant.

17:14 *The uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people. He has broken My covenant*- Col. 2:11 speaks of circumcision as another type of baptism, in that only the circumcised were in covenant with God. We either "cut off" the flesh, or God will cut us off. "The uncircumcised [un-cut off] man... shall be cut off". He who would not accept Jesus as Messiah in Messiah were to be “destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:25), using a very similar phrase to the LXX of Gen. 17:14, where the uncircumcised man was to be “cut off from his people”. Circumcision was the entry point of covenant relationship with God. The record of these Old Testament occurrences also brings out the converse- what happened to all those who were not in covenant with God, who had not received the typical 'baptism'. The unbaptized Egyptians were "cut off" (Ex. 9:15); "all flesh" that was not baptized into the Christ-ark was "cut off" (Gen. 9:15). The New Testament matches this by the oft repeated teaching that outside of Christ, there can be no salvation. The language is very similar to that of the punishment for those who refused to keep Passover, or did so with leavened bread (Ex. 12:15). Positively, the only ones to be cut off are those who wilfully refuse to accept and proclaim their covenant relationship with God in Christ. We can limit God's plans to save others in the ecclesia by our attitude to them. We can make others stumble from the path to His salvation. If parents didn’t circumcise their children, then they made their sons break covenant with God- they made others excluded from the covenant by their decisions and laziness.

17:15 *God said to Abraham, As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but her name will be Sarah*- As with "Abraham", the middle letter of the YHWH Name became part of her name. We are baptized into the Name, by which we accept our part in the Abrahamic promises. And thereby in spiritual terms and in heaven's book, the Name is mixed with our name. Our name, as that of Sarai, is not obliterated beneath the

dominance of 'God manifestation'. We as persons shall be saved; but with God's Name and ways intimately linked to our own. We are to be given a unique name for eternity (Rev. 2:17), it's not that we simply bear the Lord's Name and we thereby are subsumed beneath it into some kind of nirvana.

It could be argued that the command to Abram to leave his family was disobeyed by his continued relationship with his half sister, Sarai. Likewise he refused to break with Lot his nephew, until God's hand removed Lot from him. And yet despite this disobedience regarding Sarai, God as it were made a concession to him. And worked her too into His purpose. Despite Abraham suffering so much because of being married to her.

17:16 *I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. Yes, I will bless her, and she will be a mother of nations. Kings of peoples will come from her*- This same promise is repeated concerning Hagar and her son Ishmael (:20). There was to be no reason for jealousy between Hagar and Sarah. But potentially at least, the son of the slave girl was being put on the same level as the son of the free. The paradox is, as Paul brings out in Gal. 4:24,25, that the physical descendants of Sarah ended up in the same category as those of Hagar, in that they refused the new covenant promises to Abraham.

The promise that kings of peoples would be in Sarah's line never really came true on the level of natural descent. For Israel never had an empire, nor did they rule over Gentiles. The total lack of fulfilment encourages us to see that the promise came true but in a spiritual sense, in that those in Christ, the seed, shall be king-priests reigning on earth (Rev. 5:10), some over five cities and others over two (Lk. 19:19).

17:17 *Then Abraham fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, A child shall be born to him who is one hundred years old! Sarah, who is ninety years old, shall give birth!*- Jn. 8:56 says that “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad”. The only time Abraham is recorded to have laughed and been glad was when he was given the promise that he would have a seed; he understood that ultimately that promise had reference to Jesus (Gen. 17:17). Abraham “saw” ahead to Christ through the promises made to him concerning Jesus. He cryptically commented about the future sacrifice of Jesus: “In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen” (Gen. 22:14). It was in this sense that Jesus speaks of Abraham as having seen him. It is in this context of speaking about the promises that Jesus could say “Before Abraham was, I am”. He appreciated that God’s promises to Abraham were revealing the plan about Jesus which God had known from the beginning of the world. That purpose, which had been “before Abraham was”, had been revealed to Abraham in the promises to him, and was now being fulfilled in the eyes of the Jews of the first century, as they stood in a ring around Jesus, “the word (of promise) made flesh”.

But this view apparently runs into difficulty in the next verse, where Abraham asks God to work through Ishmael and not to as it were both to make Sarah pregnant with Isaac. I am therefore inclined to see this as the Lord in Jn. 8:56 putting a very positive take on a very negative attitude of Abraham. The New Testament does the same with Sarah's mocking comment "... my lord [Abraham] being old also". The positive is focused upon- she called her husband her "lord", and this is held up in the New Testament as a laudable example. Quite simply, God is very eager to read Abraham and Sarah positively. For He counted Abraham righteous because of the bit of faith he did have. And we ought to take away that same positive spirit in how we view God's stumbling people. God is quite clear that the covenant would be through Ishmael and not Isaac; and that circumcision was to be the sign of that covenant. And having heard that, Abraham goes and circumcises Ishmael. As if to try to force God to all the same extend His covenant through Ishmael. This is a quite startling refusal to humble himself before God's intended promise of the seed through Isaac. And it is likewise the "seed" aspect of the promise, rather than the "land" aspect, which is so hard to accept for Abraham's seed. "The things of the Kingdom" are often so emphasized to the exclusion or de-emphasis of the things of the Lord Jesus and His cross. We think of the terrible passage in John Thomas' diary of a train journey across America where he shared a carriage with a pastor who wished to enthuse about the cross of Christ, and John Thomas dismisses this as 'rubbish' compared to his own emphasis upon "the politics of the Kingdom of God". The New Testament unambiguously places the emphasis upon the things of the Lord Jesus, rather than upon those of a physical, political Kingdom of God.

17:18 *Abraham said to God, Oh that Ishmael might live before you!*- As Abraham used his handmaid to try to produce the promised seed (Gen. 16:2), so Jacob, Rachel and Leah did. God had told Abraham clearly that the covenant would continue through Isaac rather than Ishmael, and that circumcision was the sign of that covenant; and yet Abraham remonstrates with God: "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!", employing the idea of 'living before God' in a covenantal sense. That is how God has just used the term, in asking Abraham to walk or live daily life before Him (:1). When God again repeats His purpose with Isaac, Abraham goes and circumcises Ishmael, as if he was to still participate in the covenant God wished to continue through Isaac (Gen. 17:23). The fact that Abraham's circumcision of Ishmael is specifically recorded highlights his insistence on trying to make God's promises fulfil as *he* would like them to. Isaac did the same, insistent upon giving the covenant blessing to Esau rather than Jacob; Jacob likewise did something similar when he tried to reverse the blessing upon Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:18).

As noted on :5, Abraham believed in the land promise, and was enthusiastic for it, far more than he was for the "seed" promise. He was willing to see it fulfilled through Ishmael. Anything, it seems, to avoid having to have faith that 90 year old Sarah would conceive. And yet, as Romans 4 says, he had faith. Although unbelief can coexist with

faith. But the fact he had faith was focused upon and accepted by God. Just as with Lot and so many others in our experience; an undoubted germ of faith is present, despite a general lack of faith otherwise.

But we can read this another way. Abraham didn't want there to arise a situation whereby Isaac was the chosen covenant seed, and Ishmael was not. And God, ever so sensitive to human prayer and feeling, agreed to modify His plan accordingly. Ishmael was circumcised, receiving the token of the covenant, and thus lived before God, i.e. in covenant relationship with Him. He was given the same promises as Isaac, and from him also arose a great nation based around his 12 sons. The difference was simply that Ishmael chose not to abide within the covenant, and therefore it happened that God's covenant was established with Isaac, because Ishmael didn't want it. And Isaac's natural seed didn't want the new covenant, which was and is based upon the promises made to him.

17:19 *God said, No, but Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You shall call his name Isaac. I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him*- The insertion of "No" is most unfortunate. There is no corresponding word in the Hebrew. And as explained on :19,20 and :21, God heard Abraham's request, and did give Ishmael the covenant; he was circumcised, the token of the covenant, and received the same promises. The covenant would be established with Isaac (see on :21) because Isaac was open to that relationship; it was made with Ishmael but not established with him because he was closed to it and wished to go his own way.

17:20 *As for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation*- The blessings upon Ishmael were exactly those upon Isaac, and he too was to become a great nation of 12 tribes, just as Jacob did. As explained on :21 and elsewhere, Ishmael could have remained within the covenant; for he was circumcised into it, and God heard Abraham's request that Ishmael might live "before God", in His covenant presence (:18). But he chose not to remain in the covenant, and became a nation with the material blessings, but without the spiritual blessing. And thus he became as Israel after the flesh, who were just the same as the seed of Ishmael (Gal. 4:24,25).

17:21 *But My covenant I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year*- This is a prediction of how things were to develop, rather than an arbitrary decision by God against Ishmael and for Isaac. See on :9, where God makes a similar prediction about Abraham. It is not that fate and predestiny are somehow against the seed of Ishmael. Any individual could and can enter the new covenant, based upon the Abrahamic promises. That God's covenant was established with Isaac doesn't mean that it would not be established with Ishmael; the fact Ishmael was circumcised, receiving the token of the covenant, is proof enough. But Isaac was open

to the further establishment of the covenant with him and his seed, whereas Ishmael was not. Ishmael was given the same promises as Isaac. It is emphasized that circumcision was the sign of the covenant- and Ishmael was circumcised. But Ishmael chose not to remain within that covenant, and became representative of Israel after the flesh (Gal. 4:24), who likewise refused the new covenant, based as it was on the Abrahamic promises. We have to choose to accept the establishment of covenant relationship with us, and Ishmael's seed didn't do so. The covenant is established with individuals who believe it and therefore it is established afresh with each believer (Lev. 26:9; Dt. 8:18). It was not as if God's establishment of a covenant with Isaac meant that all his descendants were automatically within it. We have many examples of where this didn't happen- thus his own grandson Esau was presumably circumcised, but chose not to remain within the covenant, and his descendants were not within the covenant people. And Israel, Isaac's seed, broke the covenant bond (Dt. 31:16). Being in covenant with God, for those in Abraham's seed, was as simple as it is today- a willingness to say "Yes" to it, and to demonstrate the token of the covenant- which in our time is baptism, and possibly the taking of the cup of the covenant in the breaking of bread. I say "possibly" because now is not so particularly the age of ritual, but of faith in the heart.

17:22 *When He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham*- 'Went up' matches 'coming down', which is an idiom for a Divine manifestation. It could simply mean that the manifestation ended; although it could describe a literal ascent of the Angel to heaven, as experienced by Samson's parents.

17:23 *Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house, and all who were bought with his money; every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the same day, as God had said to him*- The way Abraham personally circumcised all the males, having done so to himself, indicates his desire for intimate connection with them all. It was a delicate operation, requiring the men to trust Abraham, and to be revealed before him completely. This is a profound statement about the closeness of fellowship which arises between those who are all in covenant relationship. We wonder whether the men voluntarily submitted to circumcision, or whether they simply followed the pack, or did so at the insistence of Abraham as head of the household. The equivalent of circumcision under the new covenant is baptism, and we likewise have the same questions when we read of household baptisms in the New Testament.

17:24 *Abraham was ninety-nine years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin*- He was impotent at the time (Rom. 4:19), so this would have been perceived as a cutting off of that wherein he already had no hope. This is how God works- He

brings us to a position whereby we cannot rely upon the flesh, but must throw ourselves completely upon faith in Him.

17:25 *Ishmael, his son, was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin*- Circumcision was the sign of the covenant- and it is emphasized that Ishmael was circumcised. He therefore had the opportunity of covenant relationship with God, and was given almost identical promises to those given to Isaac. Perhaps we are to perceive that God's saving purpose could have flanged out to cover both lines, through Ishmael and Isaac; but Ishmael chose not to go further with it. Such potentials are often to be found in the Divine plan, but are so often not realized due to human dysfunction and allowing the immediate and concrete to blot out the implications of the long term, eternal and spiritual.

17:26 *In the same day both Abraham and Ishmael, his son, were circumcised*- This again serves to reflect the unity between them. As noted on :25 and elsewhere, Ishmael was indeed Abraham's son and was within the bonds of the covenant. But he later chose to not go further with the potential set up.

17:27 *All the men of his house, those born in the house, and those bought with money of a foreigner, were circumcised with him*- This is similar to the language later to be used about how the Gentiles living with the Israelites were to obey the Passover legislation. "With him" suggests that they entered covenant relationship on account of this one man Abraham, just as the record of the flood stresses that the other seven and the animals were saved with Noah, on account of their connection with him. This is the power of one in the salvation of others. And it points up the crucial importance of the things encompassed in the promises made to Abraham, the new covenant, the things of Jesus and His Kingdom.

GENESIS CHAPTER 18

18:1 *Yahweh appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day*- The surrounding religions understood oaks as religious places, where such Divine appearances might well occur. They were associated with idolatry (Ez. 6:13). We see therefore how God presents His truth in ways which can be understood by men and in terms which they can relate to, even if their worldviews are erroneous. This is not to say that the Bible doesn't challenge paganism and wrong beliefs- it does. But God also realizes, if you like, that flatly presenting His truth with no regard to the pre-existing religious beliefs and psychological associations within people is not going to help them. And we can learn a lesson from that. We may also pick up yet another hint here that the 'holy family' of the times were not so holy; Jacob, Rachel and his sons were

all involved with paganism and idolatry at times, and Abraham's association with "the oaks" doesn't sit completely well.

The Hebrew for ‘appeared’ is literally ‘to see’, and the same word is used of how man cannot see God (Ex. 33:20). But through manifestation of Himself to men, God allows Himself to be seen. Once this is appreciated, it becomes utterly facile to assume that the three Angels were the Trinity, God Himself. For God cannot be seen. And more practically, it provides comfort in our almost childish complaint that we cannot see God. We cannot directly, but He appears / is seen to us so that effectively we do see Him. This idea is behind the Lord’s teaching that through possession of the Comforter, it is as if we see Him personally, even though the disciples were to “see Him no more” in the flesh. This is at the root of our sense of God’s presence. We are not in heaven, not literally in His personal presence; but His presence can be experienced and lived in just as much as if we were actually in heaven. In this sense, God’s seeing of us becomes our experience of having seen Him- once we perceive it. Hagar grasped something of this: “She called the name of Yahweh who spoke to her, You, God, see me, for she said, Have I even stayed alive after seeing Him?” (Gen. 16:13). The same is recorded here with Abraham; God “appeared” or ‘saw Himself’ to Abraham, and then Gen. 18:2 twice emphasizes that Abraham “saw [“looked”]... and saw” the Angels. He saw God as God saw Him. To see is to perceive, to know; and thus Paul writes of how we are known by God and thereby know Him (1 Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9).

“Mamre” is to be understood as Hebron (Gen. 23:19; 35:27), and Gen. 35:27 notes that Abraham lived there as a stranger. Despite his great wealth, he still lived in his tent, just outside the city. It was whilst he was not working, “in the heat of the day” (2 Sam. 4:5), that the Lord appeared to him. Perhaps he was using the rest time for prayer and meditation, and his spirituality was rewarded by the Lord’s appearance to him- just as we can experience in essence. Or perhaps on the contrary he was doubting the promise of chapter 17, and the Angels appeared in order to strengthen his faith.

18:2 *He lifted up his eyes and looked, and saw that three men stood opposite him. When he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself to the earth*- The three Angels may each have had distinct roles. Perhaps one was concerned with giving the promise to Abraham about Isaac; another was dedicated to the destruction of Sodom, as “the destroyer” Angel of the Passover night which slew the firstborn in Egypt; and the other Angel may have been concerned with the salvation of Lot. Even if we are simply being shown Abraham's generosity and respect toward strangers (Heb. 13:2), his bowing reflects a humility. For in any primitive society, there is a pecking order; you don't bow to strangers in case they are beneath you in the social hierarchy. But Abraham did; he who was both wealthy in this world, and had been promised the eternal inheritance of the land. And this humility was doubtless part of his psychological response, the change of personality elicited, from having received the

very same promises which we too have received in the Gospel of the Kingdom (Gal. 3:8). He is twice recorded as having bowed to God in chapter 17; his humility before God led to a humility before men. We note too his energy at 99 years old. "He ran... and bowed himself". We have an impression of energy and speed in this incident, characteristic of the Abraham family.

18:3 *And said, My lord, if now I have found favour in your sight, please don't go away from your servant*- The desire for them to stay and not leave recalls the attitude of Manoah's wife to the Angelic 'stranger' who visited her. Although Abraham is presented as having entertained Angels unaware (Heb. 13:2 surely alludes here), it seems he subconsciously sensed they were Angels. For he bows to them (:2) as he does to God / an Angel in chapter 17; and the way he speaks to them here would suggest that he considers them his superiors; and see on :7. I think we have here far more than the exaggerated courtesy culture of the east. And the whole picture is [yet again, as with all the Biblical record] so psychologically credible. On one level he is "unaware" they are Angels; but he senses they are on a subconscious level. We will read the same kind of thing in the Joseph story, where on one level the brothers don't recognize Joseph when they meet him; and yet subconsciously they do, clearly enough.

18:4 *Now let a little water be fetched, wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree*- The Angels had an appearance of needing to rest. We see there God's willingness to engage with us in human terms. And this is going to set the scene for Abraham's bargaining with God which we encounter later.

18:5 *I will get a morsel of bread so you can refresh your heart. After that you may go your way, for this is why you have come to your servant. They said, Very well, do as you have said*- There are similarities with how the same Angels come to visit Lot, who likewise sees them and then urges hospitality upon them. Just as Abraham persuades the Angels to eat a large meal, so Lot urges them [against their initial will] to stay in his home. This is all part of the theme to be showcased in the dialogue between God and Abraham over Sodom- of how God is open to persuasion by men.

18:6 *Abraham ran into the tent to Sarah, and said, Quickly prepare three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes*- The emphasis on running, receiving into the home and rejoicing at the good news of the promised salvation in Isaac is all strangely alluded to in the record of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:4-9). This would explain the Lord's otherwise strange comment that Zacchaeus was a "son of Abraham" (Lk. 19:9), meaning that he was similar to Abraham, bearing his characteristics. The amount of meal used here was huge, enough to make many kilograms of bread. The picture may simply be of the hospitality culture of that time, whereby vast amounts of food were prepared in order to demonstrate how welcome the guest was. Such hospitality is common in primitive societies. When the Czar visited rural Russia, there are stories of farmers slaying every animal they owned in order to provide just one meat meal for the revered visitor. But it

may be that although Abraham did this 'entertaining Angels unawares', thinking they were merely "strangers", according to Heb. 13:2, it may be that he sensed something of the Divine in them. For they just appeared in front of him; and he lived as a foreigner in the area. Clearly they had come specifically to him.

18:7 *Abraham ran to the herd, and fetched a tender and good calf, and gave it to the servant. He hurried to dress it*- The impression is given that Abraham and Sarah personally did all these things. And yet Abraham was a chieftain ruling over a group which must have numbered a few thousand people (see on Gen. 14:14). I suggested on :3 that although Abraham was "unaware" these men were Angels, he sensed they were subconsciously. This would explain his desire to personally serve them.

18:8 *He took butter, milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them. He stood by them under the tree, and they ate*- As a chieftain over thousands of people (Gen. 14:14), we must note the more this extremely humble attitude, standing as a waiter to the visitors whom he assumes are far superior to him and demand his personal attention. As noted on :3 and :7, on one hand he was "unaware" they were Angels, but subconsciously he recognized them as Angels. This is a feature of being human; to know or recognize something on one level, but not on another. That may be a simple explanation as to how the Lord knew Judas was the betrayer, from the beginning; and yet He acted and felt the shock of being betrayed by his "own familiar friend in whom I trusted". And we think of the attitude of Samson to Delilah in the dramas with his hair. The psychological reality of the Biblical record gives it huge credibility as quite simply "true".

18:9 *They asked him, Where is Sarah, your wife? He said, See, in the tent*- The "visitors" used Sarah's new name, and clearly knew the name of his wife. This was surely done to encourage Abraham to join the dots and perceive that they were Angels. The Genesis record opens with God asking Adam where he is, and we noted there that the idea is really 'What are you doing?' or 'Why are you there?'. It was obvious that Sarah was in the tent, for she was not in sight, it was midday, and she was not standing by them under the tree as Abraham was. So the question was probing far further. Was she really just an elderly childless woman preparing for the final stage of her life? Was that how Abraham and Sarah were to perceive her? There may even be an implicit rebuke. They were not to consider her just shut up in the family tent / home, facing the inevitable end. This old lady was to have a significant baby.

18:10 *He said, I will certainly return to you when the season comes round*- The "certainly" and "I will" may hint that they had somewhat lost faith in the promise of a seed. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfill their

tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. Gen. 18:10 describes the Angel saying to Abraham "I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son". On that first visit, the Angel must have enabled Sarah to conceive, and then He physically returned nine months later. See on Gen. 24:40; 28:12,13-15; Ex. 3:8; 9:14; Mt. 2:13; 2 Kings 13:23; 1 Chron. 14:15; Mt. 22:30; Dt. 4:7; Ps. 57:3; 78:49; 144:7; Lk. 4:11; Dan. 3:28; 9:21; 10:13; Acts 10:5; Rev. 9:1; 1 Sam. 2:21; Is. 31:4; 1 Cor. 11:10.

Behold, Sarah your wife will have a son. Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him- The "*will* have a son", stressing the "will", speaks to their disbelief in the implications of the promises so far received, especially in chapter 17. It seems that Abraham, father of the faithful, was not that faithful. He had flashes of faith and spiritual brilliance, but the record seems to be full of his weakness. What faith he had was counted as righteousness to him; and he was saved because he held on to being in God's program, and because God by pure grace just wanted to save this man. And so it is with all his seed, who bear these same characteristics.

18:11 *Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age. Sarah had passed the age of childbearing*- Rom. 4:19 says that additionally, Abraham was impotent by this time.

18:12 *Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I have grown old will I have pleasure, my lord being old also?*- For "pleasure" she uses the word *ednah*, related to the word *Eden*. Yet in the events of Gen. 19, she sees how the land around Sodom that was once "like the garden of Eden" (Gen. 13:10) is made barren and sowed with salt so that nothing could grow there (Gen. 19:25; Dt. 29:23). She was being taught that God can give and take away fertility on a huge scale.

Sarah is commended for calling Abraham her "Lord" (1 Pet. 3:6). She is recorded as doing this in one place only, and it's here. She doubted God's promise by laughing; she is rebuked for this by the Angel. Yet in doing so, when she came to think of Abraham, in her heart she called him "my lord". So in the midst of her lack of faith in one respect, she also had a commendable attitude to Abraham. And yet she seems to be employing sarcasm; Abraham was impotent (Rom. 4:19), and had additionally just cut off part of his reproductive organ. "My lord being old also" sounds as if she was mocking him as well as the promise. But the Spirit focuses upon the positive; she referred to him as "my Lord", however sarcastically. All this, don't forget, was going on "within herself". God searched her thoughts, He saw her wrong attitudes there deep in her heart, and He saw what was commendable there too; and through Peter He drags this out and reveals it to us all as an inspiration.

All this opens up a wider issue. There are many Bible characters who appear to behave wrongly, but are spoken of in later revelation as if they were righteous. Lot is a classic example. Why is this? Why, for example, is the Genesis record about Sarah so open about her weakness, but the New Testament commentary sifts through this and reveals the righteous aspect of her motives? Lot would be another example. Surely it's to show that God sees us very differently to how we appear on the surface, both to our brethren and even to ourselves. He knows every motive, He alone untangles our motives and thoughts; He sees what is truly behind our actions. It is not just that He has the power to do this if He wishes; He does it all the time. God is thinking of us and our inner thoughts and motives every moment. Every piece of body language reveals something, every thought. And yet as with Sarah, God imputes righteousness to His people.

It is easy to assume that people like Lot and Sarah repented of their weaknesses and came to stronger faith; although this is not recorded. So another angle on this is that indeed, the Old Testament record is negative about such people, whilst the New Testament praises their faith. But this is because God recognizes that faith is never total nor absolute. It is always a case of "I believe, but...". Our "unbelief" coexists with our faith; spirituality with unspirituality. This of course should not be the case, but the reality is, that this is how it is with all men apart from the Lord Jesus. But God sifts through it all, and focuses upon the faith, the spirituality, and accepts that. This is a huge inspiration to us, to do likewise with others; recognizing that this is how God analyzes and treats us. This is no mere naievity, no turning a blind eye to sin.

18:13 *Yahweh said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Will I really bear a child, seeing I am old?'*- She laughed in her heart (:12). But Abraham is apparently held responsible for his wife's inner thoughts. Perhaps she had scoffed at the reported word of promise which Abraham had told her about three months previously (see on :14), and Abraham had not rebuked her as he ought to have done. The way Abraham is rebuked for Sarah's mocking disbelief is perhaps because he too had something of this, although at the time of the promise three months previously he had joyfully believed it.

18:14 *Is anything too hard for Yahweh?*- The Hebrew word translated "hard" is that usually translated "wonder". In our moments of wonder, and as the afterglow of them permeates our lives, it becomes easier to believe that nothing is too wonderful for our God of wonders to do for us. For He *is* the God who does wonders, He *is* wonderful and awesome. Jeremiah theoretically learnt the lesson from God's words to Abraham and Sarah; for he alludes to it in Jer. 32:17: "Ah Lord God! Behold, you have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and by your stretched out arm; there is nothing too hard [wonderful] for you". But God has to remind him soon afterwards in Jer. 32:26,27: "Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: *is* there any thing too hard [wonderful] for me?". We think we know all about wonder, when actually we don't. Our lack of total faith shows that we do indeed think

God's wonder is limited. Because something is hard / marvellous in our eyes doesn't mean it is in God's eyes (Zech. 8:6). Again we are surely to realize that Abraham and Sarah considered the promise of a child too wonderful or "hard" of literal fulfilment.

At the set time I will return to you, when the season comes round, and Sarah will have a son- "The season" appears to refer to the nine month gestation period. Gen. 17:21 had stated that after a year, Sarah would have a child. So it seems that a three month period had elapsed. Things were structured like this so that they would have the chance to exhibit faith in the promise. Having been circumcised at 99 (Gen. 17:24), Abraham would not have been able to immediately have intercourse. But now after three months he was able to. Perhaps the question about Sarah being in the tent (:9) was a way of telling Abraham that he should now be attempting to get her pregnant.

18:15 *Then Sarah denied, saying, I didn't laugh, for she was afraid*- Her fear was because she realized that these visitors were Angels. And yet she lies to them. Perhaps her lie was because she considered that she had only laughed in her heart (:12), and not out loud. The Angelic insistence that "You did laugh" was therefore teaching that the inner, concealed thought is indeed judged as the external action, just as the Lord was to later teach. This has huge implications.

He said, No, but you did laugh- It's been observed that Biblical Hebrew has no word for 'yes'; instead, in order to show agreement, the preceding actions or words of the speaker are repeated. Another example is in Esther 5:7 Heb.. Seeing that Biblical Hebrew reflects to us something of the mind of God, it seems to me that we're being taught by this to believe that what we ask for from God, we will receive; our request is the nature of the answer. Hence the need for care in formulating *what* we ask for, believing that God's 'yes' will be effectively a repeating back of our words to us.

Heb. 11:11 says that at this time, Sarah had faith: "By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted Him faithful who had made the promise". We would not perceive this from the Genesis narrative. That faith was not immediate; it was only after her desperate repentance at having lied to and laughed at the Angel who made the promise. Her failure and unrecorded begging for forgiveness were therefore used to deepen her faith. The destruction of Sodom was surely to further teach her that the prophetic word of Angels does come powerfully true. We marvel at God's positive attitude to Sarah, commending her for calling Abraham "lord" and discerning faith in her at this time. We too are to be positive about each other, and to believe how positively God looked at us, reflecting His pure love for us on account of His grace.

18:16 *The men rose up from there, and looked toward Sodom. Abraham went with them to see them on their way*- If Abraham had not personally escorted the guests further, up the ridge to where they could look toward Sodom, he would not have had the

opportunity to plead with God for Lot's salvation. This is how spiritual life goes; effort to go with God in the way leads to more meetings and opportunities.

18:17 *Yahweh said, Will I hide from Abraham what I do*- When we read that “Surely the Lord does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets” (Am. 3:7), we might tend to take that as a statement of absolute principle that is obvious to all the Angels. But we find an Angel discussing with others: “Shall I hide from Abraham [who was a prophet] what I am about to do?” (Gen. 18:17). My point quite simply is that the Angels have more debate, expend more mental and physical energy than we surely realize, in order to operationalize things which we might consider to be standard and automatic in God’s work with men. In our context, what this means is that when men reject the machinations and schemings of God’s love, they reject an awful lot; and it grieves and disappoints Him, and appears tragic to those like the prophets who see things from His viewpoint. We make know our secrets and our plans to our friends (Jn. 15:15; Am. 3:7); and indeed, Abraham was the friend of God (Is. 41:8; James 2:23). The 'gap' between God stating His plan and its actual fulfillment is the opportunity for men and women to plead with Him, as Moses did, as Abraham did regarding Sodom (Gen. 18:17-22), as so many have done... and He is most definitely open to human persuasion.

The lack of ultimate Angelic knowledge results in the Angels taking time to think things out and discuss their action with each other, which may result in an apparent delay to we humans. However, this same incident shows that there are varying degrees of knowledge amongst Angels or in the same Angel over time. The Angel who destroyed Sodom reasoned: "I know him (Abraham), that he will command his children and his household after him" (Gen. 18:19). Yet perhaps the same Angel, or the mighty Angel of Israel which made the promises to the patriarchs said to Abraham a few months later after his offering up of Isaac: "Now I know that thou fearest God" (Gen. 22:12), implying that he did not know whether Abraham's faith was genuine before that incident, and that the knowledge of Gen. 18:19 was merely that Abraham would 'teach his children the truth' and did not reflect any knowledge of Abraham's personal faith. In this case, Sodom might have been preserved by reason of Abraham's known willingness to teach others 'the truth' rather than because of any personal faith in God he may have had. Thus the lesson comes home that a man's zeal or success in preaching can be unrelated to his personal faith or spirituality. The elohim "found" Abraham's heart to be faithful (Neh. 9:8). This was by a process of research and drawing of conclusions. And our Angels are in the process of doing the same with us this very day.

18:18 *Since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed in him*- We have a unique insight here into the internal discussion of God through the Angels concerning us.

The Lord's later command to preach to "all nations" would ring bells in Jewish minds with the promises to Abraham, concerning the blessing of forgiveness to come upon "all nations" through Messiah (Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). Therefore God's people are to preach the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ to "all nations". The offer of sharing in that blessing did not close at the end of the first century. Putting the "all nations" of the Abrahamic promises together with the Lord's preaching commission leads to a simple conclusion: The Hope of Israel now applies to all nations; so go and tell this good news to all nations. Perhaps this is why there appears to be an intended grammatical ambiguity in the 'promise' that Abraham and his seed would be a blessing for all nations. It's unclear, as we've commented elsewhere, whether "be a blessing" is purely a prophetic prediction or a command. The commentary upon the promises to David in Ps. 72:17 is similar: "May his name resound for ever... may men bless themselves by him, may all nations pronounce him blessed". It is for us to go forth and be a blessing, and to make His Name great to the ends of the earth.

18:19 *For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of Yahweh, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Yahweh may bring on Abraham that which He has spoken of him*- At present it is the Angel-cherubim's job to "keep the way of the tree of life". They have been given this charge, and yet they chose men to fulfil it who will keep the way pure- thus the Angels decided concerning Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children... and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19 AV). It will be our duty to take over as the way keepers from the Angels, although we should have had good practice in this life. Thus we will say to the mortal population "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Is. 30:21). There is an intended ambiguity as to whether we are to read as AV "I know him" or as NEV "I have known him, to the end that...". God's knowing of us, using the Hebraism whereby 'to know' means 'to have a relationship with', is so that we might share that relationship or knowledge with others, particularly our family. The knowledge of God was not so that he could enjoy it alone; it was given to him as it is given to us *to the end that* we might share it with others. God has trusted us with the job of preaching His Gospel. That He trusts us, believes in us, is a surpassing thought. If you trust someone completely with a task, to the point it is clear that now if they don't do it, it won't be done, they often respond with a maturity and zest which wouldn't be seen if they merely were given partial responsibility [children are a good example of this]. And so God has done with us.

We perceive here a conditional aspect to the Abrahamic promises. What God had promised Abraham and his seed would come true because they would respond to it by

doing righteousness. Abraham had been "counted righteous" in Gen. 15:8, but we must try to live out in practice what we are counted as by status. Because of Sarah's faith, "therefore sprang there... so many as the stars of the sky in multitude" (Heb. 11:11,12). Those promises to Abraham had their fulfillment, but conditional on Abraham and Sarah's faith. Those promises / prophesies were "sure" in the sense that God's side of it was. Rom. 4:18 likewise comments that Abraham became "the father of many nations" precisely because he *believed* in this hope. Yet the promise / prophecy that he would be a father of many nations could sound as if it would have happened anyway, whatever. But it was actually conditional upon Abraham's faith. And he is our great example exactly because he had the possibility and option of *not* believing in the hope he had been offered.

According to Gen. 18:17-19, the reason God told Abraham what He would do with Sodom was because Abraham would teach others, and his descendants would teach others. This implies that Sodom's destruction was to be a special lesson for all generations. And 2 Pet. 2:6 says the same- Sodom was to be a perpetual "example unto those that after should live ungodly"; in this sense Sodom was "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The fire was "eternal" in the sense that the example of destruction was to be to all generations. This paves the way for Sodom's destruction to be understood as a particularly significant type of the last days. Our Lord clearly understood the destruction of Sodom as being typical of the events of the second coming: "As it was in the days of Lot... the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven... even thus shall it be in the day when the son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away... remember Lot's wife... in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Lk.17:28-34). Not only is the city of Sodom representative of the world of the last days, but Lot's calling out of Sodom by the Angels is typical of our being 'taken' by Angels to meet the Lord.

18:20 *Yahweh said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous*- A close study of the record of Sodom's destruction will reveal that the 'Lord' spoken of there was one of the Angels who arranged the judgements on Sodom. "The Lord said, Because the cry (NIV 'Outcry') of Sodom... is great... I will go down now" (Gen. 18:20,21). Perhaps this outcry of Sodom was from the Angels who were shocked at its sinfulness, whose concern prompted the senior Angel into 'coming down' in judgement.

"Grievous" translates a Hebrew word meaning 'hardened' [it is the word used of Pharaoh's hardened heart] or 'honoured / glorified'. What was wrong with the Sodomites

was that they were hardened in their sins, both sexual sins and the sins of pride and fullness of bread (Ez. 16:49), to the point that they glorified sin.

18:21 *I will go down now, and see whether their deeds are as bad as the reports which have come to me*- The Angel seems to recognize His own limited perceptions: “I will therefore go down and see, if they completely correspond with the cry which comes to me, and if not, that I may know” (LXX). And we shall be made like the Angels (Lk. 20:35,36).

If not, I will know- God's way of using the Angels to punish Sodom gives insight into the relationship between them and God. God Himself knew exactly what He would do because of the wickedness He knew was in the city. The Angel who debated whether to reveal to Abraham His purpose with Sodom says "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great... I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me". The Angels responsible for Sodom had brought the "cry" or news of Sodom's sins to the attention of this senior Angel, who then investigates it further to see whether or not their news was correct. "And if not, I will know"- the emphasis being on the "I"- i. e. 'whether their news was correct or incorrect, I will know because I am blessed with greater powers than they'. This senior Angel seems to manifest God to a very great degree, as Gen. 19:13 describes the other two "men" (Angels) saying to Lot "we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord (the third "man"- the senior Angel); and the Lord (senior Angel) hath sent us to destroy it". These two Angels sent to execute the judgments were under specific guidelines- v. 22 "I cannot do anything till thou be come thither". Thus these Angels were given power conditional on certain things happening. Perhaps this was part of the work of Palmoni, the "wonderful numberer" of Daniel, who is the Angel responsible for all timing; maybe He decreed that they could only have power once the condition of Lot leaving the city was fulfilled. Maybe this Angel co-ordinates all the huge number of timings which go to make up God's purpose? This would explain the passages which imply that a set time is allowed to some human beings to bring about repentance and response to God’s offers. Thus Pharaoh was condemned because he “let the appointed time pass by” (Jer. 46:17).

18:22 *The men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, but Abraham stood yet before Yahweh*- There are several examples where there is an ambiguity in the Hebrew text which reflects the suggestion of mutuality. "Abraham stood yet before Yahweh”. And yet, as witnessed by several translations, the text here can be read “The Lord stood yet before Abraham”, as if Abraham was being given the right to dominate God. See on :33.

The record of Abraham reasoning with God about how many righteous people could save Sodom's destruction is a lesson powerful enough. But it becomes the more powerful when we realize that Gen. 18:22 originally read: "Yahweh stood before

Abraham". Walter Brueggemann speaks of the image of "Abraham as Yahweh's theological instructor. It is as though Abraham were presiding over the meeting. But that bold image of Yahweh being accountable to Abraham... was judged by the early scribes as irreverent and unacceptable. Therefore, the text was changed to read as we have it" (Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982) p. 168). If this is so, and there is good textual reason to accept it, then we are left saying 'Wow!' not only to God's humility, but to the extreme willingness which He has to hear and go along with the prayers of men. And further; Ez. 14:12-20; 18:5 teach that there can be no 'acquittal by association'; if a righteous man stands before God and pleads for others, he can save only himself. Yet Abraham had the spiritual vision, driven by a pure love of others and God's glorification, which led him to go beyond this basic principle, and stand before God, or have God stand before Him, and plead for others- and be heard! God clearly is willing to change even the application of His basic principles in the light of intense prayers for others. It's all a *huge* challenge to us in our prayers for others. Indeed, Abraham's prayer seems to show that God can be 'persuaded' to see things from quite another perspective; see on :25.

18:23 *Abraham drew near, and said, Will You consume the righteous with the wicked?*- The drawing near could mean that Abraham literally came near to the Angel. But to draw near to God means to come close in relationship, in prayer or sacrifice (1 Sam. 14:36; Ps. 73:28; Is. 29:13; Heb. 10:22) and specifically in intercession (Jer. 30:21). It is used repeatedly of how Moses drew near to God in intercession for Israel (Ex. 24:2 etc.). In all this intercession, clearly Abraham has in view his relative Lot, "that righteous man" (2 Pet. 2:8). God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked, and so Lot was urged to flee Sodom lest he be consumed or destroyed in the destruction of the wicked (s.w. Gen. 19:15,17). In this sense, the essence of Abraham's prayer was heard. For Lot was saved from Sodom as a result of Abraham's prayer (Gen. 19:29). He didn't pray for it specifically, at least, not as recorded here. But the essential spirit of his requests was heard and understood. This is how God responds to our prayers. It is not the case that the person who can verbalize the best or the most accurately will have a better prayer experience than the one who is less gifted with verbalization. The essential spirit of our prayers is interpreted by the Lord the Spirit, and responded to- according to Rom. 8.

18:24 *What if there are fifty righteous within the city? Will You consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous who are in it?*- Circumstances were overruled by God to teach Abraham that he really would be a blessing to others, as He had promised. Twice he intercedes for blessing upon Sodom (Gen. 14:14; 18:23-33); just as e.g. we may be called to care for a sick person, in order to teach us about how we really are to be a blessing to others. Perhaps the most telling example of the limitation of God's potential by men is in Abraham's request that God would spare Sodom for the sake of fifty

righteous men there. He then lowers the number to 40, and then finally to ten, assuming that surely Lot's family were righteous and would comprise ten righteous. If Abraham had left off praying at, say, forty...then this would have been the limit God set. If there were ten righteous there, the city wouldn't have been saved. But Abraham went on to set the limit at ten. But we wonder, what would have happened if he had gone further and asked God to save Sodom for the sake of one righteous man, i.e. Lot? My sense is that the Father would have agreed. But the city wasn't saved for the sake of the one man Lot, because Abraham limited God's desire to save by the smallness of his vision. This principle can possibly be extended even wider. David asks: "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee" (Ps. 33:22). And whoever prayed Ps. 132:10 asked to be heard "for thy servant David's sake" - he or she believed that God would remember David and for *his* sake respond favourably [and how much more powerful is prayer uttered for the sake of the Son of God!].

18:25 *Be it far from You to do things like that, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be like the wicked. May that be far from You*- Abraham reasons that God's Name will be profaned if the righteous perish with the wicked. "Be it far...." is the same Hebrew translated "profaned" in Ez. 20:9. Abraham is saying that God's Name will be profaned if his prayer isn't heard... and that prayer required God to abrogate, at least temporarily, the principle that a righteous man can only ultimately save himself. The whole record of the Yahweh-Abraham encounter in Gen. 18 is perhaps intentionally intended to echo the language of barter in a Middle Eastern bazaar- the 'price' moves from 50 down to ten. But in Middle Eastern culture, the buyer has more 'power' than the seller... and again, we see the almost disturbing message that we in our prayers for others can have some sort of 'power' over God when praying for others. It's like Jacob wrestling the Angel to a draw; through his prayers that night, he had power [Heb. 'power as a prince'] over the Angel and prevailed (Hos. 12:4). I say all this is "disturbing" because it demands such a huge amount of us in prayer, if these indeed are the possibilities. But shining through it all is God's grace. For the required ten righteous people weren't found; yet all the same, for Abraham's sake, Lot and his immediate family were not destroyed in Sodom (Gen. 19:29). And it could be argued that the whole theme of Isaiah 53, the innocent *one* saving the many, is somehow an allusion to Abraham's saving of Lot by intercession.

Shouldn't the Judge of all the earth do right?- This could be seen as manipulative reasoning. But God goes along with it, leaving us for all time with an amazing example of how intimate a believer can get with God. "Right" or justice would be done, Abraham reasoned, by saving the sinners for the sake of the righteous. We would be inclined to reason that justice would be done by saving the righteous and destroying the sinners, i.e. making a distinction between them. But Abraham had learnt from his own personal experience that he a sinner had been counted right with God, by grace. And he considered that a righteous remnant could allow this to legitimately happen, according

to God's principles. His problem was that he over-estimated the righteousness of Lot's family, and failed to rise up to the fact that he alone by his prayer could save the entire city. He failed to imagine the power of just *one* righteous person.

18:26 *Yahweh said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake*- "Spare" is the same word translated "accepted" when we read that God "accepted" Lot's desire for Zoar to be spared when otherwise it would have been destroyed (Gen. 19:21). Perhaps we are intended to join the dots and conclude that Sodom could have been spared or even "accepted" if Abraham or Lot had simply asked for it. The faith of one righteous is enough, as we have learnt in our experience of the work of the Lord Jesus for us. The word is even translated "forgive" in Ex. 10:21. Acceptance, sparing and even forgiveness of sinners for the sake of a righteous one or minority is one of the most striking features of the Biblical record. We think of the emphasis upon how Noah saved those who were "with him", both people and animals. All this sets up the New Testament teaching of salvation on account of association with Abraham's seed, the Lord Jesus.

18:27 *Abraham answered, See now, I have taken it on myself to speak to the Lord, who am but dust and ashes*- Living broadly contemporary with Abraham, Job would have been aware of his description of himself as merely dust and ashes. Yet Job was brought to realize that “I am become like dust and ashes” (Job 30:19). He always had been; but now he realized the desperation inherent in his nature. He clothes himself in ashes to mourn his material losses at the beginning of the book; but at the end, he does this again, as a sign of his repentance for his general sinfulness and weakness (Job 42:6). Abraham's reference to "dust and ashes" may likewise indicate a sense of moral weakness, as well as referring to his mortality.

18:28 *What if there will lack five of the fifty righteous? Will You destroy all the city for lack of five? He said, I will not destroy it, if I find forty-five there*- If a person had been found who would have powerfully interceded for Jerusalem, 'stood in the gap' (Ez. 22:30), God wouldn't have destroyed Jerusalem - "that I should not destroy it" is an allusion to Abraham interceding for Sodom here in Gen. 18:28. There were simply so many possible scenarios! And this is what we must expect if even time periods can be shortened or extended in response to human behaviour. But if Sodom could have been saved for the sake of one man, the reason it wasn't was because Abraham lacked the faith and vision about it; he thought ten would be a respectable number. He over estimated the faith of Lot's family.

18:29 *He spoke to Him yet again, and said, What if there are forty found there? He said, I will not do it for the forty’s sake*- Perhaps the most telling example of the limitation of prayer is in Abraham’s request that God would spare Sodom for the sake of fifty

righteous men there. He then lowers the number to 40, and then finally to ten, assuming that surely Lot's family were righteous and would comprise ten righteous. If Abraham had left off praying at, say, forty…then this would have been the limit God set. If there were ten righteous there, the city wouldn't have been saved. But Abraham went on to set the limit at ten. But we wonder, what would have happened if he had gone further and asked God to save Sodom for the sake of one righteous man, i.e. Lot? Or even just asked for the salvation of the city for his own sake? My sense is that the Father would have agreed. But the city wasn't saved for the sake of the one man Lot, because Abraham limited God's desire to save by the smallness of his vision. This principle can possibly be extended even wider. David asks: "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee" (Ps. 33:22).

18:30 *He said, Oh don't let the Lord be angry, and I will speak. What if there are thirty found there? He said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there*- Abraham becomes more confident in his vision of Divine possibilities, reducing by an increment of five and then by ten. But he didn't go down to where he was being led- to one. He stuck at ten.

18:31 *He said, See now, I have taken it on myself to speak to the Lord. What if there are twenty found there? He said, I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake*- Abraham felt his own responsibility ever more intensely; he had taken it upon himself to speak to God for the sake of Lot and Sodom. The way God operates elicits from us the maximum initiative. He will work for others for our sakes; just as the paralyzed man was healed and forgiven for the sake of the faith of his friends (Mk. 2:5). This means that our lives are totally taken up with the possibilities of service.

Commentators have pointed out that the entire 'Dialogue with God' passage reads almost identically to descriptions of Middle Eastern market haggling; the price typically starts five times higher than the price that will be accepted. Phrases like "since I have undertaken to speak to my lord" and twice, "do not be angry [at my suggestion]" were stock phrases from the bazar. It is something of a formality to apparently 'knock down' the seller. And this is what we have here. 50 is knocked down to 10. As if God is that open to dialogue. And as if Abraham naively misperceives that this seller will in fact let him have what he wants just for the asking; not even for the sake of one, but for the sake of asking. The image of human haggling, when analyzed, gives way to the image of God's amazing grace, His willingness to give- but limited by man's failure to perceive it. Indeed, if Abraham was treating God as if in the market, then his reducing of the numbers is not to be seen as timorously begging Yahweh to be yet more merciful each time. Rather, Abraham has settled on the figure of "10", but he starts at 50 and reduces to 10 because that was the accepted way of doing things. In this, we see his failure to fully appreciate and perceive the God whom without doubt he did believe. Again, we see Abraham's weakness, coexisting with his faith. God agrees to every request of Abraham. That is the overall impression. That God is saying 'Yes' to whatever Abraham asks; saying

'yes' immediately and without condition. And surely He would have continued to do so. There is no haggling on God's side, no resistance, no attempt to claim that Abraham is getting something too cheap. He just agrees. The analogy with the market place haggling breaks down at this point- the element of unreality highlights God's eagerness to agree to intercession. He wants to save. It is God who has chosen to tell Abraham what He intends to do to Sodom; as if He actually wants to be talked down and out of it. But that doesn't happen, although it almost does.

Haggling in this way is done when there is a social distance between the buyer and seller; it was not done like this between close friends. If I want 1000 for my old car I will not tell you, as my friend, that I want 5000 and make you knock me down to 1000. I will tell you straight what I want for it and you will give that to me. And so it was then. Yet God has expressed His desire for intimacy and close family friendship with Abraham, as noted on Gen. 17. But still, Abraham doesn't get quite how intimate God wants to be with him; just as we don't. But we can compare this incident with Ex. 32, where Moses also intercedes with God not to destroy Israel as planned. Moses learnt from Abraham's mistake, or, lack of vision. Amos did likewise in Am. 7:1-6. We are likewise to learn. But although Abraham failed to avert the destruction of Sodom, God saw to the essence of his request- which was to save Lot. And so Gen. 19:29 says that his intercession was heard: "when God destroyed the cities of the plain, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities where Lot lived". Despite our lack of perception, God graciously sees the essence of our prayers, although unexpressed, and responds. This is grace upon grace. And it is the teaching of Romans 8, that our unexpressed, unarticulated, non verbalized "spirit" is what is presented to God by the intercession of the Lord Jesus.

18:32 *He said, Oh don't let the Lord be angry, and I will speak just once more. What if ten are found there? He said, I will not destroy it for the ten's sake*- We enquire why Abraham feared God's anger with him for asking for mercy. There is no reason God should as it were get mad at a man seeking to save sinners. We can take this as a window onto Abraham's spiritual immaturity. Or we can read the Lord's anger as being against Sodom, and Abraham is asking for it to subside. "Angry" is literally "to become hot", and is used of how God's anger "waxed hot" with Israel, and they were saved from it my the mediation of just one man, Moses (Ex. 32:10,11 s.w.). Moses learnt the lesson from Abraham's limited vision here. He realized that the Lord's hot anger with Sodom could have been ameliorated by the intercession of Abraham alone, or by the righteousness of just one man in Sodom, i.e. Lot. And so Moses alone was inspired to alone intercede for Israel, so that His anger no longer "waxed hot". We too are to be directly inspired by such Biblical examples and implications. The connection with Moses supports the idea that if Abraham had gone even lower, from ten down to one, his intercession would've been successful.

If 40 righteous had been found there....it wouldn't have been destroyed, thanks to Abraham's prayer. And he reasons with God, down to 10 righteous. Now I ask...if Abraham had asked: " If...*one* righteous man be found there...??" . Would God have said 'No'? We don't know, but the impression I have is He would have agreed. The salvation of Sodom depended upon Abraham's breadth of vision. God's mercy is upon us, and upon others, according as we hope in Him. Abraham's amazing spiritual ambition in changing the mind of God and reasoning with Him is really intended to be our example. Gideon picked up almost the very words of Abraham in Gen. 18:32 when he asks God "Do not let your wrath blaze...let me speak just once more" (Jud. 6:39). And if Abraham's spirit in prayer could influence Gideon... it can echo down through a few more centuries to influence us too. We will now read in Gen. 19:21 that the intercession of one man saved Zoar; and this feeds back into this theme developed in commentary here on chapter 18, that the intercession of one man, Abraham, and the righteousness of one man, Lot, could have saved a whole city- but Abraham lacked the vision and faith to actualize it.

The calling of Lot out of Sodom is a type, on the Lord's authority, of our calling away to judgment. His position immediately prior to the Angels' coming must therefore connect with our situation now. We will see as this study continues that Lot was in no way as spiritually strong as he ought to have been, nor as enthusiastic for the Lord's coming as his complaining about the evils of the city recorded in 2 Pet. 2:7,8 might lead us to think. The very fact that he chose to live in the area whilst Abraham steered well clear of it is testimony enough to his worldliness (Gen. 13:10,11). The offering of his two daughters to the Sodomites also betrays a certain unspirituality (Gen. 19:8). The fact that Sodom's fate was revealed to Abraham rather than Lot may also be significant. Despite this, Abraham evidently rated Lot's spirituality- his conviction that Lot and his family must comprise at least 10 righteous people must have been the basis of his prayer for Sodom's destruction to be nullified (Gen. 18:32). And so in the sight of the ecclesia, the high spiritual status of latter day believers may not be questioned- and yet the Lord's coming may find us seriously unprepared, as it did for Lot. It seems Jeremiah and Ezekiel likewise, on the eve of the coming of the Lord's day in their times, had to be taught that they had a far too exalted view of the state of the ecclesia. What latter day similarities with how the faithful remnant of today perceive things? It is significant that a ten-man remnant would have saved Sodom, representative of Jerusalem in the last days? (Is. 1:10).

Abraham saved Lot out of Sodom by his earnest prayer for him; and there is ample reason to think from the Genesis record and his subsequent reaction to the Angel's invitation to leave that Lot of himself was simply not strong enough. Without those prayers and the concern of Abraham read by God as prayer, Lot may well have been left to suffer the condemnation of the world he preferred to live in. And yet Lot fleeing from Sodom is used in the NT as a type of our latter day exit from the world at the Lord's

coming. Is this not to suggest that the latter day believers will be saved only by grace, they will not be strong and ready to leave; and their salvation will only be on account of the prayers of the faithful? Lot was not without spirituality; but he was simply swamped by the pull of the world in which he had become entangled, not to mention his unspiritual wife. He was the type on which one could have compassion, making a difference, and pull out of the fire. Indeed, it could even be that Jude's words about pulling a brother out of the fire may be a reference back to Lot being pulled out of the fire that came upon Sodom. Those in his position sin a sin which is not unto death only in the sense that we can pray for them, so that their sin will not lead them to condemnation. But only in this sense is sin not unto death; for the wages of sin, any sin, is death (Rom. 6:23). But in some cases this sentence can ultimately be changed on account of our effort for our brother.

18:33 *Yahweh went His way, as soon as He had finished communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his place*- Again we see mutuality between God and man (see on :22). God goes His way to His place, and Abraham goes his way, to his place. "As soon as He had finished" gives the impression that Abraham was as it were delaying the Angel, just as in chapter 19 we will read of the Angels being delayed in the destruction of Sodom by their dialogue and plea-bargaining with Lot. This explains some of the delays in the outworking of God's purpose, why time periods don't always fulfil exactly, and why it's impossible to compose a set in stone chronology of latter day events. God is so very sensitive to human prayer, positioning and repentance [or lack thereof] that His purpose can expand or contract in response.

GENESIS CHAPTER 19

19:1 *The two angels came to Sodom at evening*- The third Angel was the one who dialogued alone with Abraham in Gen. 18:22.

Lot sat in the gate of Sodom. Lot saw them, and rose up to meet them. He bowed himself with his face to the earth- Lot sitting "in the gate of Sodom" (Gen. 19:1) has been seen as an indication that he held some prominent public office in the city's administration. Yet despite this, he evidently maintained his separation- although this seems to have created suppressed bitterness amongst his colleagues, which they gave vent to in their sudden persecution of him just before the Angel came. They complained that he was "a judge" (:9). Note how initially Lot lived in the smaller "cities of the plain", and then "pitched his tent toward Sodom", resulting in him eventually settling within the city (Gen. 13:12). One wonders if he kept his tent in the loft. Ps. 1:1 seems to allude to Lot's progressive apostacy, speaking of the righteous man *not walking, standing* or *sitting* with the wicked- in other words, the righteous man will learn from Lot's mistakes. The way Lot progressively moved Eastwards has to be connected with a strange theme

in Genesis of all the apostates moving ever further East (Gen. 4:6; 11:2 RV; 13:11; 16:12 RVmg; 28:9). This is not the only indication in Scripture that many latter day saints, whom Lot represents, will not be spiritually fit when their Lord returns. This gradual slump into worldliness to the spiritual detriment of his family (the wife, sons and possibly other daughters refused to truly leave Sodom) is not difficult to see matched in the present ecclesia. The material prosperity of Lot just before his short, sharp persecution period at the Lord's 'coming', matches Israel's prosperity in Egypt just before their holocaust started (Gen. 47:11). The wealth of the latter day ecclesia may well be proof in itself, in the light of these types, that we are heading for a like tribulation period.

Yet 2 Pet. 2:7,8 reveals how Lot "vexed (Gk. 'tortured') his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds". Seeing that he failed to influence his family to properly appreciate the sins of that city, and that he was so attached to it that he was unwilling to leave, this must be interpreted as little more than the sort of middle class, respectable 'tut-tutting' that present day Christianity abounds with. After all, he had chosen to live there, he did not have to stay, and the record of his choice of Sodom in Gen. 13 spotlights his unspiritual, worldly thinking in this regard when compared to Abraham, the stranger and sojourner. Whether this assessment of Lot's character is felt to be correct or not, it must surely be accepted that there was a serious dualism in his position which has strong similarities with ours today- vexing his soul about the sins of the surrounding world, and yet increasingly involved in it and greatly benefiting from it materially, at spiritual cost to himself and his family. Lot was effectively willing to betray his daughters to the men of Sodom, pointing forward to the Lord's prophecy of how in the holocaust to come, many will betray each other (Mt. 10:36), family life within the ecclesia will break up; a spirit of dissension will fall upon natural and spiritual families. The reason for this will be rooted in a lack of true spiritual concern for the family in the easier years of this present life. Not for nothing does Paul warn against marriage in the last days (1 Cor. 7:28).

19:2 *And he said, See now, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, stay all night, wash your feet, and you can rise up early, and go on your way. They said, No, but we will stay in the street all night*- There are such distinct similarities between the record of Abraham meeting and entertaining the Angels and how Lot does likewise. They both bow to the visitors (:1) and personally entertain them, and are solicitous for their welfare. Both of them entertained Angels unaware (Heb. 13:2). As noted with Abraham, Lot was on one level "unaware" they were Angels, but on another level he surely was.

19:3 *He urged them greatly, and they came in with him, and entered into his house. He made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate*- The Angels who visited Lot in Sodom wanted initially to lodge in the street, but they were persuaded by Lot to change their plans. And who is to say that to some extent this isn't possible today, too?

This connects with the theme encountered in chapter 18, of God being open to dialogue with men. The reason they wanted to stay in the street was perhaps to protect Lot, but they went to a plan B in the face of his insistence. The "feast" with unleavened bread was a sign of fellowship. To break bread together was from earliest times a sign of fellowship, and had religious significance. Always the Lord's people had an open table, as exemplified supremely by the Lord Jesus. There was no test of the worthiness of those who presented themselves.

One difference with the entertainment of Angels by Abraham is that Lot's wife plays no role in it, unlike Sarah. We are left to conclude that she was not of one mind with him about the matter. The way she longed for Sodom even after leaving it, despite the attempted rape of their visitors, indicates that she was very much in line with the local thinking rather than spiritual thinking.

19:4 *But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter*- The double emphasis upon "the men" is in the context of their demand for sex with the attractive male visitors. As the Angels had entered at "the gate" (:1), the whole town knew of their arrival. But their desire to rape them was not pure lust, it was also xenophobia. The whole city is implicated as evidence of the fact that not even ten righteous could be found within it.

19:5 *They called to Lot, and said to him, Where are the men who came in to you this night? Bring them out to us, that we may have sex with them*- The specific sin of Sodom is well known- confirmed by the repeated emphasis on "the *men* of Sodom" in the record. The grossness of their perversion is shown by their clamouring for the Angels, who doubtless appeared as good looking young men. Lot's response and his offer of his daughters to them (Gen. 19:7,8) clearly shows their intention. In the light of this, Jude warns the believers that their punishment for this was what awaited those of the new Israel who threw off their responsibilities. "As Sodom and Gomorrah... giving themselves over (implying this was a conscious apostasy?) to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth an example" to us (Jude 7). In passing, it should be noted that all Jude's examples of Divine punishment involve people who were responsible to God, by reason of knowing His ways. Is Sodom an exception? Perhaps Lot had preached to them. We must give full weight to the Lord's comment that the villages who rejected Him will have a worse judgment than the men of Sodom (Lk. 4:21-24). To reject the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus is far worse than what these men did. And this is being done by millions as we read these words. Likewise Lk. 17:26-32 speaks of being caught up with the daily stuff of eating and drinking, marrying, planting, building... as being the essential sin of Sodom, just as Ezekiel identifies their sin as idleness, ignoring the poor, and "fullness of bread". It is these things which give rise to sexual perversion. The fall of Rome, of the West today, is directly analagous.

There can be no doubt that the sexual aspects of Sodom's sins have great similarity to the moral filth of our present world. But significantly it was not this aspect which our Lord chose to highlight when speaking of how "the days of Lot" typified those of His return. Instead He spoke of those things which were more likely to ensnare His people: "*They* (as well as our present world) did eat, *they* drank, *they* bought, *they* sold, *they* planted, *they* builded" (Lk. 17:28). Their obsession with daily activities without an awareness of God was as bad as their other sins; a point we would do well to be aware of. However, their eating and drinking must have been to gross excess- Ez.16:49 defines "the iniquity of Sodom" as being "fulness of bread" among other things. Some lavish Christian lifestyles frequently feature "fulness of bread"- but because it is not perceived as a gross sin, this unhealthy similarity with Sodom slips by unchallenged.

"They bought, they sold" suggests that Sodom was a major trading centre, rapidly increasing in wealth; "they planted, they builded" (Lk. 17:28) implies a real boom town. Such success resulted in the people being proud and haughty (Ez. 16:49,50); the wealth created at the expense of others brought about "abundance of idleness in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ez. 16:49). It is these aspects of Sodom which are so precisely matched by our self-centred, money mad world. As our Lord realized, it is these aspects which are most likely to ensnare the child of God. Yet Sodom's people were not completely unaware of their religious conscience. Jeremiah likened the false prophets of Israel who effectively taught that sin was service to God to the people of Sodom, suggesting that they too said the same (Jer. 23:14). This is another hint that the people of Sodom had some degree of responsibility, as have latter day Israel whom they typify.

19:6 *Lot went out to them to the door, and shut the door after him*- Lot was willing to die in order to save the Angels. There is an intended similarity with the entrance door to the ark which was also opened and shut (Gen. 6:16), and the Angelic defence of the "door" of Israelite houses in the night of Egypt's destruction (Ex. 12:22,23). The same two Angels had also stood at the "door" of Abraham's tent (Gen. 18:1,2,10 s.w.). There is without doubt a correspondence between Abraham and Lot, but it seems the similarities are more to point a contrast between the two men, in which Lot comes out negatively.

19:7 *He said, Please, my brothers, don't act so wickedly*- Lot thought that he had authority over them, as a judge who sat in the gate of the city. But their anger and lust was beyond respecting anybody. Perhaps it is specifically this incident which Peter has in mind when he writes that Lot was "distressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked" (2 Pet. 2:7), and Peter even implies that it was because of this that he was "delivered". There is no other Biblical example of Lot being "distressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked" in Sodom. It was on behalf of Abraham's intercession that he was delivered, but confirmed in another dimension by this act of genuine distress at their wickedness.

Although Lot is presented as weak, this heat of the moment response was indicative of his genuine distress at their wickedness. Lot was deeply wrong to offer his daughters to be raped (:8), and the fact they raped him later reflects how his sin returned upon him. But as with Sarah's 'laughing' and expulsion of Hagar is read positively in the New Testament, so here, Lot's attitude to the Sodomites is held up as positive. God sifted through his sins, his weakness, and found something positive.

19:8 *See now, I have two virgin daughters. Please let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them what seems good to you. Only don't do anything to these men, because they have come under the shadow of my roof*- This is really indefensible, and is a deep reflection of Lot's weakness and yet also of his desire to somehow do the right thing on another level. On a psychological level, the daughters took their revenge later by making Lot drunk and sleeping with him. This is absolutely psychologically credible, and confirms the veracity of the Biblical storyline here presented.

19:9 *They said, Stand back! Then they said, This one fellow came in to live as a foreigner, and he appoints himself a judge. Now will we deal worse with you, than with them! They pressed hard on the man Lot, and drew near in order to break the door*- The sense in which they felt he was a "judge" was in that Lot had told them that gang rape was "wicked". They were furious that he criticized their moral standards. We can assume that they intended to rape and murder Lot, and yet their passion for the Angels was unabated, and they attempted to break the door down to get in.

19:10 *But the men reached out their hand, and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut the door*- The same word is used of the Angelic shutting of the door of the ark (Gen. 7:16). Salvation was to be within the house, prefiguring the ecclesia in the last days; for a brief moment as the judgments are poured out on this Sodom like world, we too shall be shut in behind a door (same Hebrew phrase, Is. 26:20). "Reached out [their] hand" is used of Noah in Gen. 8:9. We note that this salvation of Lot was by grace- he has just shamelessly offered his daughters to be gang raped. But instead of turning away from him in disgust, God saves him- and offers to save his family. Again we see the juxtaposition of God's grace and human weakness. So often God's saving grace is revealed in our weakest moments, when furthest from Him.

19:11 *They struck the men who were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves to find the door*- Zeph.1:17,18 has a series of allusions to Sodom, indicating that its destruction prefigures that of Israel in the last days: "They shall walk like blind men (as the Sodomites did), because they have sinned against the Lord ("the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord", Gen. 13:13)... neither their silver nor their gold (cp. Sodom's wealth) shall be able to deliver them... the whole land shall be devoured by the fire" (Zeph. 1:17,18). "Blindness" is literally 'dazzling'; the Angels showed their Angelic faces, and the light blinded the Sodomites. The similar blinding of Saul and Elymas was to bring them to repentance,

and perhaps even at this late stage, the Angels were still seeking to elicit repentance. Truly we should never give up with people.

The smiting with blindness in a latter day context suggests Zech. 14:12, where this is the plague with which God punishes those who have come against Jerusalem. In this case Lot would represent a feeble-faithed Jewish remnant in the last days, unsuccessfully pleading with others to obey the Lord's call.

19:12 *The men said to Lot, Do you have anybody else here? Sons-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whoever you have in the city, bring them out of the place*- Perhaps they were mindful of the condition that ten righteous could save the city. And yet they reason as if the destruction of the city is already certain, and that ten would not be found. The destruction of Sodom is paralleled with that of Babylon; "Come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4,5) is based upon this call. But Lot could 'bring them out', just as Noah is presented as the saviour of his family. "Whoever you have" is in AV "Whatsoever thou hast". All that we have, finally, is our believing, saved family members who are believers and who will be saved from condemnation. They are all we have, ultimately and eternally. And that should be our focus. Nothing material can be salvaged from this life. As discussed on :29, although the precondition set by Abraham for "ten righteous" was not met- the essence of his prayer was still answered.

It is recorded that Lot only went to speak with his sons in law, and that the daughters who came with him were young unmarried girls who were still living at home, rather than speaking to his married daughters (Gen. 19:14). There is no mention of his speaking to them or his sons- perhaps because he knew that spiritually they were too far gone to be interested? It is possible that his speaking only to his "sons in law" rather than directly to his daughters also indicates a lack of urgency or comprehension of the seriousness of the situation.

19:13 *For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown so great before Yahweh that Yahweh has sent us to destroy it*- The language is similar to that of Gen. 15:16 about the sin of the Amorites becoming "full". There are limits to the moral declension which God will tolerate. When the *eretz* was "full" of wickedness, the flood came; and when the sin of Sodom grew to a certain point, this was the trigger for judgment. It is hard to imagine that our world has much further to run until it reaches that trigger point. Angels sent to destroy points forward to the "destroyer" Angel sent to destroy at Passover, with a minority saved by grace.

19:14 *Lot went out, and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters, and said, Get up! Get out of this place, for Yahweh will destroy the city. But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be joking*- Our last appeal to the world will probably meet a similar response from the "mockers" of the last days (2 Pet. 3:3,4); but it must be remembered that if Lot's leaving of Sodom represents the calling away to judgment,

then those whom he asked to leave with him may primarily represent other believers. At the Lord's coming, the willingness to respond to the call to leave the world is an indicator of our acceptability- those who refuse or delay to obey the call are punished (after judgment) in the sufferings of the world, whilst those who voluntarily obey the call to judgment immediately are those who will be accepted. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins illustrates this too. Thus Lot's appeal to those who presumably knew the true God to leave the city may parallel our frantic pleading with weak believers to immediately respond to the call to leave the world. Sadly there will be the same light hearted refusal on the part of some.

"Lot went out" into streets filled with blind, angry men of Sodom, in order to spread the message as the Angels requested (Gen. 19:14). This picture of preaching amidst bitter hostility but with Divine protection recurs in Rev. 11 concerning the two witnesses.

We note that Lot urged his sons-in-law to flee Sodom, but when it came to it, he was very reluctant to do so. They had surely heard how he had just offered his daughters, their sisters-in-law, to be gang raped. One reason why they laughed off his appeal was because he clearly lacked personal integrity and credibility; he was hardly walking his own talk. And this is a factor in why so many refuse the preaching of the Gospel today; the preachers lack personal credibility. And of course the opposite is so true.

The record speaks of Lot's daughters as if they were his only daughters. They were virgins, and not yet married (:14). The two daughters who fled with him to the cave are described as his "firstborn" and "the younger"- as if he only had two daughters. It was the custom that the firstborn daughter must be married first (Gen. 29:26). So it is quite likely that the daughters whom Lot offered to be raped were in fact engaged to be married. So no wonder their prospective husbands hardly responded to Lot and considered him a joke of a person. As indeed he was. Another option of interpretation is that the firstborn refused to marry unbelievers. But her younger sisters agreed to. Her sin of raping her father would then have to be understood in that light.

"Joked" is the same word has just been used in Gen. 18 of how Sarah mocked at the Angel's promise that she would become pregnant. But she was saved by Abraham. Lot's family likewise mocked God's prophetic word- but were not saved by Lot. This continues the message that Abraham's faith and intercession saved his family and his seed; and that Sarah, the mother of God's people, "mother of us all", was deeply flawed and saved by grace.

19:15 *When the morning came, then the angels hurried Lot, saying, Get up!*- "Get up" is the same word Lot uses to his relatives in :14. Perhaps his appeal for them to "get up!" and urgently leave was none too credible because he himself was reluctant to do so. Consistently in this record, we see that Lot was saved by grace. Like his wife, he was reluctant to leave Sodom and failed to perceive the urgency of the situation. He

represents God's people of the last days; and we can infer therefore that they [we] will be very weak as Lot was, and saved by grace alone.

Take your wife, and your two daughters who are here- "Are here" in the Hebrew means literally 'to come out'- as if to stress that although living with Lot, they still had made the conscious decision to leave. The fact that they did not look back like their mother would indicate a certain degree of spiritual strength- and perhaps they were still virgins because they declined to marry "the men of Sodom (who) were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly" (Gen.13:13). "Who are here" is literally "who are found"; it is the same word used in Abraham's bargaining about not destroying the city if ten righteous were "found" there (Gen. 18:32). We note that the daughters, and not Lot's wife, were "found". So Lot and his daughters, three people, were "found" righteous. But the daughters will later rape their own father to get pregnant. They were "found" righteous in the sense that the not very righteous Noah was "found righteous" in his generation, and Hebrews 11 says that it was by his faith that righteousness was counted to him. And with pathetically weak Lot and his girls, it is rather sounding like they were counted righteous by the faith of uncle Abraham.

Lest you be consumed in the sin of the city- It is apparent that "sin" is sometimes used as a metonymy for 'condemnation for sin'. The AV margin here rightly suggests that "the iniquity" of the city was the condemnation / punishment for their iniquity. And there are other examples in Ps. 7:16; Jer. 14:16 and Zech. 14:19. This isn't just a matter of cold exposition; the reality is that every sin we commit- and we sin daily- is in fact a self-infliction of condemnation upon ourselves. We rather than the Lord are the ones who in essence have demanded our condemnation; His judgment is merely reflecting our own choice. The idea of self-condemnation is perhaps behind the Lord's teaching in Mt. 18:6.

This command to leave Sodom is clearly one of the source passages for Rev. 18:4 concerning Babylon: "I heard another (Angelic) voice from Heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues". Note that it was also an Angel who said this to Lot. Babylon is directly equated with Sodom in Is. 13:19 and Jer. 50:40. Babylon geographically and culturally represents the peoples surrounding Israel of our last days- and therefore it is not surprising that related Arab nations like Edom, Moab and Ammon are also paralleled with Sodom (Jer. 49:18; Zeph. 2:9). This continues a long-standing Biblical theme that the curses on apostate Israel are the same as those on the Arabs / people of the *eretz*- thus Sodom is representative of both Jews and Arabs.

19:16 *But he lingered; and the men grabbed his hand, his wife's hand, and his two daughters' hands, Yahweh being merciful to him; and they took him out, and set him*

outside of the city- Just as the men grabbed him and pulled him inside the house (:10), now they grab him and drag him out of Sodom. Continually we want to use the word "pathetic" about Lot. But he was counted righteous, and saved by grace, thanks to Abraham's intercession. And we have so many people like him in our lives; their salvation may depend finally upon our intercession. They believe, but they are weak; they fail temptation, time and again; and are passive as Lot was.

Lot had been attracted toward Sodom by materialism, and it had consumed most of his family, and almost himself. For despite all he had been through in the last 24 hours, he still lingered, thinking of his wealth, and was saved by special grace alone. He left Sodom with nothing but the clothes he stood up in. Just as we will at our exit from this world. Israel were not to "linger" in leaving Egypt on Passover night (s.w. Ex. 12:39); the urgency of the situation becomes all the more relevant to us once we perceive that the call to leave "Sodom" is not just when the Lord comes, but right now; for we now are not to "look back" as Lot's wife did (Lk. 9:62; Phil. 3:13).

The importance of leaving the world immediately the Angel comes is shown by the consistent impression in the record that the Angels urgently "hastened Lot" (Gen.19:15-17,22), implying that if he did not hurry then he would perish. It was not foreordained that he would not perish- "Arise... *lest* thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city... escape for thy life; look not behind (the Hebrew root means 'to delay') thee, neither stay thou... *lest* thou be consumed" (Gen. 19:15,17 AV). It is quite possible that the *speed* of our response to the call will be the proof of our acceptability. The speed of response was the basic difference between the wise and foolish virgins. It was only after he had left Sodom that the Angel said that he could not "do any thing till thou be come thither", i.e. to Zoar (Gen.19:22). Yet Lot "lingered", the Hebrew meaning 'to question or argue', as we see him doing later in the record in his discussion with the Angel concerning the danger of going to the mountain as he had been told, and asking leave to go to Zoar. "Lingered" literally means 'Why?' or 'What!', indicating severe incomprehension on Lot's part. We would be foolish to think that we too will not be prone to a serious sense of incomprehension when the Angel appears. Only repeated meditation upon that moment and a true love of the Lord's coming will stop us being so flustered by the Angel's call that we fail to respond to it with the necessary speed.

Therefore the Angel "grabbed" Lot's hand, a Hebrew word elsewhere translated 'to take courage', and definitely meaning to strengthen or encourage. Angels frequently said to faithful men "Fear not" when they have appeared to them. It is therefore tempting to think that our Angel will speak similar words of strength and encouragement to us on their appearing. The typology of Lot would support this. But we have to remember that in Lot's case the Lord was "merciful unto him"- such grace as was shown to him cannot be presumed upon. "Merciful" certainly carries the idea of pity in Hebrew- if we have had a loving relationship with our guardian Angel now, surely we may look forward to their

'pity' then. Despite all this, Lot's wife still looked back; and 'remember her'. The pull of family and materialism was such for that woman, that all this supreme demonstration of mercy and love was not enough to convince her that nothing else mattered apart from obedience to God.

Lot therefore was 'taken out' from the city which he had failed to separate from as he should; all by grace. And likewise with Abraham being 'taken out' from Ur by Divine providence, when he ought to have obeyed of his own volition.

19:17 *It came to pass, when they had taken them out, that one of them said, Escape for your life! Don't look behind you, and don't stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be consumed!*- "Escape" or "flee" is *malat* and is related to the word "Lot". Lot was born to flee [the word is used five times in :17,19,20,22]; but he failed to be the man he was intended to be. Yet he was dragged out, made to flee, by the higher hand of grace, operating on behalf of Abraham's intercession. The exit from Sodom was a type of our calling out of the world on the eve of its destruction in the last days; but when we first respond to the Gospel, we are likewise warned not to "look back" (Lk. 9:62; Phil. 3:13). We are to try to live now in the intensity of the second coming, living on a knife edge, realizing that the ultimate issues of eternity are before us. The world in which we live is as Sodom, ripe for destruction. "The mountains" were exactly where Abraham was living, the barren uplands which Abraham had accepted when Lot chose the fertile plain. He was being driven to reconsider that decision he had taken, and to realize how much he had suffered because of it. The whole "plain", the fertile area once so attractive to Lot, was to be destroyed. And so on the eve of this world's destruction, we need to earnestly consider whether we are as Lot or Abraham.

LXX "lest perhaps thou be overtaken together with them" shows that despite Abraham's intercession being a factor in Lot's salvation, he still would have lost that salvation if he chose to tarry longer. "Look" means to view intensely with love or pleasure; that these words were said to Lot must indicate that he was tempted to look on Sodom in that way. There seems to be a pointed contrast with Abraham, who looked at Sodom burning without being punished, presumably because he had no attraction towards it (Gen. 19:28). Thus for all his vexing of soul for the sins of the city (2 Pet. 2:8), Lot was still tempted to love it. Our repulsion at the ways of the world is not necessarily a sign of our spiritual safety- there is an uncanny love within human nature for the environment we know. Thus there can be homesickness for drab streets and scenes which we despised whilst living among them. Such love, taken to its logical end, is a love of the world which militates against our desire to see the end of this age and to enter the Kingdom.

It is amazing that with the clear command echoing in his ears, Lot could ask leave to live in Zoar, a small city of the plain, and not go to the mountain. He clearly failed to appreciate the reality and seriousness of the Angel's coming- and this will certainly be a temptation to us in that moment when the typology of Lot is fulfilled in us. The only way

to guard against this is by consciously living our lives now in awareness of the fact that now we have been called to leave the world and its ways, and therefore our whole life now should have the spirit which we will have when we leave this world when the Angel comes. This is confirmed by an oblique allusion which our Lord makes to this Angelic command in Lk. 9:62: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God". The context shows that starting to plough represents the start of our new life in response to the Gospel call- but the allusion to the Angel's words to Lot show that we should live our whole lives in response to that call as if we are on the way to the judgment, having been called away by the Angel.

It is a breathtaking thought that all the intricate typology of the judgments on Sodom has been worked out for our benefit- the generation who will be alive at the second coming. To a lesser extent, the believers of the first century could have seen that the story of Sodom also represented the judgments to come upon Jerusalem in AD70. An impressive group of Old Testament prophets had associated Jerusalem with Sodom: Is. 1:10; Am. 4:11; Dt. 29:23; Jer. 23:14; Lam. 4:6; Ez. 16:46. Jer. 4 and 5 are prophecies which have relevance to Israel's latter day judgments (Jer. 4:28 = Mt. 24:30). Jer. 5:1 seems to allude to God's requirement for their to be some faithful men in Sodom to prevent its destruction: "Run ye to and from through the streets of Jerusalem, and see... if ye can find a man... that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it". This associates Sodom, Jerusalem and the last days. It confirms the exposition offered on chapter 18- that if only one righteous had been found in Sodom, it would have been saved. And there was one righteous, namely Lot (2 Pet. 2:7). But Abraham set the limit at ten, and God accepted that. As the faithful remnant were miraculously allowed to leave Sodom, immediately unleashing the Divine judgments by doing so, the faithful Christian remnant were allowed to leave Jerusalem just before the final Roman onslaught of AD70, doubtless spurred on by their Lord's command: "Let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it (Jerusalem) depart out" (Lk. 21:21). The reference to fleeing to the mountains would have suggested a conscious allusion back to the command to Lot to flee out of Sodom "to the mountain".

19:18 *Lot said to them, Oh, not so, my lord*- Lot recognized he was dealing with Angels, and yet he felt he could dialogue with them, just as Abraham had done in chapter 18. But given the urgency of the situation, we tend to see his words here not so much as a reflection of his intimacy with God, but rather of his fearful lack of faith.

19:19 *See now, your servant has found favour in your sight, and you have magnified your grace, which you have shown to me in saving my life. I can't escape to the mountain, lest evil pursue me there, and I die*- Lot's response to the Angel's call illustrates the contradictions which abound within human nature. He claims to appreciate that the Angel has saved his life, but then goes on to say that what the Angel is telling him to do will result in the loss of his life. Similarly our calling away may well present us with the

prospect of apparent pain or loss. He feared that "some evil" would "take me", using a Hebrew word that is not the one usually translated as "take". This one means strictly 'to pursue after and capture', indicating that Lot was all too aware of the Sodomites' desire to kill him, and feared that if he lived alone in the mountains they would easily pursue and kill him. Instead, Lot suggested, there would be more safety in living in the small city of Zoar nearby, which presumably the Sodomites would be loath to invade just to take Lot. Another consideration is that "the evil" (Heb.) referred to Lot's belief that there was some evil, satan-like figure in the mountains which would pursue and kill him there. That belief was so deep that it made him challenge the Angel-saviour even in this desperate moment. And yet for all that wrong doctrine, the Angel still showed mercy and condescended to his misbelief, just as the Lord used the language of demons to those for whom the idea was so entrenched.

All this shows an incomprehension of what the Angel had said. Firstly, Sodom was to be destroyed at any moment, including the men whom Lot feared. Either he did not properly believe this, or he thought that God's judgment would not involve total destruction. Secondly, he had been explicitly told "neither stay thou in all the plain (including Zoar)... lest thou be consumed" (Gen.19:17 AV). Insufficient attention to the words of the Angels therefore resulted in his foolish reasoning which almost cost him his life. It is easy to imagine that the moment of the Angel's coming will fill the weak latter day believer, perhaps distracted as he will be by the persecutions of the holocaust to come, with such a sense of confusion and incomprehension that he too will fail to take careful note of what is said to him. A love of God's word now, rejoicing in its detail, is surely the preventive for this.

The connection between the Angels as God's eyes and His hearing of prayer becomes more relevant once it is realized that to 'find grace in God's sight' (eyes-Angels) is equivalent to saying 'please hear my prayer'- see Gen. 19:19; 32:5; 33:10,15; 34:11- at least in Genesis. This again explains why early believers conceived of God in terms of an Angel, as they would have prayed to the Angel and received the answers and other revelation of God from one.

The Angels make things potentially possible, but the realization of their potential plans depended upon Israel's freewill effort. When Lot says that he "cannot" flee from Sodom, the Angel responds by saying that he "cannot" [same Hebrew word] do anything until Lot has left- as if to suggest that the Angel's mission depended upon Lot's freewill decision for its realization (Gen. 19:19,22). The same word is found on the lips of another Angel in commending Jacob that he had "prevailed" (Gen. 32:28)- literally, he had 'coulded'. He had achieved what had been made potentially possible in terms of his relationship with that Angel. Caleb and Joshua perceived that Israel were "well able" to overcome the tribes and inherit the land, seeing that the Angel-hornet had gone ahead and prepared the way; and yet due to Israel's disabling of this possibility at the time, it was in some

ways so that God Himself was "not able" to give them the inheritance, because *they* judged that *they* were " not able" to take it (Num. 13:30,31; 14:16).

19:20 *See now, this city is near to flee to, and it is a little one. Oh let me escape there (isn't it a little one?), and my soul will live*- The Hebrew for "flee" is also translated 'to hide in', carrying the idea of being chased into. Again, his fear of the Sodomites is shown to loom large in his thinking. The Angel had bidden him flee from the Divine wrath that was soon to consume all the cities of the plain. But instead Lot was preoccupied with the fear of human vengeance against him. Such an attitude appears crazy to our cool, armchair analysis of what happened. Yet Lot is certainly a type of the believers who are alive at the Lord's return. There can be no doubting, therefore, that whatever our theoretical willingness now to leave all and follow the Angel, there will then be at least the temptation to get consumed with the kind of double-think that seized Lot's reasoning. He even tried to accommodate his human desires to the desires of the Angel: "Is it not a little one?", as if to imply that there was little wrong with the place spiritually. The Hebrew translated " little one" is also rendered "a short time"- as if to say 'You are asking me to be quick about leaving Sodom- so I'll go to Zoar, as it won't take long to get there'.

"My soul shall live" is really a reflection of his lack of faith in Divine salvation; he considered that he knew better than God in working out his salvation. All the way through, Lot is portrayed as a man of very weak faith. And yet he was counted righteous, as 2 Peter makes clear.

19:21 *He said to him, Behold, I have granted your request concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow the city of which you have spoken*- LXX "Behold, I have had respect to thee also about this thing". We see here God's sensitivity and even humility before men; His "respect" of humans in all their weakness. We too should respect people even if they are spiritually weak; and this will affect the language and jargon we use about people. The intercession of one man saved Zoar; and this feeds back into the theme developed in commentary on chapter 18, that the intercession of one man, Abraham, and the righteousness of one man, Lot, could have saved a whole city- but Abraham lacked the vision and faith to actualize it. God was so open to dialogue; the plans for destruction of the whole plain were ammended at the last moment because of Lot's intercession, even though it was rooted in his fear rather than his faith. We see how sensitive God is to intercession. And it was only because of Abraham's intercession that Lot was saved (:29).

The righteousness of a single man [cp. that of the Lord Jesus] wasn't perceived by Abraham as powerful enough. Perhaps Paul had this in mind when he writes in Romans of how for the sake of "the one", the Lord Jesus, many sinners can be counted righteous. And surely God was trying to bring out the same possibility when we read of how Lot asked for the sake of Zoar- just for his singular sake. And God spared Zoar- just for the

sake of one man, Lot. Note how the Hebrew word used for "spare" in Gen. 18:24,26 recurs in Gen. 19:21, where God assures Lot that He will indeed *spare* Zoar [AV "I have *accepted*"]. We are surely intended to reflect that God would have spared Sodom for Lot's sake too. Perhaps God is alluding to the same point when He says that for the sake of just one righteous man He would have spared Israel in Ezekiel's time (Ez. 22:30). Surely there was one righteous man in Ezekiel's time, not least Ezekiel himself. But there was nobody with the spiritual vision to intercede with God to spare Israel for the sake of that one man; their lack of vision of His grace and pleasure in the righteousness of even one person was akin to Abraham's lack. And are we not intended to see some allusion to Abraham's failure in the way that Moses, just one man, prayed for and received Israel's salvation? And could not Abraham have asked for Sodom to be spared for his own sake, had he had a broader vision of God's grace? Perhaps his legalistic attitude is reflected in his appeal for "the judge of all the earth" to do what was *right*, in not destroying the righteous with the wicked. He perceives God as legalistic judge, not gracious Father. He asked for justice- not mercy. His basis is that the Judge of all the earth shall “do judgment”- note that “do right” is a poor translation. The Hebrew word translated “Judge” is the same root as “do judgment / justice”. It’s as if Abraham is almost simply observing that the Judge / Justice will of course do justice, and so he’s drawing to His attention that there are in fact just people in Sodom, and therefore God’s justice will surely preclude Him from destroying them. He assumed there were ten people in Sodom who were righteous; but perhaps later Scripture alludes to this by stressing that there is not one truly righteous person, not one (Rom. 3:10). Paul brings out the point that therefore salvation is by grace, not personal righteousness. And in the end, Lot was saved- but only because he threw himself upon God's grace. Yet he too perhaps suffered from Abraham's legalism; it is possibly referred to by the men of Sodom when they complain that he who had come in to sojourn amongst them "would play the judge" (Gen. 19:9). Significantly, Lot's salvation out of the burning Sodom is applied to all God's people in Am. 4:11. His entire people are saved by a like grace.

Abraham saved Lot out of Sodom by his earnest prayer for him; and there is ample reason to think from the Genesis record and his subsequent reaction to the Angel’s invitation to leave that Lot of himself was simply not strong enough. Without those prayers and the concern of Abraham read by God as prayer, Lot may well have been left to suffer the condemnation of the world he preferred to live in. And yet Lot fleeing from Sodom is used in the NT as a type of our latter day exit from the world at the Lord’s coming. Is this not to suggest that the latter day believers will be saved only by grace, they will not be strong and ready to leave; and their salvation will only be on account of the prayers of the faithful? Lot was not without spirituality; but he was simply swamped by the pull of the world in which he had become entangled, not to mention his unspiritual wife. He was the type on which one could have compassion, making a difference, and pull out of the fire. Indeed, it could even be that Jude’s words about

pulling a brother out of the fire may be a reference back to Lot being pulled out of the fire that came upon Sodom. Those in his position sin a sin which is not unto death only in the sense that we can pray for them, so that their sin will not lead them to condemnation. But only in this sense is sin not unto death; for the wages of sin, any sin, is death (Rom. 6:23). But in some cases this sentence can ultimately be changed on account of our effort for our brother.

19:22 *Hurry, escape there, for I can't do anything until you get there. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar*- When Lot says that he "cannot" flee from Sodom, the Angel responds by saying that he "cannot" [same Hebrew word] do anything until Lot has left- as if to suggest that the Angel's mission depended upon Lot's freewill decision for its realization (Gen. 19:19,22). The same word is found on the lips of another Angel in commending Jacob that he had "prevailed" (Gen. 32:28)- literally, he had 'coulded'. He had achieved what had been made potentially possible in terms of his relationship with that Angel. The two usages of "I cannot..." suggest that God and man are now at loggerheads. Lot "cannot" obey the required precondition, and God "cannot" go ahead with His plan. And the situation was resolved by God dragging Lot out of the situation by pure grace.

19:23 *The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar*- Just as God reads the situation of the righteous as prayer even if they don't verbalize it, so God sees the behaviour / situation of the wicked as a cry ascending up to Him, as prayer does. Sodom's cry reaching unto Heaven is the obvious example (Gen. 18:20,21; 19:23); but Ps. 74:23 also speaks of the voice of God's enemies 'rising up' [Heb.] to Him in Heaven.

The rising of the sin invites comparison with the description of the second coming as the rising of the sun in Mal. 4:2; the judgments upon this Sodom like world are to come the moment the Lord returns. "But his wife looked back from behind him" (Gen.19:26) suggests the picture of the wife following behind Lot, filled with remorse at the loss of all she had held dear. Our Lord comments concerning not desiring our "stuff which is in the house" in the day of his coming: "Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever (like her) shall seek (Greek: 'plot') to save his life shall lose it". We can infer from this that she plotted and schemed how to save her possessions- i.e. her 'life', seeing that for her, her life did consist of the abundance of the things which she possessed (Lk. 12:15). These feelings grew so strong that she paused to take a loving, wistful look at the city. Remember that the fire only fell after Lot was in Zoar; therefore the city was looking as it normally did. Their exodus was at night- "the sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar" (Gen. 19:23), so she would have seen the flickering lights of the city in the distance. Compare this with how the virgins of Mt. 25 go out to meet their Lord at night.

As a result of Abraham's intense prayer, believing that this coupled with the spiritual preparedness of others really could change God's stated purpose, the judgment of Sodom need not have come. So with Jerusalem in AD70, had there been a suitably

large, repentant 'remnant' those horrific judgments could have been avoided. Despite the definite associations of Jerusalem with Sodom in the prophets, the Old Testament also uses Sodom as a symbol of total, permanent destruction of the type which has not and will not come on Jerusalem, the future capital of the Kingdom (Dt. 29:23; 32:32; Is. 13:19; Jer. 49:18; 50:40; Am. 4:11; Zeph. 2:9). It is for this reason that Paul makes the point that for the sake of the tiny group of Jews who did still hold and practice the truth, Israel would not suffer the judgments of Sodom in totality (Rom. 9:29 cp. Is. 1:9). This would indicate that there will also be a latter day Jewish remnant which will stop the faithless Israel of today receiving the judgment of permanent destruction. But of course for the individuals of both natural and spiritual Israel who have consciously rejected God, "it shall be more tolerable in that day (of judgment) for Sodom" than for them (Lk. 10:12). Jer. 20:16 has a graphic description of the people of Sodom screaming out in anguish, both mental and physical, as the judgments of God fell upon them: "The cry in the morning (when the judgments began, Gen. 19:23,24), and the shouting at noontide". This is in reality a picture of the rejected in the last days.

19:24 *Then Yahweh rained on Sodom and on Gomorrah sulphur and fire from Yahweh out of the sky*- The 'raining' invites us to compare this with the coming of the flood, thereby connecting Lot with Noah. The same word is used in Gen. 7:4. The days of Noah and Lot are brought together in the New Testament; Noah and Lot are clearly intended to be compared. They both sinned through wine after their gracious deliverance. Evidence of this has been uncovered by Albright and other archaeologists, finding it superimposed upon a once fertile area: "Evidence of five freshwater oases have been located at the southeast corner of the Dead Sea, obviously used for irrigation to service the cities of the circuit when they were in existence. Adjacent to these oases, on a plain elevated above the level of the Dead Sea some 500 feet (152.4m), there were found the remains of a great fortified enclosure, a high place for religious festivals. According to these archaeologists, the evidence suggests that the population of the area ended abruptly about 2000 B.C. It also showed, that at that time, the area was densely populated, fertile and prosperous".

Abraham prayed for the city of Sodom to be saved for the sake of ten righteous who might be there. He didn't specifically mention what was his heart's desire- that *Lot* be saved. But God discerned the *spirit* of his prayer, and saved Lot, even though Abraham 'knew not what to pray for' and asked for the 'wrong' thing in order to obtain what he really wanted, i.e. the salvation of Lot.

19:25 *He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew on the ground*- This is mentioned because the fertility of the area had been so initially attractive to Lot. The "all" excluded Zoar; so we have another example of "all" not meaning 'every', in a global sense. The scale of destruction, utter totality, of man and animal and vegetation, recalls the effects of the flood.

19:26 *But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt*- The Angels and Abraham looked upon Sodom (Gen. 18:16), but of course they looked upon Sodom differently to Lot's wife. The point of course is that it all depends with what eyes we look upon this world. She was walking "behind him", so Lot would not have actually seen her turn into a pillar of salt. As he ceased to hear her footsteps behind him he must have guessed what had happened- but now the Angel's words seemed more vital to him: "Look not behind you". Likewise it will be a sore temptation for us to be side-tracked from our obedience to the Angel's call by consideration for our natural family. Dt. 29:23 and Zeph. 2:9 show that Sodom was turned into an area of salt, which explains why Gen. 19:25 says that the fire destroyed "that which grew on the ground", by making the area salty. This salt was presumably formed through the fire intensely burning the rocks and earth until the elements dissolved into a 'salt'. It is reasonable to think that as Sodom was turned into salt by fire, so Lot's wife suffered the same punishment through a bolt of fire striking her and turning her too into salt. This is a prime example of how the unworthy will suffer the same punishment as the surrounding world which they failed to truly leave. There is good reason to think that their punishment may also involve an element of literal fire, as that of Lot's wife did.

"Remember Lot's wife" suggests that we should meditate upon her position as it has especial warning for the last days. Her leaving of Sodom appears to have been due to the personal influence of Lot her husband, yet ultimately she failed to have that personal desire to obey God. It would not be pushing the type too far to suggest that the wives of latter day believers may feel that they can enter the Kingdom in the spiritual shadow of their husbands. One cannot help wondering whether she left Ur not through personal response to the promises but because the others were leaving. Doubtless her husband's uncle Abraham would have led her and the whole family in regular prayer and meditation during the journey towards Canaan. But somehow the reality of the God of Israel was never allowed to touch her inner being, and the years of the soft life in Sodom would have sealed her spiritual state. It is hard to avoid making the point that many of us may be in a similar position.

Gen. 19:14 RVmg. brings out the likely immediate background to her decision. Lot's sons in law "were to marry" his daughters. The Lord too perceived that they were marrying and giving in marriage the very day the flood came, and He pointed out the similarities with the Sodom situation (Lk. 17:27-29). Could it not be that the very day of the double wedding, they had to leave? With all the build up to the wedding, Lot and his wife would so wanted to have stayed just another day to see the wedding of their two daughters. It is to the girls credit that they both left. But Lot's wife had invested so much in it emotionally that she just had to look back.

19:27 *Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before Yahweh*- He went there to see whether the destruction had happened, whether in fact

ten righteous had been found there. He went there in faith, responding to the Angel's words. And he found they had come true. Remember that Abraham was informed of the promised destruction of Sodom by the Angel just after the same Angel had promised the conception and birth of Isaac. It's as if the short term fulfilment of the Angel's words was encouragement that the longer term Angelic prediction would likewise happen; and the yet longer term fulfilment of the promises would also occur. We too find the Father operating in a similar way with us. We are given short term experiences of faith rewarded to encourage our faith in longer term outcomes.

19:28 *He looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and looked, and saw that the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace*- Of Gog's destruction it is written: "I will rain upon him... great hailstones, fire and brimstone" (Ez. 38:22), associating latter day Gog with Sodom. At the same time, Gog and his supporters will be fighting each other (Ez. 38:21), clearly connecting with Zechariah's prophecy that the local surrounding invaders of the last days will do the same (and cp. Jud. 7:22). God's pleading against Gog with these things is the language of Joel 3:2, again about the destruction of Israel's latter day Arab enemies. The Hebrew word for 'locust' in Joel is almost identical to 'Gog'. All this results in an association between the latter day invaders, the Sodomites, Gog and the northern invader. This prepares the way for the view that " the beast" is a symbolic epitome of all Israel's enemies.

It is to be expected, therefore, that the fall of Babylon chronicled in Rev. 18 is shot through with allusions back to the Sodom record. The following are the more evident points of contact:

Babylon (in Rev.)	Sodom
"I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore" (Babylon); 17:2	Cp. God showing Abraham the judgment of Sodom.
The beast supporting Babylon "was and is not and shall ascend"; 17:8	Sodom and surrounding cities were strong, then overrun by Abraham, then revived.
"Her sins have reached unto Heaven, God hath remembered her iniquities"; 18:5	"The cry of Sodom... is great because their sin is very grievous ... the cry of it is come unto me" (Gen. 18:20,21)

"She hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously"; 18:7	"Pride... fulness of bread" (Ez. 16:49)
"Utterly burned with fire"; 18:8	'Sodom' = 'burning'.
"Her plagues... death... and famine"; 18:8	"He overthrew all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground" (cp. "famine"; Gen. 19:25).
"The great city... great Babylon"; 16:19	The city of Sodom.
"There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven" (16:21)	"The Lord rained upon Sodom... brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen.19:24).
"They shall see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off for the fear of her torment (18:9,10)	Abraham standing far away and seeing the smoke of Sodom's burning indicates that the surrounding kings did likewise (Gen. 19:28).
Merchants suffered through Babylon's fall (18:11-19)	Sodom was a trading centre (Lk. 17:28)
" ...a great millstone cast into the sea ... thus with violence shall... Babylon... be found no more at all" (18:21)	Sodom now appears to be submerged in the Dead Sea, to be found no more.
"Her smoke rose up" (19:3)	"Sodom... the land of the plain... the smoke of the country went up" (19:28)

We have reasoned that Lot's call out of Sodom represents how the Angels will call us out of this present evil world. Indeed, our Lord said that Sodom represents the world

just prior to the second coming (Lk. 17:28). The evident connections with latter day Babylon would suggest that 'Babylon' too represents the world of the last days; " Come out of her my people" (Rev. 18:4) therefore refers to the Angel's plea to us at the second coming, in addition to any previous historical reference it may have to the Catholic apostasy. The call for the first century Jews to leave Rome or for true believers to come out of apostate systems were pointers towards the ultimate fulfilment of these words, which will be in our leaving this life at the behest of the Angel who comes to call us away. Our obedience then will be the summation of all the previous decisions God's people have made to 'come out' from the 'world' in its various forms.

If 'Babylon' refers specifically to the powers surrounding Israel, it is possible to see Sodom representing the world under Arab control in the last days, offering great material wealth. Yet the obvious Biblical basis for the language of "come out of her my people" is in the many references to Israel being called on to leave the soft life of Babylon and return to the land during the restoration (e.g. Zech. 2:6,7). In this there is a remarkable similarity with Sodom. The Jews in Babylon maintained their separateness, and yet became heavily involved in the government of Babylon (as witness Daniel and his friends, along with profane history). This is parallel to Lot's position in Sodom. Yet the prosperity of Babylon made the Jews disinclined to leave it in order to go to Jerusalem, as Lot had a similar disinclination. And the easy life of the present world will also seem a greater attraction to the unworthy of the new Israel, when the Angel calls them to go to Jerusalem to meet their Lord.

19:29 *It happened, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the middle of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived*- The situation has many connections with the flood, where God likewise "remembered Noah" and saved a remnant from the total destruction which came (Gen. 8:1). 'Remembering' a person can be read as an idiom for responding to their prayers. Abraham's intercessory prayer in Gen. 18 apparently failed- Sodom was destroyed, and his condition of ten righteous in the city was not met. But the essence of his prayer was 'Please save my righteous nephew Lot'. And that was heard. Just as the essence of our prayers is heard. And here we have a case of a weak believer being saved from condemnation by the prayers of a third party (as Mk. 2:5). This is why the prophets say that Judah and Jerusalem would have been as Sodom- were it not for the intercession of a righteous remnant. They were the seed of Abraham, praying and believing in his spirit.

We learn from this verse that Lot had lived in the cities of the plain, until he eventually settled in Sodom. This adds to the impression of a steady slide downwards in his spirituality. It was only by taking all his wealth and family away from him, until he ended up living as a caveman, that he could be saved. Such is the terrible power of materialism and the soft life.

The days of Sodom are to be read as types of our last days. Thus in the type of the last days, the prayers and loving spiritual concern of the faithful remnant really can have an effect on the salvation of our weaker brethren. Note that Abraham's prayer that Sodom would be saved if ten righteous were found there, was not answered; but God knew the real spirit of his prayer, that Lot should be saved, and that God's justice should be upheld in not destroying the righteous with the wicked. It was this which God recognized and answered, even though Abraham had not specifically verbalized those thoughts in prayer. Our true spiritual love for our brethren, expressed in such intense prayer, will likewise be heard in these last days.

The record of Lot's leaving of Sodom (a remarkable type of our 'exodus' at the second coming) has the repeated hallmark of 'haste'. This is found repeated in the record of both the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea. They were told, "You shall eat it in haste" (Ex. 12:11); "they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry" because " the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste" (Ex. 12:39,33). Lot was "sent out" of Sodom by the hastening of the angels. It may be that in some cases our angels will hasten us to leave through their influencing of the surrounding nations (Egypt), rather than through their physical presence.

19:30 *Lot went up out of Zoar and lived in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to live in Zoar*- Again, we see Lot being brought back to the obedience he should have made originally. He had been told to flee to the mountain, and now he does so of his own volition. His fearing to live in Zoar was really another lack of faith- in the Angelic promise that Zoar would not be destroyed.

He lived in a cave with his two daughters- This is a picture of his absolute poverty, having been plunged from wealthy affluence to cave dwelling.

19:31 *The firstborn said to the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in to us in the way of all the earth*- There were still plenty of men in the *eretz*, and Zoar was still intact, protected by the promised Angelic deliverance of that city for the sake of one man's intercession, Lot. See on :36.

19:32 *Come, let's make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve our father's seed*- Incest was likely commonplace in Sodom, and the young women were still influened by it, although saved by grace. And yet as with Lot offering his daughters to the men of Sodom to gang rape, in order to protect the Angelic visitors- so here too, the misbehaviour is not purely sensual but is given some wider spiritual justification, For the women considered that there were now no other human beings alive (:31) after the dramatic destruction of Sodom. They were arguing that they had to do this in order to preserve the human race. And so again, the nature of Lot's sin against them is reflected in the nature of how they sin against him. Simple faith, trust in God, would have saved Lot and his daughters from their sins.

19:33 *They made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father. He didn't know when she lay down, nor when she arose*- We wonder how this could quite have been the case. To achieve ejaculation when so drunk that there is a memory blackout, and for both women to conceive within 24 hours of each other after only one act of intercourse... all seems a straining of physical credibility. It could be that we have here an example of human perception being stated, without any footnote to the effect that 'this is just how they liked to see it and present it'; we have plenty of examples of this kind of thing when we consider the language of demons and exorcism in the New Testament.

19:34 *It came to pass on the next day, that the firstborn said to the younger, Behold, I lay last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine again tonight. You go in, and lie with him, that we may preserve our father's seed*- As noted on :33, the physical likelihood of conception occuring from one act of intercourse with a man so drunk that he suffers memory blackout, and both sisters conceiving within 24 hours of each other... is so unlikely that we get the impression that we are reading the agreed version of events which the family agreed to publicize. The simple fact may be that seeing Lot thought little of offering those girls for sex to a gang who wanted to rape his guests... he didn't see too much wrong with sleeping with them himself.

19:35 *They made their father drink wine that night also. The younger went and lay with him. He didn't know when she lay down, nor when she got up*- There are strong similarities with Noah getting drunk and apparently being involved in some incestuous sex at the time. It is a sad anticlimax to the life of a man who did show spirituality and faith, despite so much weakness. His life almost comes to this end purposefully, in order to highlight the amazing grace of the statement that in the end, Lot was counted righteous, will be saved, and is to be remembered for how much he detested the immorality of Sodom (2 Pet. 2:7,8). The contrast is so severe that we are driven by it to accept the power of Divine grace.

19:36 *Thus both of Lot's daughters were with child by their father*- I have suggsted on :33-35 that those verses are a transcript of the agreed version of events distributed by the family. Perhaps this is the force of the word "Thus", as if to say, "This is the explanation offered as to how Lot's daughters were with child by their father". But this doesn't have to mean that it actually happened as they said; the girls' complaint that there were no males to marry was also untrue, as noted on :31.

19:37 *The firstborn bore a son, and named him Moab. He is the father of the Moabites to this day*- "Moab" = 'begotten of my father'.

19:38 *The younger also bore a son, and called his name Ben Ammi. He is the father of the children of Ammon to this day*- 'Son of my own people'; and "Ammon" means "tribal", with the implication "inbred". "To this day" again reminds us the initial purpose of the Pentateuch was to explain to Israel in the wilderness the origins of the peoples with whom they were coming into contact as they approached Canaan.

GENESIS CHAPTER 20

20:1 *Abraham travelled from there toward the land of the South, and lived between Kadesh and Shur. He lived as a foreigner in Gerar*- Locating where these places were is not as simple as looking at a "map of Abraham's journeys". The idea may well be that Gerar was "between Kadesh and Shur", the two clauses being in parallel; although that is not how the locations are presented on most maps. In this case, "lived" [Heb. 'settled down'] is parallel with the different Hebrew word translated "lived as a foreigner", or better 'lived temporarily', 'lived as one passing through'. In this case, a powerful lesson emerges: that no matter how stable our living place may appear, even if we lived in the house we were born in all our lives, it is still a passing through, as a foreigner, just temporarily- because the true permanence is yet to come, when the promises to Abraham are fulfilled. See on Gen. 21:34.

20:2 *Abraham said about Sarah his wife, She is my sister. Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah*- Gerar was the very place where Isaac also lied about his wife. Abraham had previously been rebuked for doing the very same thing in Gen. 12; but he failed to learn the lesson. Indeed this time he excuses himself by saying that he regularly did this (:13). Abraham like Lot is presented as a man of consistently weak faith and behaviour; and yet he believed God at His word, that he would really be saved, and showed that in the stellar act of obedience in being prepared to offer Isaac. He believed, and demonstrated that faith by that work; but much of the rest of his life isn't presented as being very full of faith. And in this sense he is indeed the father of the faithful- we who likewise are weak, so weak; and yet cling on to God's promise of final salvation, and with a gun at our head, act accordingly.

Abraham's behaviour at this point is particularly awful because Sarah was surely pregnant with the child of promise. Her rejuvenation had made her physically attractive to Abimelech despite her age. At Gen. 17:21 there were 12 months to the birth of Isaac ("My covenant I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year"). By Gen. 18:10, there were 9 months to the birth of Isaac: "I will certainly return to you when the season comes round. Behold, Sarah your wife will have a son". And immediately this incident in Gerar is over, Sarah gives birth (Gen. 21:2). It is natural for all of creation to be protective of the pregnant mother of your child. But Abraham says he fears dying for her. He presents as deeply faithless and selfish. “They will kill *me* and

let *you* live" (Gen. 12:12) matches his concern here that he not die for his wife. He had clearly not learnt the lesson. If she, as a pregnant woman, was accepted into another man's harem, the consequences for her and the child could have been fatal. For the king would have slept with her and then discovered she was pregnant with another man's child. However it could be that they weren't aware Sarah was pregnant, and lacked the faith to believe she was. In which case, after they realized she had been pregnant at this time, they would have marvelled the more at God's grace.

Abraham is presented as absolutely selfish. Just as in Gen. 12:13 he asks her to lie about their marriage "that it may go well with me because of you". And yet God allowed that to happen: "And it went well with Abram because of her" (Gen. 12:16). Like unbelieving Israel in Egypt, he came up out of Egypt with great wealth. And Abraham at this point also receives great material blessing (:14,16). Just as did Isaac when he lied about his wife, also in Gerar. This all gives the lie to the idea that people get blessed when they are good, and lack of material blessing is due to sin. God's goodness rather is intended to lead to repentance.

As in Gen. 12, Abraham's fear and deceit is all an outcome of his *lack* of faith in the promises given to him. And yet Abraham is held up as an example of faith in those promises. Sarah conceived by faith, and Abraham believed the promise that she would. But now they both appear to have collapsed in faith. Either that, or their much lauded "faith" was accompanied with unbelief at the same time. We see here a radically different definition of faith than that which is presented in standard 'religion'. Faith means somehow holding on to trust in God's promise, despite ups and downs, indeed very low moments of loss of that faith. With the exception of the Lord Jesus, human faith / trust in God is not total, nor is faith absolute. It goes up and down over time, and unbelief can exist at the same time as belief; "I believe, help my unbelief" is our cry. It was however by faith that Sarah conceived and bore a child: "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11). And yet her behaviour here, and that of Abraham, seems to lack much faith. Perhaps after the salvation from Abimelech by grace, their faith became very strong at the time Isaac was born. Or it could be that despite their surface level fear and unbelief, they also had a strong faith- and God focused upon that.

20:3 *But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, Behold, you are a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken. For she is a man's wife*- God told Abimelech that he would surely die, with evident allusion to God's judgment of Adam; no conditions were stated. But later, it became apparent that the death penalty was conditional upon his not releasing Sarah (:7). Prophetic statements are made in the

Bible without the conditions being mentioned; more prophecy is conditional than we might imagine at first encounter with the Bible text.

Abimelech was "a dead man" for taking Sarah, as if although he was alive, for that sin he was in God's eyes condemned and dead. But that verdict for that case was changed by his change of the situation. The unfaithful now walk naked (Rev. 3:17); but they will do so in the final condemnation of Rev. 16:15. They can walk naked *now* and repent, clothe themselves so as to cover the nakedness of condemnation which they now have; but not then.

20:4 *Now Abimelech had not come near her*- Repeatedly, the surrounding pagan world is portrayed as being of more integrity than the Abraham family. The conclusion is that the people of God believe in His grace, but sadly aren't necessarily good people; although they ought to be.

He said, Lord, will you kill even a righteous nation?- This was precisely the reasoning of Abraham with God in chapter 18. "Righteous" is the same Hebrew word used by Abraham in Gen. 18:23. Maybe Abimelech had heard of this and was influenced by it, even though he must've thought Abraham was good at his theory but hardly walked the talk in practice. We too must see beyond the hypocrisy of others and be prepared to accept that even they have something to teach us. Or perhaps the similarity is in order to demonstrate the parallels between Abraham and Abimelech; in order to point up the fact that Abraham was not much better than the surrounding chieftains, apart from the fact that he believed in God's grace to save him. And that made all the difference. Abimelech is reasoning that the sinner here is Abraham and / or Sarah; and he like Abraham is interceding for his people as Abraham mediated for Lot. And Abimelech's prayer was heard; Abraham was not destroyed because of Abimelech's intercession. Just as Lot was not destroyed because of Abraham's intercession. The whole incident serves to teach Abraham that despite his peak of faith, devotion and intercession for Lot, he himself is a sinner in need of mediation.

20:5 *Didn't he tell me, 'She is my sister?' She, even she herself, said, 'He is my brother'. In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands have I done this*- Despite this innocence, he was but "a dead man" because of his intentions to commit a sin of ignorance (:3). We see here how sensitive God is to human sin; even the intention to sin in ignorance nets death. This gives backdrop and perspective to the vast extent of His grace in forgiving and saving sinful man. And we see too how God still notices and measures sin even amongst Gentiles [cp. the sin of the Amorites reaching a certain point].

20:6 *God said to him in the dream, Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also withheld you from sinning against me. Therefore I didn't allow you to touch her*- God will strengthen the heart / spirit of those who try to be strong (Ps. 27:14;

31:24). He can even, somehow, withhold men from sinning, and keep us from falling (Ps. 19:13; 1 Sam. 25:39 s.w.; Jude 24). We should therefore have no essential objection to the idea of the Lord granting us His Spirit, in the sense of His thinking, His heart / mind. For the gift of the Spirit, the blessing to Abraham, is not just forgiveness, but to turn us away from our iniquities (Acts 3:25,6).

20:7 *Now therefore, restore the man's wife. For he is a prophet, and he will pray for you, and you will live. If you don't restore her, know for sure that you will die, you, and all who are yours*- There seems here to be a connection between prayer and God's word being within us- for exactly because Abraham was a prophet, therefore he could pray for Abimelech. Faith comes from our appreciation of the word (Rom. 10:17), and faith is the basis of answered prayer (Mt. 21:22)- to the point that we believe we have received the answer the moment we pray (as in Ps. 56:9). God cried to Israel in the prophetic word, but they would not hear; and so when they cried to Him, He also did not hear (Zech. 7:13). If the Lord's words dwell in us, we will ask what *we* will, and it will be done. Yet only if we ask according to *God's* will can we receive our requests (Jn. 15:7 cp. 1 Jn. 5:14). The implication is that if the word dwells in us, our will becomes that of the Father, and therefore our requests, our innermost desires, are according to His will, and are therefore granted. Therefore the word was what directed and motivated David's regular daily prayers (Ps. 119:164); they weren't standard repetitions of the same praises or requests, but a reflection of his Biblical meditation. He asks God to hear his prayers because He keeps God's word (Ps. 119:145,173).

The language is alluded to in Job 42:10, where Job prays for his friends and they are saved; and later in the Pentateuch we will read of Moses praying for Pharaoh, and having the possibility of obtaining forgiveness for him. Forgiveness is likewise predicated upon the faith and intercession of third parties in Mk. 2:5. This opens up the vista of huge and constant work for us all in praying for others.

"And all who are yours" may seem extreme, a kind of guilt by association. But that principle isn't supported in the Bible. They would've died because they knew Sarah was Abraham's wife, and hadn't spoken out against their master in this matter. Keeping silent about wrongdoing is therefore seen by God as making us culpable for the wrong being done. We think of the price paid by John the Baptist for speaking out against Herod's wrongdoing.

20:8 *Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ear. The men were very scared*- As noted on :7, their knowledge of the proposed wrongdoing made them culpable if they didn't speak out against the King if he still went ahead and did it.

20:9 *Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, What have you done to us?*- This question is always used to elicit confession of sin (note Gen. 3:13; 4:10). It is found in

the wife-sister incidents in Gen. 12:18 ["Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that you have done to me? Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife?"] and Gen. 26:10 ["Abimelech said, What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us!"]. The similarities between the incidents is clearly intentional, in order to demonstrate how the family of faith simply didn't repent and keep repeating the same moral failures- and yet were accepted because of their faith.

How have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done things to me that ought not to be done!- Abimelech noted that he was "a dead man" (:3) already, and therefore he was guilty of a great sin already- the sin of intending to commit a sin of ignorance. He fully accepted God's standards of judgment and morality in a way which Abraham did not; for he had now multiple times (:13) led Sarah and her suitors into potential sin. Abimelech did this just once, and in ignorance, and is truly penitent and sensitive to God's view of the matter; but Abraham was not. This is the more commendable when we realize that the pagan gods and idols knew nothing of this kind of sensitivity to potential sin.

20:10 *Abimelech said to Abraham, What did you see, that you have done this thing?*- Abimelech is angry that Abraham has led him into sin (:9 also), and he focuses upon that, rather than the more obvious comment that Abraham was hardly a good husband to Sarah. The Lord likewise taught that one aspect of sexual failure is that it can cause others in some cases to commit adultery (Mt. 5:32).

20:11 *Abraham said, Because I thought, 'Surely the fear of God is not in this place. They will kill me for my wife's sake'*- As noted above, all Abimelech says shows that he did in fact fear God. So the record presents Abraham as wrong and spiritually inferior to Abimelech on some points. And in fact Abraham is saved thanks to Abimelech's intercession for him. Abraham's words appear to be purposefully recorded in such a way as to beg the observation that according to the New Testament, the husband should die for his wife's sake. Abraham is consistently presented as weak and with the fear that comes from lack of faith.

20:12 *Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife*- "Iscah" in Gen. 11:29 is understood by some as another name for Sarah, seeing that she and Abram had the same fathers. The question remains as to why she is given a different name there; and yet if she isn't Sarah, then we wonder why one woman should be singled out for mention, when hardly any other women apart from Sarah are mentioned in the genealogies of Gen. 10 and 11. Such behaviour was condemned under the law of Moses; but we are presented with a man who was in an ongoing situation which broke the law, who attained a righteousness greater than the law. Never was there any hint that Abram should have ended his marriage to Sarah because she was his half sister; and this may have significance for

those who consider that marital failure must be put right by separation from current partners.

God clearly and simply promised to make a great nation out of him. But there was a time when his faith in this wavered, and he lied about his wife Sarah, exposing her to great risk, because he feared losing his life more than his wife. She was his half sister (Gen. 20:12), and so he said she was his sister, not his wife... we are left to imagine the complicated thought processes and contorted reasoning that took place within him before finally doing this. He could justify it, apparently. But he would have been better holding to a simple faith in God's clear statements.

Gen. 20:12,13 could be translated as meaning that Abraham married Sarah at the time he left Ur: "She [Sarah] is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife when it happened that God caused me to wander from my father's house; at that time, I said to her, 'This is your kindness which you shall show to me. Everywhere that we go, say of me, He is my brother'". In this case we see that Abraham didn't at all leave his family- he married his half sister! In doing so he was repeating the behaviour of his brother in marrying close family relatives- Nahor married his brother Haran's daughter (Gen. 11:29). They left Ur and went to live in Haran- and it's surely not coincidence that they had a brother of the same name, Haran. Surely there was a connection between the man and the city- and that's where they went to live. This was hardly the individuation from family members which God had required of Abraham.

20:13 *It happened, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is your kindness which you shall show to me. Everywhere that we go, say of me, He is my brother'-* Abraham's weak attitude to leaving Ur is reflected much later too, when he tells Abimelech that "the gods caused me to wander from my father's house" (Gen. 20:13). The Hebrew *ta'ah* ("wander") has the idea of wandering aimlessly (Gen. 21:14; 37:15) and even sinning (Is. 53:6). It wasn't a very nice term to use about God's providence. That seems to me to be a believer in a moment of weakness speaking about his faith in very worldly terms, as one pagan to another. He doesn't see his leaving of his father's house as obedience to Divine command and promise; but rather he portrays that response as his being somehow manipulated by the gods, picked up and taken out of the situation. See on Gen. 11:31. The LXX has "when God brought me forth out of the house of my father"; even in this case, we see the emphasis upon God bringing him out to separation from his relatives, rather than his obedience to the call to do so. By saying this, he would be growing closer to appreciating grace; that God caused him to be obedient when he of himself was not. This is the same work of the Spirit which continues in our days. The Gentile believers are in this sense 'made obedient' by the Spirit's work (Rom. 15:18; 1 Pet. 1:2). Truly our salvation is not of works of obedience, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:9).

Abraham's comment that God caused him to go astray from his father's house would likely have been understood by those who first heard it as a negative reference to God- for the word "gone astray" is used of a lost sheep (Jer. 50:6; Ez. 34:4,16; Ps. 119:176); and it was understood that "A bad shepherd causes a sheep to go astray from the flock because he is careless". Perhaps God recognized Abraham's failure by instructing His people to confess every year that "An Aramean gone astray was my father" (Dt. 26:5). I take this to be a reference to Abraham and not Jacob; for it seems that the people of Aram migrated to Ur, and that Abraham having settled in Padan Aram, Abraham could also for that reason be called an Aramean. So Israel were asked to remember that their forefather Abraham had gone astray both literally and spiritually; and thus Abraham's God was a God of grace, and was thereby their God too.

Our own calling out of this world is likewise a matter of God's grace; He wishes to save us, and leads us out of situations and into new ones, when we ourselves ought to have made the moves of our own volition. He makes us wander from our father's house (Gen. 20:13). This is all part of the "blessing" to Abraham, which involves turning us away from sin (Acts 3:25,26). God was the one who brought about Abraham's obedience. "From thence [Haran]... *God* removed him into (Canaan)" (Acts 7:4 R.V.).

"This righteousness thou shalt perform to me" (LXX) sounds as if Abraham kidded himself and Sarah that lying was a form of righteousness. And so often in the heat of moments we too are tempted to justify wrong behaviour as being necessary for the cause of righteousness.

Abraham is commended for being a wanderer and sojourner; but this meant he was constantly in new situations. And according to his own words here, he lied each time about his wife. But righteousness was imputed to him, and God focuses upon the positive, as we should with others.

We learn here that Abraham's lying about Sarah had been habitual and frequent; and he had refused to learn the lesson from the incident of Gen. 12 when he lied about Sarah in Egypt. Dishonesty is presented as a characteristic of Abraham and his family. In this light we come to consider his statements as he takes Isaac to be slain: "You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you" (Gen. 22:5). He fully intended to sacrifice Isaac. So Abraham expected to return to the servants without Isaac, but he says "we will return" in order to cover his intention of killing Isaac. He lied- rather than having faith that Isaac would be killed by him and then immediately resurrected. And yet he also believed, and his obedience and trust that somehow things would work out is commended and noted by God. He likewise effectively lied to Isaac in answering the question "But where is the sheep for the burnt offering?" (Gen. 22:7). It was by God's gracious hand that these white lies became prophetic.

All through, we see God eager to detect the faith and spirituality in His people which lay beneath their failures. We should be comforted by this, and view His people likewise. Sarah is commended for obeying Abraham (1 Pet. 3:5,6), and yet her obedience to his commands is only recorded in Genesis in the context of obeying his command to lie. In order to pander to the weakness of his faith and his selfishness. But that obedience is seen by God as commendable. Likewise her mockery of the Angelic promise of pregnancy included the phrase "my lord..." about Abraham; and this too is read so positively. She is a pattern for us in our submission to Jesus as Lord / kurios; when we too are far from totally respectful to Him as we should be. And in fact, contrary to the idealized vision of 1 Pet. 3:5,6, it is all actually the other way around- Abraham hearkens to Sarah, he is submissively obedient to her, to do the wrong things: "Abraham hearkened to the voice of Sarah" (Gen. 16:2) and sleeps with her servant Hagar; he obeys her command to cast Hagar out into the desert (Gen. 16:6), and the Angel confirms this: "Whatever Sarah says to you, obey her voice" (Gen. 21:12).

We can better understand how Abraham and Sarah are held up as examples of sinners to whom righteousness is imputed, by grace but through their faith, however weak that faith was at times, and despite its coexistence with unbelief and unspirituality.

20:14 *Abimelech took sheep and cattle, male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored Sarah his wife, to him*- Abraham ought to have apologized to Abimelech. But instead Abimelech gives him a present. We see here an example of grace; and how the unbelieving world is favourably contrasted with the family of faith at this time. The same happened in chapter 12. This is all the spirit of going the second mile, offering the undergarment if someone takes your jacket. It leaves us with the upper hand.

20:15 *Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before you. Dwell where it pleases you*- We would rather expect Abimelech to consider Abraham a hypocrite and leave the area. But rather he seems to want a man of the true God living amongst him; he wasn't fazed by personal hypocrisy, but saw through to the higher truths.

20:16 *To Sarah he said, Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver*- As happened in Genesis 12, and with Isaac when he repeats this sin, the sin is followed by material blessing. This for all time ends the myth that God gives material blessing as a kind of 'well done' for good behaviour. He at times pour out His grace at our weakest moments, as often seen in the lives of the Abraham family. The sum was large- a way of redeeming himself by atonement money from the sin of taking another man's wife. Silver was associated with cleansing properties. It was a 'covering of the eyes' in the sense that in the eyes of the world, he was now exonerated. Again we see the pagan world revealed as being more conscionable than the family of faith.

Or it could be that Abimelech considered that the infertility of his women to have been the result of the 'evil eye' of Sarah, as such beliefs were common- that an evil person looking at someone could impart a curse. But his gift of 1000 pieces of silver would cover her evil eye, so she would not do this again and his women would become fertile again.

Behold, it is for you an adorning of the eyes before all that are with you. In front of all you are reproved- Sarah was “reproved” by King Abimelech for going along with Abraham’s lie about her not being his wife. And yet Kings were reproved for her sake, and were not allowed to do anything harmful to her (Ps. 105:14)! And Abraham reproves Abimelech later- for something Abimelech claimed he had not done (Gen. 21:25). The repeat of the word “reprove” is surely meant to indicate that here is an example of Abraham and Sarah being counted righteous because of their faith- when clearly they were not wholly righteous. Abraham, the man who had to be reproved, was used by God to reprove the man who had reproved him... it would have sounded very hypocritical to Abraham’s neighbours. Yet the point was, that God saw him as being righteous. See on Gen. 26:11.

Concerning not outwardly "adorning", the Greek text in in 1 Pet. 3:4-6 is alluding to the Septuagint of Gen. 20:16, which says that Abimelech told Sarah that he had given Abraham many silver pieces "that these may therefore be for thee to adorn thy countenance"; or in another version of the LXX, "those shall be to thee for the price of thy countenance", as if to say 'this is the cost of being a pretty woman'; the suggestion would be that it was the payment for whoredom, although she had not slept with him. Thus Abimelech is speaking sarcastically (note how he calls Abraham "your brother", referring to Sarah and Abraham's family relationship). It was a custom for married women to wear their silver pieces on their face (cp. Lk. 15:8). Presumably she had taken these off, in order to appear single and sexually available. Abimelech is saying: "I've given your so-called 'brother' Abraham 1000 silver pieces, so just make sure you wear them in future and don't lead any more men into sin". And what does the Spirit comment? "Thus she was reproved". Her willingness to pretend she was single and not refusing the sexual advances of Abimelech can only be seen in a negative light from the Genesis record. She lacked continued faith in the promises of a seed, and she disregarded God's marriage principles for the sake of an all too convenient 'obedience' to her husband. It may have been that she regarded her inability to have children as partly his fault (cp. the deadness of Abraham's body, Rom. 4:19). The thing is, she had already shown enough faith to conceive (Heb. 11:11), and presumably the effect of this was seen in the physical rejuvenation of her body, which made her so attractive to men, although she was 90 years old. Both Sarah and Abraham had shown faith, she was living with her own body as the constant reminder of God's faithfulness, and yet in the incident with Abimelech she wavered and had to be reproved. Yet she is seen in a positive light by the Spirit; her lack of wearing ornaments, even though it was to show she was single, is commended; as is her obedience to her husband, even though she

was reproved for this. The point is, like all of us, her motives were probably mixed. She did want to be truly obedient to Abraham, she did want to have a meek spirit rather than outward adorning. Her wrong motives surfaced, and were rebuked. But God saw deep inside her heart, and saw the good motives, and drags them out and holds them up as an example.

"And speak the truth in all things" (LXX) would be a well deserved and stinging rebuke to her; for even today in Semitic cultures, to call someone a liar to their face is an insult.

20:17 *Abraham prayed to God. God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his female servants, and they bore children*- See on Gen. 45:5. This is the language of Job praying for his friends; see on :7. Abraham's weakness leads Abimelech's wives to become barren; yet through the faith and prayer of an undoubtedly spiritually weak Abraham, their fertility is restored. Again, God was teaching Abraham through circumstances. It could also be reasoned from Gen. 20:6 that God weakened Abimelech's body so that he had no sexual desire for Sarah- and again, this was to teach Abraham the impotent old man that virility and conception is a gift which God can give and take at ease. The wonderful thing is that all these lessons were taught to Abraham through the incident of lying about and betraying his wife, which shows the weakness of his faith in God's promises. The way God works with and through human weakness is awesome.

20:18 *For Yahweh had closed up tight all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham's wife*- Time and again Biblical history demonstrates that sins of silence and omission are just as fatal as sins of public, physical commission. Sarah omitted to say that Abraham was her husband; and was reproved. Abraham's lie about Sarah and unfaithfulness to his marriage covenant with her became a source of God's blessing and the curing of Abimelech's wife from infertility (I read her infertility as a state that existed prior to the incident with Abraham). The righteousness of God becomes available to us exactly because we have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23,24). God works out His plan of salvation actually through man's disobedience rather than his obedience. As Paul puts it again, we are concluded in unbelief, that God may have mercy (Rom. 11:32). It was and is the spirit of Joseph, when he comforted his brothers: "Now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). And again, speaking about the sin of Israel in rejecting Christ: "Their trespass means riches for the [Gentile] world" (Rom. 11:12).

GENESIS CHAPTER 21

21:1 *Yahweh visited Sarah as He had said, and Yahweh did to Sarah as He had spoken*- The double emphasis "As He had said... spoken" emphasizes the fulfilment of His word

of promise, and perhaps stands in contrast to her laughing in mockery at that same word. "Spoken" refers specifically to the spoken word; so the "Yahweh" in view is the Angel who had visited Sarah nine months previously. Angels can bear the Name of Yahweh, as can His Son, without being one and the same as God Himself.

21:2 *Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him*- It could be that the Divine visitation of :1 refers rather to God 'visiting His people' in the sense of getting involved with them and identifying with them, rather than a literal visit. This would mean that the conception was Yahweh visiting Sarah. But it's also possible that the visitation was in order to give Sarah both conception and childbirth at the same time. I suggest this because Paul writes of how Isaac was born after the Spirit, and Ishmael after the flesh (Gal. 4:29). Whilst Isaac was not the only begotten Son of God as the Lord was, all the same it is possible to argue from Paul's language that Isaac was somehow Divinely conceived, by the Spirit, and not as a result of "the flesh" as Ishmael was, i.e. Abraham having intercourse with Sarah. Whatever, her conception is attributed to the visitation of the same Angel who had appeared to her previously. In this case, we have yet another hint at the weakness of Abraham and Sarah's faith. They ought to have slept together, firmly believing the Angelic promise that they would have a child. But if Isaac was born after the Spirit and not after the flesh, we could draw the conclusion that they did not, and the conception and birth were of special Divine intervention, although the resulting child was miraculously of the seed of Abraham.

21:3 *Abraham called his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac*- The name was a reminder for all time that initially, Sarah had laughed at the promise of Isaac, and been rebuked for it (Gen. 18:12-15). The laughter of joy at his birth was memorialized in his name, but so was Sarah's terrible mocking laughter at God.

21:4 *Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him*- The circumcision of both Isaac and Ishmael is emphasized; they were both in covenant with God and thereby heirs of the promises, which were at different times made to them both. But Isaac held in with these things, whereas Ishmael pushed off to Egypt and despised them, as Esau was to do later.

21:5 *Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him*- This was 25 years after the first promise of a seed.

21:6 *Sarah said, God has made me laugh. Everyone who hears will laugh with me*- The same word is used of how Sarah had mockingly laughed at God at the news of Isaac's conception (Gen. 18:12-15). And we wonder whether her skepticism may still carry through here, as if to say: 'I can't believe this is for true, everyone who hears I bore a child will laugh their heads off in disbelief'. Sarah is saying 'I laughed / mocked when I

heard I was supposed to bear a child at 90, and frankly, who wouldn't have done, you would have laughed with me; and now it actually happened, laugh with me too'. This again is far from the paragon of virtuous faith that she is presented as in the New Testament. But Heb. 11:11 must be given its due weight- she did also believe, despite all this surface level disbelief and wrong self justification. We see here how righteousness was imputed on account of faith; and we see too how Sarah and Abraham are examples of faith in that they had *our kind of faith*- weak, incomplete, coexisting with disbelief. But they held on to that faith. And that is the point.

21:7 *She said, Who would have said to Abraham, that Sarah would nurse children! For I have borne him a son in his old age*- The answer to her question is "God". Only God would say such a humanly bizarre thing. Likewise Peter reasoned that if it was the Lord Jesus walking on the stormy lake, then the Lord would bid him come unto Him. Nobody else would think of making such an invitation. There is something uniquely challenging about God's way with us, and the possibilities which He alone perceives and seeks to make real for us. Job suffered an incredible 'run of bad luck', and concluded likewise that this was not chance, not 'Satan', but "Who, if not Him?".

21:8 *The child grew, and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned*- Weaning could take up to three or four years, which would make Ishmael 16 or 17 at this time, and not a toddler.

21:9 *Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking*- Ishmael was a mid teenager; and yet his behaviour was judged as sinful. Children and young people can and do sin, such is God's sensitivity to human failure. What he did to the toddler Isaac is called "persecution" (Gal. 4:29). So there may have been more to it than "mocking" a toddler. We observe however that Sarah too had mocked- and mocked God's promise (Gen. 18:12-15). The record carefully balances out the wrongdoing, to stress that it is not the case that Abraham and Sarah were *per se* more spiritual than others. "Mocking" translates the same Hebrew word translated "caressing" in a sexual context (Gen. 26:8), and when Potiphar's wife accuses Joseph of 'mocking' her (s.w. Gen. 39:14,17), she clearly has sexual behaviour in view. And it's used in a specifically sexual sense in Ex. 32:6, where the people worshipped the golden calf and then "rose up to play", interpreted in the New Testament as sexual immorality. This is why we read that Sarah "saw" rather than simply 'heard' the 'mocking'. It's therefore possible that Ishmael, the "wild donkey of a man", in some way sexually abused the child Isaac. He was now 'weaned' and 'the child had grown'. He may well have been between 3 and 6 years old. This highlights God's grace in hearing the cries of the teenage Ishmael as he lay dying of thirst in the desert, and how "God was with the boy as he grew up" (:20). Rather than seeing God as being mean to Ishmael, we can see him being blessed by a very great grace considering what he had done. Ishmael was 13

when Isaac was born, and weaning took place at any time from 3 to 7 years later. We see here how Ishmael, the teenage pedophile, pervert and sexual abuser was indeed rejected by God- and yet God seems to feel sorry even for those whom He has to reject. He shows Himself far more gracious than man, who would likely have left Ishmael to die in the scrubland, thinking 'and good riddance'. Even though we can infer that God struck Ishmael with some kind of heat stroke, so that his mother dragged the body of her child under some shade. She calls him at that age her "child" simply because your young adult child is always felt as your "child", especially when they are facing death or acute danger.

21:10 *Therefore she said to Abraham, Cast out this handmaid and her son! For the son of this handmaid will not be heir with my son Isaac!*- Sarah's screaming indignation can be well imagined. Consider which words were probably stressed most by her: "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman *shall not be* heir (just hear her voice!) with my son, even with Isaac" (Gen. 21:10). This is in harmony with her previous bitterness and aggression to Hagar and Abraham. But both Ishmael and Isaac had received circumcision, the token of the covenant, and identical promises were made to them both. Sarah was out of step with God's intentions. Her attitude in implying that Ishmael was not the seed is gently rebuked by God in his subsequent words to Abraham concerning Ishmael: "He *is* your seed" (:13). And yet Sarah's words are quoted in Gal. 4:30 as inspired Scripture! Here we see the wonder of the God with whom we deal, in the way in which He patiently bore with Sarah and Abraham. He saw through her anger, her jealousy, the pent up bitterness of a lifetime, and he saw her faith; or even counted righteousness to her, as He did to Abraham and Lot. And He worked through that screaming, angry woman to be His prophet. According to Gal. 4:30, God Himself spoke through her in those words, outlining a principle which has been true over the generations; that the son of the slave must be cast out, and that there must always be conflict between him and the true seed. Sarah in her time of child-birth is likened to us all as we enter the Kingdom, full of joy (Is. 54:1-4); and yet at that time she was eaten up with pride and joy that she could now triumph over her rival. And yet Sarah at that time is seen from a righteous perspective, in that she is a type of us as we enter the Kingdom. God's mercy to Sarah and Abraham is repeated to us daily.

"Cast out" is a word used elsewhere about divorce. Sarah's attitude here is altogether wrong; remember that it was her idea that Abraham should effectively marry Hagar and have a child by her. The contemporary laws were clear that if man got his slave girl pregnant, he must never divorce her. The law of Moses likewise was careful to allow divorce only for adultery. Hagar had done nothing wrong to Abraham. Her teenage son had apparently wronged baby Isaac. But that was no grounds for Abraham divorcing Hagar.

Apostate Israel are described in the very language of the adversaries / Satans of God's people. Because they acted like the world around them, from which they had been called out, they were ultimately judged by God as part of that world. Consider all the times when God's apostate people are recorded as acting in terms of their Arab cousins. Thus apostate Israel and the Jewish system were to be "cast out" (Jn. 12:31) just as Ishmael had been (Gen. 21:10). Indeed, Hagar and Ishmael are representative of Israel "after the flesh" and the earthly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:29,30).

21:11 *The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son*- It is stressed in the record that Ishmael was "his son". Abraham had other sons by Keturah, but clearly Ishmael had a special place for him; for he had been circumcised, and was therefore within the covenant. "Grievous" is the usual word for "evil" and has a definite moral connotation. In Abraham's opinion, he was being manipulated to do something morally wrong.

21:12 *God said to Abraham, Don't let it be grievous in your sight because of the boy, and because of your handmaid. In all that Sarah says to you, listen to her voice. For in Isaac will your seed be called*- What Sarah was proposing was indeed morally evil ("grievous", see on :11). But God asks Abraham not to take that guilt upon himself. I have argued on Gen. 16:11 that Ishmael means "God hears" because God heard Abraham's request that Ishmael might live before God in covenant relationship, and this was confirmed by Ishmael being circumcised as the token of the covenant and receiving the same promises as Isaac. It was a Divine observation that Isaac would be the one through whom the promised seed would come; rather than saying to the effect that 'Don't worry, you can throw Ishmael away, I'm against him and he's not in covenant with Me, but Isaac will be'.

So God asks Abraham not to take that guilt upon himself. There was wrong, but God is saying that in the end, Ishmael will survive and He has a potential purpose with him. But the higher level surely would've been for Abraham to refuse any part in this evil treatment of Hagar and Ishmael. It's a case of different levels and God's willingness to be sympathetic to those who feel they are caught up in a situational ethic... As we should be.

As discussed on Gen. 20:13, Abraham is presented as obedient to Sarah, whereas 1 Pet. 3:5,6 praises Sarah for being obedient to Abraham. We see here again how the Spirit in the New Testament seeks to present God's servant as positively as possible.

21:13 *I will also make a nation of the son of the handmaid, because he is your seed*- The promises to Ishmael are very similar to those to Isaac and the seed of Abraham; God is surely saying that sending Ishmael away didn't of itself mean that the promises could not apply to him. In this, God was as it were disallowing Sarah's desire to disinherit Ishmael. This confirms that the comment in :12 that Abraham's seed would be called in

Isaac is not saying that Ishmael was not Abraham's seed. He was, and the record often stresses that Ishmael was Abraham's son.

21:14 *Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder; and gave her the child, and sent her away-* There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1); Samuel (1 Sam. 15:12); David (1 Sam. 17:20; 29:11); Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chron. 29:20). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (2 Chron. 36:15; Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

There is a word play here, where the word *shawkam* occurs twice. Abraham "rose up early" (*shawkam*) in the morning, took bread, water and Hagar's child, and "laid [them] on her shoulder" *(shawkam*). I understand from this that Abraham really fellowshipped with the suffering laid upon Hagar; he did it with a very sad heart, feeling for Hagar to the point of realistic empathy.

Abraham's behaviour towards Hagar and Ishmael was actually illegal in terms of the near Eastern legal codes. Those of Lipit-Ishtar and Hammurabi, as well as the laws of Nuzi amongst the Hurrians, all specifically stated that a husband with a barren wife may take a concubine through whom he could have offspring, but if his wife then has children, he must not ever disinherit or expel from the family the concubine and her children (Angel Gonzales, *Abraham: Father of Believers* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) p. 74). Yet Abraham did exactly this, effectively casting out Ishmael and Hagar into the desert, to walk until they perished of heat exposure. Perhaps God's later demand of Abraham to sacrifice his son, "your son, your only son, Isaac" (Gen. 22:2), when he had other children apart from Isaac, was an implicit criticism of Abraham for having rejected Ishmael as his son; and he was asked to enter into the loss of a child, of how Hagar felt for her only son, as he had effectively sacrificed Ishmael to the desert.

She departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba- Abraham and Sarah had also been caused to wander by God (see on Gen. 20:13). Again the point is being made that the supposedly holy family were not radically different from Hagar and Ishmael. God wanted them too; but they chose to step out of God's program and return to Egypt.

21:15 *The water in the bottle was spent, and she cast the child under one of the bushes*- Travel in the desert was done by moving from well to well, rather like a light aircraft flies between beacons. The Bedouins only carry as much water as is required until they reach the next well. Hagar had apparently missed her way; or more likely, the Angel had closed her eyes from seeing the well, which is why when her eyes were "opened" she immediately saw the well (:19). Ishmael had been thirteen when Isaac was born, and they were cast out by Sarah when Isaac was weaned, which would likely have been at 3 or 4 years old. So Ishmael was a mid teenager. He apparently fainted because of the lack of water. Hagar tried to carry him, but unable to do so any longer, left him under a bush to die. This tragic situation was brought about not as punishment, but to attempt to intensify her relationship with God, in the hope she would now raise a Godly seed.

21:16 *She went and sat down opposite him, a good way off, about a bow shot away. For she said, Let me not see the death of the child. She sat over against him, and lifted up her voice, and wept*- Her voice of weeping was heard as "the voice of the boy" (:17). Ishmael was about to die and had likely lost consciousness. Our prayers can be heard as the prayers of others, which is how the Lord's prayer intercession for us is described in Rom. 8. The language however is similar to how God heard Israel's cry in Egypt. The cry of distress at a situation is read by God as prayer; it is our inner spirit or attitude which is read as prayer (Rom. 8). This is comfort for those who feel they cannot well verbalize things in prayer. God hears the spirit of our situation rather than the verbalization.

21:17 *God heard the voice of the boy*- As noted on :16, the voice or situation of someone is heard by God as if it is their prayer; and there is also the possibility that the prayer of another for us, in this case Hagar (:16), is read as prayer by God.

The angel of God called to Hagar out of the sky, and said to her, What ails you, Hagar? Don't be afraid. For God has heard the voice of the boy where he is- The fact we read a phrase like "the Angel of elohim" here suggests that individual angels can be messengers of other Angel-elohim, and that there is a degree of hierarchy in the Heavenly organization.

21:18 *Get up, lift up the boy, and hold him in your arm. For I will make him a great nation*- Ishmael was around 16 or 17. The lifting up was therefore the language of sacrifice- for that is the idiom used for sacrifice and prayer. Again we see a parallel with Isaac, whose parent was also commanded to lift up his beloved son to God. As she looked into the eyes of her helpless, dying son, probably unconscious or delirious, it would have seemed such a juxtaposition with such a great promise. And so it was with the promise repeated to the helpless baby Isaac. But we are brought to know our weakness, that God's grace might be the more revealed. As discussed above, we see here how the passionate prayer of the mother for her delinquent, punk, abusive son was still

answered. The young man is described as a boy or child, perhaps because we are being given the perspective of how his mother saw him. Yoour suffering adult child is always 'your little boy'. And thereby we again sense the sympathy of God for Hagar.

21:19 *God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, filled the bottle with water, and gave the boy drink*- See on Ps. 119:18. I suggested on :15 that travel in the desert was done by moving from well to well, rather like a light aircraft flies between beacons. The Bedouins only carry as much water as is required until they reach the next well. Hagar had apparently missed her way; or more likely, the Angel had closed her eyes from seeing the well, which is why when her eyes were "opened" she immediately saw the well.

21:20 *God was with the boy, and he grew. He lived in the wilderness, and as he grew up he became an archer*- We read in :22 that God was also "with" Abraham. We are being taught that Ishmael was potentially just as much within the covenant purpose of God. God was not against Ishmael, the record really emphasizes this. Despite Abraham having other sons by Keturah, Ishmael and Isaac are mentioned as his sons in 1 Chron. 1:28. He was circumcised, part of the covenant; God was with him; but Ishmael chose the way of his mother and stepped out of the purpose of God, resigning, effectively, the covenant relationship into which he was born.

21:21 *He lived in the wilderness of Paran. His mother took a wife for him out of the land of Egypt*- Hagar was an Egyptian, and when she fled from Sarah in Gen. 16 she began on the road back there. And she takes a wife for her son from there. Egypt clearly represents the world; she was driven out from association with the Abraham family, thanks to Sarah's awfully wrong attitude, but failed to hold on to the covenant which Ishmael had been given.

21:22 *It happened at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol the captain of his army spoke to Abraham, saying, God is with you in all that you do*- Sarah has effectively tried to kill Hagar and her son Ishmael as she did in chapter 16, apparently because of the teenage Ishmael mocking the baby Isaac. Whilst this incident is symbolic of the persecution of the righteous by the wicked (Gal. 4:29), this in no way justifies Sarah's behaviour. And yet straight after this shameful business, God blesses Abraham in all that he does, and Sarah would have benefitted from this. Clearly material blessing is not related to spirituality.

21:23 *Now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son. But according to the kindness that I have done to you, you shall do to me, and to the land in which you have lived as a foreigner*- Abimelech had first encountered Abraham when he lied about Sarah, and Abimelech reproved him for his immorality. It must've been a strange experience- to begin relationship with this man realizing he was a hypocrite and didn't walk his talk, and yet

coming to see that God was with this man. Abimelech is presented as a God fearer, contrary to what Abraham initially thought. He saw through the weakness of God's representatives, as we should, and came to perceive that this one true God is characterized by grace- working with and blessing those who were not worthy of it.

21:24 *Abraham said, I will swear*- This is the first time this Hebrew word for "swear" is used, and we will now read an unusually elaborate ritual of 'sevening' or swearing, involving seven lambs to represent the 'sevening'. This swearing to a covenant was to be kept carefully and seriously. It was to set Abraham up for God 'swearing' to him in even more solemn terms that the promises to Abraham would really come true (Gen. 22:16). God likewise uses circumstances in our lives in order to prepare us for the next stage in our lives.

21:25 *Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a water well, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away*- Earlier, Abimelech had rightly reproved Abraham for what he had done wrong in deceiving Abimelech about Sarah. Perhaps psychologically, Abraham wanted to get equal with Abimelech, although again, as in the incident with Sarah, Abimelech has sinned in ignorance. The similarities point up a comparison between the two which consistently leaves Abimelech in the more positive light. And yet Abraham was the one whom God chose.

21:26 *Abimelech said, I don't know who has done this thing. You didn't tell me, neither did I hear of it, until today*- As noted on :25, again Abimelech is finding himself involved in a sin of ignorance. The same Divine hand was at work in his life; and we likewise find situations repeat in life, to teach us. Abimelech's implication is: 'And why ever didn't you tell me about this matter earlier?'. This was exactly what he said to Abraham regarding the deception over Sarah. Abimelech must have had the impression that Abraham was a strange, furtive guy, somewhat lacking in integrity; and yet the God of all grace was strangely with him. See on :23.

21:27 *Abraham took sheep and cattle, and gave them to Abimelech. Those two made a covenant*- One can't help but notice that God stressed to the later children of Abraham that since they had a covenant with Him, they were not to make covenants with the people who lived around them in the land- time and again God references His covenant with His people, and in that context tells them not to make covenants with the peoples of the land (Ex. 34:10-12,15,27; Dt. 7:29; Jud. 2:1,2,20). Yet Abraham made covenants with those very people (Gen. 14:13; 21:27,32)- perhaps indicating his lack of appreciation of his covenant relationship with Yahweh?

21:28 *Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves*- The idea was that they were separate from the two men, observing them ["by themselves"], but witnesses. Seven is the number of perfection; or perhaps he had in view the 'plural of majesty', the

one great, perfect lamb. Did Abraham perceive that there was some 'perfect lamb', perhaps his future promised seed, who would be the ultimate witness between men?

21:29 *Abimelech said to Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?*- This way of swearing was unknown to Abimelech and the surrounding culture. As noted on :24, Abraham had thought up a new ceremony in order to emphasize the gravity and utter dependability of his 'swearing'; and this was then used by God in Gen. 22:16, to show Abraham that now God Himself was going to 'swear' to Abraham.

21:30 *He said, You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, that it may be a witness to me, that I have dug this well*- As noted on :31, to seven oneself was to swear, and Beer Sheba was literally the well of the sevens. This was perhaps the reason for the seven lambs. For the meaning of the seven lambs, see on :28.

21:31 *Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because they both swore there*- Literally, the well of the sevens; to seven oneself was to swear.

21:32 *So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Abimelech rose up with Phicol, the captain of his army, and they returned into the land of the Philistines*- The sober gravity of this covenant was to prepare Abraham for the wonder of God making a covenant with him in the next chapter.

21:33 *Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and called there on the name of Yahweh, the Everlasting God*- AV "grove". The idea was of a roofless temple; and the tamarisk was hard and had evergreen leaves and plants growing on it, rather like mistletoe. Groves of such trees were typically associated with idol worship. We note that Abraham didn't build an altar for worship, but rather this grove; and we wonder whether he was not mixing Yahweh worship with idolatry, as Jacob and his family also did.

21:34 *Abraham lived as a foreigner in the land of the Philistines many days*- I noted on Gen. 20:1 that Abraham is described as both living temporarily, and yet also permanently dwelling. No matter how stable our living place may appear, even if we lived in the house we were born in all our lives, it is still a passing through, as a foreigner, just temporarily- because the true permanence is yet to come, when the promises to Abraham are fulfilled. And no matter how long Abraham lived in an area, even for "many days", he "lived as a foreigner", just as we should, realizing that we are only passing through.

GENESIS CHAPTER 22

22:1 *It happened after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, Abraham! He said, Here I am*- See on Gen. 24:18. Temptation comes from internal processes (James 1:13-15), but God does test, as He did Adam in Eden and Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 15:25; 16:4). The primary audience of the Pentateuch was Israel under testing; and so the example of Abraham was presented in that context. The testing was for Abraham's benefit, not God's; He doesn't need to reach understanding by experimentation. It has been observed: "In Late Bronze Age diplomatic correspondence, vassals attempt to demonstrate their loyalty by declaring they would carry out any command of the king even if it is self-destructive". Abraham was aware of this, but I suggest he loyally accepts it, and the point of the record is "obedience" rather than faith in resurrection, which I suggest is not upmost in Abraham's mind at this point. He believed he would receive Isaac back, so that the promises could be fulfilled (Heb. 11), but in what form and when were surely unclear to him. He showed the faith which is trust. And to be willing to sacrifice his son was effectively sacrificing his future, going against all basic human instinct. And that is indeed the call of Jesus to this day.

We note this [and :11] is the only time when God calls Abraham by name. It was to demonstrate the depth of His personal relationship with Him, and He repeatedly shows how He understands what He is asking of men. Likewise we note that "God" here has the article, *ha*. As if 'God, *the* God, tested Abraham'. And so Phyllis Trible translates: "God, indeed God, tested...".

That God tests man is a common theme. Ps. 26:2 “Probe me, YHWH, examine me, Test my heart and my mind in the fire”; Ex. 20:20 “Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid; God has come to test you, so that your fear of him, being always in your mind, may keep you from sinning’ ”; Dt. 8:2 “Remember the long road by which YHWH your God led you for forty years in the desert, to humble you, to test you and know your inmost heart— whether you would keep his commandments or not”; Job 23:10 “And yet he knows every step I take! Let him test me in the crucible: I shall come out pure gold”; Zech. 13:9 "I shall pass this third through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, test them as gold is tested”; Ps. 17:3 “You probe my heart, examine me at night, you test me by fire and find no evil”. The testing as fire clearly alludes to probing the quality of gold and silver- and that is for the benefit of the tester, not the tested material. Yet does not God see and know all things? In one sense yes, in another, He limits His omniscience as He limits His omnipotence, in order to enter legitimate, felt relationship with us. "Surely they will reverence My Son [but they didn't]... I looked for My sons to be... [but they weren't]". Proverbs says that the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching the innermost mind of man. I take that to mean that His probing of us is our probing of ourselves. We are revealed both to Him and to ourselves. And because self-examination is hard to totally achieve, He brings tests into our lives, to reveal ourselves to ourselves-

and thereby to Him. This I suggest is what happened to Abraham. It is what happens to us as we come before the cross of the Lord in self examination at the communion table. If our hearts are zoned out and His death and resurrection means nothing, we are blank in feeling and response- then this is shown to God. If we feel motivated to lay down our lives, whilst admitting our humanity puts the brake on such desires... and we beg for God's patient endurance with us until we can do that... then, God sees that too.

In the end, Abraham didn't have to sacrifice Isaac; and perhaps one subtext of the story is to show that God wants us to be willing to sacrifice our children to Him, but He doesn't of course want us to do that in literal reality, and instead showed that animal and not human sacrifice was the path He chose for His people.

22:2 *He said, Now take your son, your only son, whom you love, even Isaac*- Isaac was not Abraham's only son. He had Ishmael, and other children by Keturah. But God is foreseeing Abraham's tendency to try to get around things; He is clarifying that He means Isaac, not Ishmael, nor Eliezer, whom Abraham had been tempted to consider his promised 'seeds'. God had always tested Abraham at the point of family relationships- leaving his natural family (Gen. 12:1), separating from Lot (Gen. 13:15-18), separating from Ishmael his son (Gen. 17:17,18); and now being willing to lose his beloved son Isaac, 'laughter', the one who had brought such joy to him and Sarah. Attitudes to family are critical; and so is the willingness to sacrifice what is nearest and dearest to us, whatever it is in our context. Clearly the incident is framed to point forward to the sacrifice of God's only and beloved Son; "the son of His love" (Col. 1:13) surely alludes back here. Perhaps we are to read the words here as meaning that Isaac was the "only" son whom he loved so much. Or it could be that Isaac is framed as Abraham's only son, just as Melchizedek is spoken of as having no parents, and no beginning nor end of life. The reference is to how the record is framed in Genesis; no genealogy nor chronological markers are provided for him. And so it might be there, with this presentation of Isaac as "your only son". But perhaps the idea is that Isaac was the only son of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham had frequently lied about her during their marriage (Gen. 20:13), and hardly comes over as willing to die for her. And yet God here speaks to Abraham as if he is Sarah, alluding to the unity which He counted as being between them. The decision to sacrifice Isaac would have ideally needed her agreement.

"Your only son" reflects how God did appreciate what He was asking of Abraham. It is stressed six times in the record that Isaac was to be offered as a "burnt offering". The emphasis reflects how God was intensely aware of the enormity of what He was asking Abraham to do. In Gen. 12:1, Abram had been asked to sacrifice his past, his homeland and family or origin- and eventually, Abram had done so. Now he is being asked to sacrifice his future- and he is willing. We naturally struggle with the idea of child sacrifice; but we must note that the later, Mosaic condemnations of child sacrifice were

always in the context of forbidding the sacrifice of children *to other gods*. Israel were asked to give their firstborn to God: "You shall give the firstborn of your sons to Me" (Ex. 22:29). This was not literal child sacrifice; but the idea was that instead of giving your firstborn in literal sacrifice to a god, Israel were to give their firstborn in service to Yahweh, as living sacrifices.

And go into the land of Moriah. Offer him there for a burnt offering- It seems reasonable to conclude that Isaac was offered on or near the hill of Calvary, one of the hills (Heb.) near Jerusalem, in the ancient “land of Moriah" (where the temple was built, 2 Chron. 3:1). "Moriah" is a form of the Hebrew *ra'a*, 'to see' or provide. This is going to be a major theme; that on the mount of sacrifice, there Yahweh would provide. The ultimate 'seeing' and thereby provision of human need was in the gift of Jesus to die on Calvary. God sees our sins, and our inability in reality to put them right, nor to escape their consequence. He understood that, and His seeing is also His provision.

The command to sacrifice Isaac would apparently have meant that God's promises about the future seed through Isaac would not come true. I doubt whether Abraham was expecting to sacrifice Isaac and then see him instantly resurrected. I think his faith was rather in the sense that he trusted that God would somehow fulfil what He had promised, even though Abraham could not see how that would happen. This is where faith means trust, to believe is to trust, even when on an intellectual level we fail to see sense, justice or purpose.

It is stressed six times in the record that Isaac was to be offered as a "burnt offering". Ten times the word "son" is used in :2-16. The emphasis reflects how God was intensely aware of the enormity of what He was asking Abraham to do. The Biblical narrative is so sparse- just a small amount of text to cover decades. So when there is repetition of detail, we must see this as significant.

On one of the mountains which I will tell you of- As with the journey to the promised land, Abraham was not given specific details, and presumably an Angel in a cloud directed him to the specific spot. Abraham's earlier slow response is now far better- he gets up and goes straight away, trusting in guidance.

22:3 *Abraham rose early in the morning*- The flesh would naturally like to delay our response in case we can avoid the sacrifice required. But Abraham arises early in immediate obedience. He may have discussed the situation with Isaac, who would've been about 20, and he would have agreed of his own volition. However, Isaac's question in :7 suggests that he was not aware that he personally was to be offered.

And saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him- The details are added so that we can play "Bible television" with the scene and imagine it. "His young men" may refer to other sons he had had by concubines or Keturah. Perhaps he was willing to sacrifice them too if required. The fact Abraham himself does the mundane things like

saddling the donkey and splitting the wood, when he heads a household of 318 trained servants, reflects how he very personally responded to the call. And we are left to infer that he did not inform Sarah. Our callings to the most intimate sacrifices are invariably faced alone. And the Abraham who elsewhere usually says something in response to God's voice... now is strangely silent throughout the three day journey. The splitting of the wood, saddling the donkey etc. are all recorded as highly calculated, consciously performed actions- all in obedience. And by those works was his incomplete faith "made perfect", the works didn't save him, but the experience of doing them matured his faith.

And Isaac his son- Continually the record reflects God's recognition of the sacrifice. Abraham had had to separate from his father's family, from Lot, he had twice been separated from Sarah his wife (Gen. 12:15; 20:3), twice from Hagar his servant girl partner, twice and finally from his son Ishmael whom he loved; and now, apparently, he was asked to separate from his beloved son Isaac. He had been well prepared for it, but all the same- he does it.

He split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him- There are examples of Abraham being progressively set up by God so that his spiritual growth would be an upward spiral. Initially, he was told to walk / go to a land which God would shew him (Gen. 12:1); when he got there, he was told to "arise", and "walk" through that land of Canaan (Gen. 13:17). And Abraham, albeit in a faltering kind of way, did just this. But this was to prepare him for the test of Gen. 22:3 in the command to offer Isaac. His obedience this time isn't at all faltering. He "arises" and 'goes' [s.w. "walk"] "unto the place of which God had told him" to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:3). This is exactly what he had been called to do right back in Ur- to arise and walk / go to a land / place which God would show him (Gen. 12:1). And so our obedience in one challenge of God leads us to obedience in others. I've elsewhere pointed out how circumstances tend to repeat both within and between the lives of God's faithful. One experience is designed to lead us to another. Nothing- absolutely nothing- in our lives is senseless chance. All- and this takes some believing- is part of a higher plan for our spiritual good, in our latter end.

The taking of wood with them is unusual, and remarkable. Because there would have been wood nearer, rather than having to take it three days journey. This unusual element in the narrative is to highlight the matter; and it becomes understandable once we perceive that the Father and Son were carrying the wood on which the son was to be sacrificed. This was exactly what happened as the Lord carried the wood of His cross to Golgotha. "Wood" and "tree" are the same word, so we picture Isaac carrying the tree on his shoulder. God was totally connected with Him in that last walk.

The record is as it were with the camera zoomed in very close upon Abraham and Isaac. We are to imagine the scene as if it were Bible television. The way the donkey was

saddled, the wood split and transported, Abraham puts forth his hand, took the knife... and the silence as the two went "both together". We are being somehow invited into the unity between the Father and Son as the Lord travelled and walked to His death, in obedience to the Father's will.

22:4 *On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes*- The language is usually 'he looked and saw'. The mention of lifting up eyes is therefore suggestive of Abraham looking at the ground as he travelled, lost in thought.

And saw the place far off- The name given to the place, Yahweh-Yireh, means 'in this mount I have seen Yahweh'. The events of the death and resurrection of the Lord which Isaac's experience pointed forward to were therefore the prophesied 'seeing' of Yahweh. When Abraham '*saw* the place [of Isaac's intended sacrifice] afar off", there is more to those words than a literal description. Heb. 11:13 alludes here in saying that Abraham *saw* the fulfilment of "the promises" "afar off". The Lord in Jn. 8:56 says that Abraham *saw* His day or time [usually a reference to His sacrifice]. And yet that place of offering was called by Abraham 'Jehovah Jireh', 'Jehovah will be *seen*'. Note the theme of *seeing*. In some shadowy way, Abraham understood something of the future sacrifice of the Lord Jesus; and yet he speaks of it as the time when Yahweh Himself will be 'seen', so intense would the manifestation of God be in the death of His Son. We also note the double meaning of 'seeing' as both seeing and providing. Abraham sees the place, and there God also saw / provided. So there was a mutuality between God and man; we see, and we see our need. God sees what we see, but His seeing is His provision. We learnt this when Hagar says "You, God, see me"; she means 'You have provided for me'.

22:5 *Abraham said to his young men, Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go yonder. We will worship, and come back to you*- True sacrifice is praise of God; thus Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac was "praise" (s.w. "worship"). Israel in their repentance "will account our lips as calves" (Hos. 14:3 LXX, RVmg.), i.e. as sacrifices. The "fruit of the lips" there was repentance. Which is why the Hebrew writer says that we "make confession to his name" with the fruit of our lips (Heb. 13:15 RV). Continually we should offer this sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15), the thankfulness that wells up from knowing we are forgiven, the joy born of regular, meaningful repentance. And we do this "by" or 'on account of' the sacrifice of Jesus for us, which enables this forgiveness and thereby repentance (Heb. 13:12,15).

Mt. 26:36 has the Lord saying to the disciples: "Sit in this place [*kathisate autou*] until going away, I pray there", and then He takes along with him [*paralambanein*] Peter. These are the very words used in the Gen. 22 LXX account of Abraham taking Isaac to 'the cross'. Jesus is seeking to encourage Peter to see himself as Isaac, being taken to share in the cross. Now whether Peter discerned this or not, we don't know. But the Lord gave him the potential possibility to be inspired like this.

"And come back to you" could be read as meaning that Abraham was certain that Isaac would be resurrected. Heb. 11:19 says that Abraham went in faith that "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead". Like Job, he worked out by inference that there had to be a resurrection of the body to fulfil the implications of the promises made to them. But the spirituality of Abraham and Sarah is often spoken of in apparently exaggerated terms in the New Testament. Perhaps this is an example; Abraham's basic simple trust is read as if he had a more detailed faith and understanding than he actually did. Or it may be that Abraham was thinking of resurrection from the dead at the last day, rather than resurrection immediately after he had slain Isaac. He perhaps had no clear understanding of how and when the resurrection would happen. But he trusted that the promises necessitated Isaac's revival. Abraham's faith is never presented as total. We learn from Gen. 20:13 that Abraham's lying about Sarah had been habitual and frequent; and he had refused to learn the lesson from the incident of Gen. 12 when he lied about Sarah in Egypt. Dishonesty is presented as a characteristic of Abraham and his family. In this light we come to consider his statements as he takes Isaac to be slain: “You stay here with the ass. The boy and I will go up there; we will worship and we will return to you” (Gen. 22:5). He fully intended to sacrifice Isaac. So Abraham expected to return to the servants without Isaac, but he says “we will return” in order to cover his intention of killing Isaac. Perhaps he lied- rather than having faith that Isaac would be killed by him and then immediately resurrected. And yet he also believed, and his obedience and trust that somehow things would work out is commended and noted by God. He likewise effectively lied to Isaac in answering the question “But where is the sheep for the burnt offering?” (Gen. 22:7). It was by God's gracious hand that these white lies became prophetic.

22:6 *Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. He took in his hand the fire and the knife. They both went together*- Twice emphasized (:8), this speaks of the unity between Father and Son as the Lord walked the Via Dolorosa to the place of crucifixion; and of Isaac's willing involvement in the sacrifice, when he was easily old enough to escape from it. The scene looks forward to the Lord carrying the wood upon which He would be offered. Indeed the Hebrew for "wood" is strictly "tree". The same word is used of how Abraham had earlier "laid" provisions upon Hagar and Ishmael's shoulders and sent his son Ishmael away (Gen. 21:14). That experience in 'losing' his begotten son was to prepare him now for this apparent loss.

22:7 *Isaac spoke to Abraham his father, and said, My father? He said, Here I am, my son. He said, Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?*- This would suggest that Isaac had not been told of the plan. And yet he was old enough to have resisted. His willingness to cooperate would therefore have been a result of deciding to give his life at the very last moment. "Here I am" is the very Hebrew phrase Abraham uses in responding to the Lord's call in :1. We are given the impression of a man absolutely ready to obey any call.

22:8 *Abraham said, God will Himself provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son. So they both went together*- The Hebrew language reflects certain realities about the nature of God's ways. The common Hebrew word for 'to see', especially when used about God's 'seeing', means also 'to provide'. Hagar has this sense when the Angel rescues her in the desert, and she comments "You God see me". She means indeed that 'God sees me', but she clearly has the sense that 'God you see me and therefore have provided, thank You'. This is the huge import of the simply truth that God sees and knows all things. He sees us- and it is axiomatic to that seeing that He will provide. The ultimate seeing-provisioning is in God's understanding of the human fate and condition, and the cross was His provision. Abraham comforted Isaac that "God will see for himself [AV 'provide'] the lamb" (Gen. 22:8 RVmg.); and thus the RVmg. interprets 'Jehovah Jireh' as meaning 'the Lord will see, or provide' (Gen. 22:14). The same word is used when Saul asks his servants to "provide" him a man (1 Sam. 16:17). When Hagar said "You God see me" (Gen. 16:13), she was expressing her gratitude for His *provision* for her. What this means in practice is that the fact God sees and knows all things means that He can and will therefore and thereby provide for us in the circumstances of life; for He sees and knows all things. Perhaps Abraham learnt from the words of his slave girl, whom he and his wife had abused. This is how we are to be, remembering and learning from incidents, even those which involve our own failures, to prepare us for future understandings and commitments.

The Rabbis insist that the Hebrew here should be read "God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering- my son!". As if Abraham is now telling Isaac specifically- 'It's you, my son, who is to be the lamb'. The significance of the next sentence is therefore so poignant- knowing that, they went both of them together. It is an exact prefigurement of the Father and Son discussing the issue in Gethsemane, and thence going together to the cross. Surely Paul had Abraham's sacrifice in view when he wrote: "He who did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

We see here Abraham verbalizing his self realization, that the lamb had to be "My son". He begins answering his son's question, but then mutters to himself: "My son". The Father above was having precisely the same thoughts. Unknown to Abraham, as unknown to us, we can come to feelings and realizations that are exact mirrors of God's self realizations. God realized above all that there was ultimately no lamb, the lamb had to be "My Son"; and Abraham came to realize this, and Isaac went along with it. No wonder the Lord alluded to this incident in His own realization that *lama sabbachthani*, how have You entangled *Me*. He too struggled to come to the final realization that there was to be no lamb, no substitute, but *Him*, "My Son", God's Son, the total representative of humanity. And yet surely He was tempted to hope that there would be a last minute substitution to replace Him.

Isaac was clearly willing to be offered. But his silence looks forward to how the Lord "opened not His mouth" during His preparation for sacrifice (Is. 53:7). Truly did Martin Buber observe: "Scripture does not state its doctrine as doctrine but by telling a story and without exceeding the limits set by the nature of a story. It uses the method of story-telling to a degree, however, which world literature has not yet learned to use; and its cross-references and inter-connections, while noticeable, are so unobtrusive that a perfect attention is needed to grasp its intent- an attentiveness so perfect that it has not yet been fully achieved. Hence, it remains for us latecomers to point out the significance of what has hitherto been overlooked, neglected, insufficiently valued".

22:9 *They came to the place which God had told him of. Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, on the wood-* "They came to the place" is echoed in the description of the Lord's arrival at "the place called Golgotha" (Mt. 27:33). Again the details are given, so that we can reconstruct the scene. Thus we read of the wood ["tree [branches]"] being laid "in order", literally 'in rows'.

22:10 *Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to kill his son-* This is the Hebrew term used of Adam and Eve stretching out their hand to take the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:22). Abraham by contrast stretches out his hand in obedience rather than disobedience. The 'taking the knife to kill ['slaughter in sacrifice']' really does invite us to see Abraham silhouetted against the sky, with the knife in mid air. He really was taken to the brink. Surely this incident is in mind in 1 Cor. 10:13: "No temptation ['testing', as in Gen. 22:1] has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it". Abraham is no longer left as an icon to be admitted from afar, as if in stained glass; but rather is he everyman in Christ.

22:11 *The angel of Yahweh called to him out of the sky, and said, Abraham, Abraham! He said, Here I am-* This is presented as his characteristic response (:1,7). He was willing to do and be as directed, both in sacrificing or not sacrificing.

22:12 *He said, Don't lay your hand on the boy, neither do anything to him-* His hand was literally less than a meter from Isaac's heart, with a knife in that hand, just seconds away from plunging the knife into Isaac. Isaac is described as a child, when he wasn't. The same is true with the description of the teenage Ishmael. Perhaps the idea is that for a parent, your suffering child is always your little boy. And so the record is written from the perspective of Abraham's feelings. As God recognized it was "your only son...", so in this we again see how God wanted to show that He recognized and understood Abraham's feelings, and understood what He was asking Abraham.

For now I know that you fear God- Because the Angels are of limited knowledge, it seems that they bring some trials upon us in order to find out more about us. This is

language of limitation- God Himself knows all things, but the Angel wanted to test Abraham. Indeed, the apocryphal *Book Of Jubilees* claims in so many words that it was an Angel called Mastema who was responsible for the idea of testing Abraham in order to determine his level of obedience.

Since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me- "Your only son" [see note on :2] reflects how God was fully aware of the cost of the sacrifice He was asking for. He too did not spare or withhold His only Son, and this passage is alluded to in Rom. 8:32: "He that spared not His own Son". Therefore He was so thrilled with Abraham's attitude because He perceived how a man was connecting with Him in having the same spirit. We too can thrill God by being likewise.

22:13 *Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and saw that behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son*- This was the "way of escape" of 1 Cor. 10:13, which alludes to this incident and presents Abraham as every one of us. When the Lord on the cross cried out "How have You forsaken Me!" (Mk. 15:34), the Aramaic *sabachthani* also means "entangled". It's as if He is saying "You have entangled *me*, I am not Isaac who was saved at the last minute, I am like the entangled ram!". I have elsewhere commented concerning the possibility that Christ felt that although He would be tied to the cross as Isaac was, yet somehow He would be delivered. Clearly the offering of Isaac is to be understood as prophetic of the Lord's sacrifice. The Lord's growing realization that the entangled ram represented Him rather than Isaac would have led to this sense of panic which He expressed in that cry from the cross. There is more evidence than we sometimes care to consider that Christ's understanding was indeed limited; He was capable of misunderstanding Scripture, especially under the stress of the cross. Surely this incident is in view when John says "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29).

22:14 *Abraham called the name of that place 'Yahweh Will Provide'. As it is said to this day, On Yahweh's mountain, it will be provided*- See on Job 42:1. Jehovah-Jireh can mean "Yahweh will show Yah", in eloquent prophecy of the crucifixion. There Yahweh was to be manifested supremely. Abraham comforted Isaac that "God will see for himself [AV 'provide'] the lamb" (Gen. 22:8 RVmg.); and thus the RVmg. interprets 'Jehovah-Jireh' as meaning 'the Lord will see, or provide'. The same word is used when Saul asks his servants to "provide" him a man (1 Sam. 16:17). When Hagar said "You God see me" (Gen. 16:13) she was expressing her gratitude for His *provision* for her. What this means in practice is that the fact God sees and knows all things means that He can and will therefore and thereby provide for us in the circumstances of life; for He sees and knows all things. Note that Prov. 28:27 and 29:7 RV speak of 'hiding the eyes' in the sense of not making provision for the need of others. God's eyes are not hidden, and

therefore He makes provision. Dt. 2:7 speaks of how God 'knew' Israel's journey through the wilderness, and therefore they "lacked nothing".

22:15 *The angel of Yahweh called to Abraham a second time out of the sky*- There was no Angel standing in front of Abraham to provide as it were visible backup. Really Abraham's faith in and response to the spoken word at this point is commendable.

22:16 *And said, I have sworn by Myself, says Yahweh*- The New Testament comments that this was because God could swear by no greater (Heb. 6:13). God was solemnly promising that all Abraham's seed would be saved because of this faith of Abraham confirmed now in his works. Because of the offering of Isaac, God confirmed His promise with this oath, by Himself. By His own life, is the idea. And God cannot die. This looked ahead to how the death of Jesus resulted in God confirming the promises to Abraham, which are the Gospel, with an oath. That by two unchangeable things [the promise and the oath], in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation and *elpis*, or "Hope", an absolute certainty of salvation. And not a 'hope for the best', as the English word 'hope' can mistakenly suggest. God is offering us salvation, eternal inheritance of the earth. Without conditions. And He has confirmed that. In this sense we take the cup of the new covenant "in His blood"; the new covenant was before the old covenant, it was the promises made to Abraham. The simple offer of eternity by grace alone. But the Lord's blood, the offering of the true 'Isaac', confirmed this- to us. Any doubt about the certainty of salvation was thereby removed. The Lord's blood was not *per se* necessary for our salvation. God who can do anything could as easily immortalize anyone at any point in time; He can forgive sin and deal with its consequences on any basis, or without any basis at all. He is not an angry deity who needed to be appeased by the blood of His firstborn. God is not a magician, neither did the blood of His Son achieve any kind of magic in removing our sin. That is the mistake of Catholicism and frankly this view is literalism's last gasp, making God's grace and forgiveness and salvation dependent upon literal blood. One of the many reasons for the Lord's death was therefore to confirm the covenant *to us*, to flag our attention to the certainty of the simple promises of salvation given to Abraham which are the Christian Gospel (Gal. 3:8). His death was to persuade us of the certainty of our salvation. It confirmed the covenant which was already sure and certain. That we might have strong consolation and a Hope so certain that it is the anchor of our souls. For we are heirs of the same promise (Heb. 6:17).

Because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son- According to Heb. 11:12, God's promises to Abraham were fulfilled on account of his faith; God in some way allowed Himself to be potentially limited by Abraham's faith. Indeed, the promised world-wide blessing of all nations was promised only "because you have obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:16,18). In this sense the covenants of salvation

were partly due to another man [Abraham] being faithful [although above all our salvation was due to the Lord Jesus]. In this sense he is the “father” of the faithful.

The offering of Isaac was without doubt an act of faith by Abraham. His trust in the invisible God, His reflection upon a series of promises which amount to no more than about 200 words in Hebrew, was balanced against his natural hope for his family, human affection, common sense, love of his beloved son, lifelong ambition... and he was willing to ditch all those things for his faith in God's promises. You can speak 200 words in a minute. The total sum of God's recorded communication with Abraham was only a minute's worth of speaking. Abraham had so much faith in so few words; and perhaps the number of words was so few so that Abraham would memorize and continually reflect upon them. Yet the total number of words God or an Angel spoke to Abraham about anything was pretty small- the total [including the words of the promises] comes to only 583 Hebrew words- which can be spoken in less than three minutes [Gen. 12:1-3 = 28 words; Gen. 12:7 = 4 words; Gen. 13:14-16 = 44 words; Gen. 15 = 117 words; Gen. 17 = 195 words; Gen. 18 = 87 words; Gen. 21 = 26 words; Gen. 22 = 82 words]. And remember that all these words, these snatches of brief conversation, were spoken to Abraham over a period of 100 years or so. His faith in God's word, His mediation upon it and following its implications, really does make him a spiritual "father of us all". We have the Bible, a whole book of God's words, which we can instantly access and read. Would we were to have a like sensitivity to every word spoken.

Spiritual ambition means that we will desire to do some things which we can’t physically fulfil- and yet they will be counted to us. Abraham is spoken of as having offered up Isaac- his intention was counted as the act. And Prov. 19:22 RV appropriately comments: “The desire of a man is the measure of his kindness”. It is all accepted according to what a man has, not what he has not. Faith is perfected / matured by the process of works (James 2:22,23). The works, the upward spiral of a life lived on the basis of faith, develop the initial belief in practice. Thus Abraham believed God in Gen. 15, but these works of Gen. 22 [offering Isaac] made that faith “perfect”. Through his correct response to the early promises given him, Abraham was imputed “the righteousness of faith”. But *on account of* that faith inspired by the earlier promises, he was given “the promises that he should be heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13). That promise in turn inspired yet more faith. In this same context, Paul had spoken of how the Gospel preached to Abraham in the promises leads men “from faith to faith”, up the upward spiral (Rom. 1:17).

God ‘spared not’ His own son (Rom. 8:32)- alluding to the LXX of Gen. 22:16, where Abraham spares not his son. Clearly the offering of Isaac is to be understood as prophetic of the Lord’s sacrifice. The Lord's growing realization that the entangled ram represented Him rather than Isaac would have led to the sense of panic which He

expressed in "My God, why have You forsaken me?". Christ felt that although He would be tied to the cross as Isaac was, yet somehow He would be delivered. The Greek phrase for 'not withholding' is elsewhere used about God not sparing people when He assigns them to condemnation (Rom. 11:21; 2 Cor. 13:2; 2 Pet. 2:4,5). The Lord Jesus knows how not only sinners feel but how the rejected will feel- for He 'bore condemnation' in this sense. We should be condemned. But He as our representative was condemned, although not personally guilty. He so empathized with us through the experience of the cross that He came to *feel* like a sinner, although He was not one. And thus He has freed us from condemnation.

22:17 *That I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your seed greatly like the stars of the sky, and like the sand which is on the seashore. Your seed will possess the gate of his enemies*- The promise Paul refers to in Rom. 4:13 was given to Abraham because of, *dia*, on account of, his being declared right with God by faith in Gen. 15:6. Perhaps Paul specifically has in mind the promise of Gen. 22:17,18. Having been declared right with God, Abraham was then promised that he personally would be heir of the world- the implications of being right with God, counted righteous, were thereby fleshed out and given some more tangible, material, concrete form. He would therefore live for ever, because he was right with God; and the arena of that eternity would be "the world". Galatians 3 definitely has this verse in mind when saying that here, the Gospel was preached to Abraham. And Paul stresses that here, "seed" is singular. But elsewhere it is plural. And the seed in view, is clearly the Lord Jesus. God's reward of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his seed is quite out of proportion to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice. And it is the same with us. Our willingness to sacrifice is counted as if we did it; for the NT speaks as if Abraham did sacrifice Isaac.

God appears to use language with no regard as to whether the people who first heard it could understand it. God spoke to Job about snow (Job 37:6), to Abraham about sand on the sea shore (Gen. 22:17), to Noah about rain (Gen. 7:4) – things which they had never seen. And the New Testament concepts of grace, agape love, humility etc. were outside the ability of first century Greek to properly express; new words had to enter the language in order to express these ideas. Yet God is also capable of speaking in the language of the day, bringing Himself right down to our human level of language use. It is vital to appreciate that God uses language in different ways in different parts of the Bible – otherwise our interpretation of it will be inconsistent and contradictory.

In some cases God uses language in a relative sense in order to emphasize something. Thus we read here of many being saved (Gen. 22:17), yet in another sense few will be saved (Mt. 7:14; 20:16; Lk. 13:23). Relative to the wonder of salvation, many will be saved; but numerically, the figure will be small, from the perspective of this world. The way to the Kingdom is easy relative to the wonder of what is in store for the faithful (Mt. 11:30; 2 Cor. 4:17); and yet from our human perspective it is hard indeed, a life of self-

crucifixion (Acts 14:22; Rev. 7:14). Our sufferings now are only for a moment compared to the glorious eternity of the Kingdom (Ps. 37:10; 2 Cor. 4:17), and yet the language of the Bible also expresses God's appreciation that from our perspective, our time of probation is "a long time" (Mt. 25:19). "Many" – relatively- would be converted to the true ways of God by the work of John the Baptist (Lk. 1:16), whilst numerically the majority of those who heard John's message eventually turned away from it, culminating in their crucifixion of the Messiah.

22:18 *In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice*- Those seminal promises to Abraham hinged around what would be realized *in*, not "by", his seed. All that is true of the Lord Jesus is now true of us, in that we are in Him. Often the promises about the seed in the singular (the Lord Jesus) are applied to us in the plural (e.g. 2 Sam. 7:14 cp. Ps. 89:30-35). Baptism is not an initiation into a church. It isn't something which just *seems* the right thing to do. And even if because of our environment and conscience, it was easier to get baptized than not- *now* this mustn't be the case. We really are *in* Christ, we are born again; now we exist, spiritually! And moreover, we have risen with Him, His resurrection life, His life and living that will eternally be, is now manifest in us, and will be articulated physically at the resurrection.

The Lord's later command to preach to "all nations" would ring bells in Jewish minds with these promises to Abraham, concerning the blessing of forgiveness to come upon "all nations" through Messiah (Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). Therefore God's people are to preach the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ to "all nations". The offer of sharing in that blessing did not close at the end of the first century. Putting the "all nations" of the Abrahamic promises together with Christ's preaching commission leads to a simple conclusion: The Hope of Israel now applies to all nations; so go and tell this good news to all nations, for the extent of the fulfilment of the promises depends to some extent upon us.

The Hebrew word for 'hear' is also translated 'obey' (Gen. 22:18; Ex. 19:5; Dt. 30:8,20; Ps. 95:7). We can hear God's word and not obey it. But if we *really* hear it as we are intended to, we will obey it. If we truly believe God's word to be His voice personally speaking to us, then we will by the very fact of hearing, obey. The message itself, if heard properly and not just on a surface level, will compel action.

22:19 *So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beersheba. Abraham lived at Beersheba*- We are left with the impression that they didn't perceive what had happened, neither did Abraham and Isaac tell them. They both returned to them just as Abraham had said they would (:5). Some of our finest acts of devotion and most intimate moments with God are by their nature very personal; so much so, that we do not share them with others. That seems almost axiomatic from the very nature of the encounters.

22:20 *It happened after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she also has borne children to your brother Nahor*- The Genesis record seems to frame the confederations of Arab tribes contemporary with the 12 tribes of Israel as being a kind of pseudo-Israel- for they too are described as being 12 tribe confederacies. Here we have 12 Aramean tribes who came from the 12 sons born to Nahor, Abraham's brother (Gen. 22:20-24); and there were 12 tribes from Ishmael (Gen. 25:13-16); and the five tribes from the sons of Esau (Gen. 36:9-14) joined with the seven Horite tribes in Seir (Gen. 36:20-28).

22:21 *Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram*- Job was from "the land of Uz" (Job 1:1) but was a true servant of God. We have here confirmation of what I suggested about Ishmael on Gen. 16 and Gen. 21- all the seed of Abraham could have been within the covenant, although most of them chose not to, and the faithful line continued through Isaac and Jacob. That was how it was, but it wasn't like that because God rejected Abraham's wider seed only in favour of Isaac. Even if we reject this view, we are still left with the fact that people outside the immediate line from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob could be in fellowship with God. Elihu likewise is presented as a righteous man, and he was a "Buzite" (Job 32:2).

22:22 *Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel*- The genealogy is introduced at this point to demonstrate that even before Isaac was offered, God had been preparing a potential wife for him. So many people were involved in the wider family, but God was working through Bethuel and Rebekah.

22:23 *Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother*- Perhaps the information is given so that we can see that how through the mass of humanity, God's purpose has worked out through a minority.

22:24 *His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah*- Again we wonder why this detail is given, when the children named don't seem to have played much part in the Biblical record. Maybe we are being introduced to the idea that most significant men of the time had concubines, and children by them. Abraham was no exception, and yet Isaac has just been presented as his "only" son; as if he had a special connection with him, which made his sacrifice of him all the more meaningful. Or maybe it is again to just provide us perspective; rather like our wondering why the cosmos is so huge, why so many uninhabited planets, why so many life forms on earth, why such complexity. And one answer to all that is simply "perspective"; to help us appreciate the breadth of God's grace in focusing in upon little me, and the small group of humans which comprise His special people.

GENESIS CHAPTER 23

23:1 *Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; this was the length of Sarah's life*- No other woman has her age at death recorded in Biblical history. For all her weakness, Sarah is being presented as the spiritual mother of us all. She and Abraham are mostly commendable for hanging on to faith in God's program, for going along with it willingly, despite multiple weaknesses of character. In this senses they become our forbears. Literally "one hundred years, twenty years and seven years". This perhaps reflects the importance given to every year, just as the phrase "he died being full of days" likewise suggests the extreme importance of every moment lived. And that significance attaches to old age too. God has a very limited time frame to prepare us for eternity, and every moment counts. And we are to perceive that. There is no retirement, old age is as significant [arguably more significant] than the rest of our lives. There is no spiritual retirement, and it's not over until it's over.

23:2 *Sarah died in Kiriath Arba (the same is Hebron), in the land of Canaan. Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her*- Abraham 'came' to her presumably in the sense that he came into her tent; or perhaps the reference is to some funeral procedure, at which very time he asked the funeral guests from the surrounding peoples if he could buy a burial place for her.

23:3 *Abraham rose up from before his dead, and spoke to the children of Heth, saying*- Abraham walked around in his promised land with the attitude of a stranger just passing through, although he was probably the most powerful man in it. The record of his purchase of Machpelah seems to exemplify this. Not only is the presence of the children of Heth highlighted (Gen. 23:3,5,7,10,11,12,13,16,18), but the record of Abraham's words demonstrates his appreciation that he was only passing through: "*Entreat* for me to Ephron... that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which *he has*... for full money he shall *give it* me for a possession... *amongst you*... and Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land... and the field... in all the borders round about (was) made sure" (23:9-17 AVmg.). The mention of the borders really rubs it in. Not only was the land promised to Abraham, but he was politically more powerful than the children of Heth; he could have annexed it for himself at ease. The children of Heth were willing to give it to him for free anyway (:11). Yet the realization by Abraham of his present position, the humility created by faith, shines through the narrative. Zacchaeus is called a son of Abraham in that he too humbly repented of his self-centered materialism (Lk. 19:9).

23:4 *I am a stranger and a foreigner living with you*- As a 'foreigner', it appears from inscriptions of local laws that he would have been unable to buy land, and unable to bury his dead [visiting foreigners had to cremate their dead]. So perhaps that is why the 'sale' of the property is arranged as a 'gift with compensation'. This was an acute

contrast with the promises of eternal inheritance just reaffirmed to him in Gen. 22. Abraham didn't even have as it were a residence permit. If he were a permitted temporary foreign visitor, he would've been able to bury his dead and buy land. But he didn't even have that status. He was literally just passing through. And he spent his life in Canaan in that spirit. The Biblical account fits admirably with what has been uncovered of the local Canaanite laws. The laws are also specific that foreigners could not pass on as inheritance any land they bought or leased. Again, the contrast is clear with the promise that the whole land would be Abraham's and would pass to his "seed". Living as Abraham's seed in this world, our values are likewise absolutely counter inversions of all around us- where ownership of property is seen as the great aim of life. The high price Abraham was charged is reflective of how the whole deal ran contrary to the spirit of the law and culture of the local people. The legislation discovered explains *why* land must not be sold to foreigners, nor be allowed to be passed on to their descendants: the concern was that the "seed" of the foreigners would increase and come to dominate the land of Canaan. And yet this was exactly the statement of the promises to Abraham- that his seed would indeed multiply and eternally possess that land. This was why sale of land to foreigners had to be agreed by the community and not just the seller; hence we read of the people who could enter the gate (:10), those who had free access to the town, i.e. the citizens. The world we live in is likewise structured exactly as the opposite of the message of the Kingdom preached in the promises to Abraham which are the foundation of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The whole chapter is remarkably similar to property transaction documents uncovered from that era; but it lacks one thing which they generally all have, namely a reference to who shall inherit the land once the new owner dies. The omission is significant- the sons of Heth were nervous about the "gift for compensation", and didn't want to fall foul of their legal code in allowing for this. At best, it was a gentleman's agreement that Abraham's descendants could be buried there. And the irony of course is that God had deeded that field and the whole land to Abraham and his descendants for ever. "Machpelah" means 'two levels', and truly 'the cave of two levels' spoke of the earthly temporal level, and the eternal level.

Perhaps Heb. 11:13 has this in mind when observing that Abraham 'confessed' that he was a stranger and pilgrim. This act of Abraham was a confession of faith, according to Heb. 11:13. We are to understand that as Abraham said this, he had consciously in mind that the land was in fact eternally his. And we are to have this perspective when we 'buy' things, when we are ripped off and deceived financially [as I suggest Abraham was], or even when things appear to go well for us materially.

This incident follows straight on from Abraham's amazing expression of faith in the events of Gen. 22, and the reaffirmation of the promises to him afterwards. But now he is reminded, by a kind of enforced juxtaposition, that these promises are far future in ultimate fulfilment. For he doesn't possess even a field in the land of promise. And Gen.

23 is full of legal language; the ties that bind in human life are still there and not immediately released by the promises of the Kingdom.

Give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight- The surrounding peoples were likewise all nomadic and may have also come from other areas (see on :10). The early Hittites (:5) were well know for this. Abraham had been in the area long enough to count as a local. But his receipt of the promises meant that he always considered himself merely passing through- just as we should, no matter what level of apparent permanence we have in our lives. Being a stranger and foreigner is the characteristic of all God's people who are in the spiritual family of Abraham (Ps. 39:12; 1 Chron. 29:15; Heb. 11:13).

We note that the need to purchase the cave came straight after the promises given Abraham in Gen. 22. The contrast could not have been stronger between our present position and our eternal destiny. But Abraham's desire for "a possession of a burying place" could be read as meaning that he still wanted to have his cake [of future eternal inheritance] and eat it in this life [by having a permanent "possession of a burying place"]. See on :11.

23:5 *The children of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him*- "Heth" means 'destruction' or 'dismay', the father of the Hittites (Gen. 26:34 cp. Gen. 27:46). Rebekah later considered their daughters too unspiritual for Jacob to marry (Gen. 27:46). This points up the clear difference between the Abraham family and those amongst whom they lived. Yet Abraham had been there for a long time. No matter how long we are in a particular location, employment or situation, we should always remember that we live "amongst" this world and are separate from them because of the longer term perspectives which we have.

23:6 *Hear us, my lord. You are a prince of God among us. Bury your dead in the best of our tombs. None of us will withhold from you his tomb. Bury your dead*- They recognize that Abraham lived "among" them rather than being "of" them. No matter how long he lived there, he was never seen as a local. See on :5. The locals perceived that he was a mighty one in God's eyes; his faith had not remained hidden. The offer of any tomb can be read as typical of Middle Eastern business- you can have anything, but of course later, you must pay for it. But it could also be argued that the Hittites wanted to 'give' a place in an existing tomb because of the legal issues discussed above. But Abraham didn't just want a burial place- otherwise he'd have accepted this offer. He wanted a plot for perpetuity, an inheritance, ownership of land. And that is at variance with God's intention to give him nothing in this life.

23:7 *Abraham rose up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth*- The 'people of the land' in later scripture (e.g. Zech. 14:1,2) would refer to the Canaanite tribes who originally lived in the land, who are the forefathers of many

of the present Arab peoples. They are called "the people of the land (earth)" in Gen. 23:7, 12,13; Dt. 7:6; Josh 4:24. Another possibility is that they are 'people of the land' in the sense that at the times they gather themselves against Jerusalem they are present within the land of Israel.

He bowed himself to those whose land he would eternally inherit. It was all part of the ritual of purchase, but Abraham surely was aware that kings were to bow down to *him* on account of his seed, who would be the blesser of all nations (Is. 49:23). The blesser was understood as superior to the blessed (Heb. 7:7); and these nations of the land were to be blessed in him. But he now bows to them. We constantly feel the same Divinely intended paradox as we pass through life, inferior to those whom we shall soon reign over.

23:8 *He talked with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar*- Ephron was there with them (:10), but because he was himself only dwelling amongst them (:10 AV), he needed the permission of the locals to "sell" the property. This would have heightened the sense of paradox- that Abraham, also living "amongst" the children of Heth for some time, had to buy a parcel of land which was eternally his.

23:9 *That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he has, which is in the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me for a possession among you of a burying-place*- The land was already promised to Abraham as an eternal possession. And yet he had to pay "full price" for it. This entire incident seeks to bring out the paradox, knowing that we as Abraham's seed will have many similar ones in our dealings with this world. It was "*his* field"- and yet the field and the whole land were eternally Abraham's.

23:10 *Now Ephron was sitting in the middle of the children of Heth*- AV "dwelt among". Although note :11 "my people".

Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the children of Heth, even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying- As noted on :4 and :8, Ephron may well have been a nomad himself who had come to live amongst the Hittites. This heightens the sense of paradox, that Abraham was likewise, and yet he had to pay a fortune for a burial plot.

23:11 *No, my lord, hear me. I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the children of my people I give it to you. Bury your dead*- This has the ring of credibility to it; this is exactly how things are done in the Middle East. Something is offered "free" and yet with the expectation of payment later. And yet we can read this another way. Ephron genuinely offered the land for free. But Abraham wanted it as a permanent inheritance, and so he wants to pay for it in the hope this will guarantee it to him. In this case, his confession of faith that he is a foreigner is nuanced by the sense within him that he also wanted a permanent inheritance in this life, even of a field and a

cave. This would fit with our sense that his faith had peaks and troughs, and at the same time as showing faith, he also showed unbelief. Just as we do. In fact, in this case, his faith would be typical of our own faith- we believe, but, "Lord, help my unbelief" which can coexist with faith. Abraham's desire for "a possession of a burying place" (:4) could be read as meaning that he still wanted to have his cake [of future eternal inheritance] and eat it in this life [by having a permanent "possession of a burying place"]. He did not receive a possession in this life; Acts 7:5 is clear that God "gave him no inheritance in it, no, not enough to set his foot on it, and He promised that He would give it to him in possession and to his seed after him". But he certainly tried by all means to get a few square feet of permanent inheritance. And he did this right after the undoubted climax of faith in Gen. 22. Our faith likewise is a jagged graph if plotted over time. The contrast is strong and intended between Acts 7:5, and Abraham's intentions of buying a permanent possession, for any price. And in fact Stephen's argument in Acts 7 is that Abraham and all the giants of faith in Israelite history were in fact not of total faith. And on that basis he is appealing to people with less than perfect faith to throw themselves at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

23:12 *Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land*- - See on :7.

23:13 *He spoke to Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if you will, please hear me. I will give the price of the field. Take it from me, and I will bury my dead there*- Abraham understood that what was offered free in such situations really had to be paid for. The record really is accurately recording words spoken thousands of years ago. The Hebrew for "price" is 'full silver / price'. Abraham was showing how desperate he was for that piece of land.

23:14 *Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him*- There really is such strong emphasis that Abraham didn't own the land whilst he lived in it. Gen. 23:4,7,12,13 seems to draw a difference in legal categories between "resident aliens", "natives" and "the local people". Abraham was an alien, and needed approval from the local community council to buy a burial place; and even then, the council had to speak with the owner and as it were do Abraham a favour. Further, the price of 400 shekels for some land with a cave in it to bury the dead was exorbitant (Gen. 23:14). There are records of the sale of whole villages in northern Syria dating from about this time, recorded in the Alalakh Tablets (E.A. Speiser, *Genesis* [The Anchor Bible] (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 171). They were sold for between 100 and 1000 shekels. Jeremiah paid 17 shekels for a field (Jer. 32:9); Omri paid 6000 shekels for the entire site of Samaria (1 Kings 16:24). If ever we feel ripped off by this world, unreasonably treated in this land which is eternally ours, powerless to protest, left without option as Abraham was- then we are following in his steps, and are truly his "seed".

One senses a growing humility within Abraham. Despite being a great man, called a "mighty prince" by local people, with a large household and private army, he personally

runs to entertain the strangers who later turned out to be Angels. He so believed in the promised land being ultimately his that he could offer to his younger relative Lot the choice of the best land to live in- when in their culture, the leader of the community, the elder, naturally had the best of everything. Progressive faith in the promises led Abraham to greater integrity and openness. In Gen. 21:25-32 we see Abraham as a secretive, furtive character, secretly digging wells in Abimelech's territory without telling him. By Gen. 23:1-20 we see Abraham buying land from the Hittites in a very public manner, sealed by witnesses- the record emphasizes the integrity and openness of the whole transaction. And this purchase of land is quoted in the New Testament as an example of Abraham's faith that he would inherit the land ultimately. The same effects will be seen in the lives of all those who truly believe in those same promises. Seeing it was traditional to bury people with their ancestors, the purchase of a family "burying place" was also a statement that Abraham had finally separated from his father's house back in Ur and Haran. From no w on, he saw Canaan as truly his land. We saw earlier how Abraham had struggled with this commanded separation from his father's house.

23:15 *My lord, listen to me. What is a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver between me and you? Therefore bury your dead*- This was an invitation to barter, stating the starting price, and yet being willing to go lower. But Abraham breaks with tradition and pays this very large price, without responding to the traditional invitation to barter. If the children of Heth are 'Hittites', as commonly thought, then it must be noted that the Hittites were themselves not the owners of the territory around that cave. Hebron belonged to the Amorites not the Hittites at the time of Josh. 10:5. Josh. 14:15 informs us that "the name of Hebron before was Kiriath Arba, after the greatest man among the Anakim"; "Kiriath Arba, named after the father of Anak (the same is Hebron)" (Josh. 21:11). The Hittites were not "Anakim", they originated in modern day Turkey. The Amorites were "Anakim". The cave was "before Mamre" (:17); and Mamre was the home of the Amorite leader called Mamre, who is called "the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner" (Gen. 14:13). The critics claim that Hittites would not have actually been the municipal council, as it were, in that area. And maybe they're right. In which case, it's possible we are to conclude that they presented as the owners when in fact they were themselves visiting traders, which is what the Hittites were noted for at that time. And so despite the large price, Abraham was actually deceived. And this gives more poignancy to the NT emphasis that he never permanently owned anything in Canaan, but will receive the land as eternal inheritance. The large price of the land is a hint that the Hittites were less than honest, especially if they began the bargaining by saying 'We will give it to you for free' when clearly that wasn't their intention. Comparison with other Bible texts about who owned Hebron would lead us to conclude that like the Gibeonites, they were deceiving Abraham. This is not stated, but we have here the hermeneutic of *remez*, or 'hints'. Whilst the Gospel message is clear in the Bible, much of the other material is to be interpreted by following hints. This principle is

in order to drive us to the text of Scripture and comparison of scripture with scripture, in order to join the dots and see the picture. I would argue that the information about these Hittites is to be read in the same way, and we can conclude that Abraham was deceived by them. The cave never became the permanent burial place of Abraham's longer term seed as he had imagined.

We recall that Abraham had received 1000 pieces of silver from Abimelech, as a kind of humiliation of him for betraying Sarah (Gen. 20:16). And now those same pieces of silver are used to buy her burial plot.

23:16 *Abraham listened to Ephron*- As noted on :15, the significance of this was that Abraham declined to barter, and the language of :15 was an invitation to knock him down from 400 to something far less. Abraham comes over as desperate to buy the land, to get himself a lasting possession, at any cost. Even though it never really worked out- we never hear of the cave being used for burials of his seed beyond the next two generations after him.

Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver which he had named in the audience of the children of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the current merchants' standard- Abraham surely realized the paradox, that he was buying his own eternal possession. The price was very high, and yet Abraham must have paid it with almost a smile on his face, knowing that actually all the land was his.

23:17 *So the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all of its borders, were deeded*- The stress upon "deeded" is to highlight the paradox, that the land had been eternally deeded to Abraham and his seed. The language of "borders", defining where the parcel began and ended, is also almost ironic, seeing that the whole land belonged to Abraham. Likewise the strict legal definitions of what was included in the deal are almost laughable when we perceive that the entire land was eternally Abraham's.

23:18 *To Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city*- It was God who had given Abraham the entire land for an eternal possession. And yet the elders of the city sat there in all solemnity as if they were global power brokers. The contrast and paradox is being highlighted. Gen. 22:18 spoke of how the gate of all would be in Abraham's power; but he lived in faith of that day as then unseen.

23:19 *After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre (that is, Hebron), in the land of Canaan*- "After this" refers not to the initial meeting with the local elders, but to the receipt of the property deed from those "at the

gate of the city" (:17,18). There is extreme emphasis upon the legal process; to highlight the paradox in the fact that Abraham had the whole earth deeded to him in possession for ever- by God and not man.

23:20 *The field, and the cave that is in it, were deeded to Abraham for a possession of a burying place by the children of Heth*- "Deeded" is AV "made sure". This is however alluded to in Rom. 4:13,16. The "promise to Abraham and his seed, that he should be heir of the world, did not come through the law, but through... faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed. Not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all". The 'making sure' was achieved by God's grace, through faith. And this confirmation or making sure of the promises to Abraham, which encapsulate the Gospel of the Kingdom, was through the death of the Lord Jesus. Not by paying money. And this is our challenge; to believe, by faith alone, that by grace alone our inheritance is yet future, but is "made sure" by the Lord's death, and not by any human device. Our faith in this is sadly not total; and neither was Abraham's. But he endured in faith, and in this sense is "the father of us all".

The repetition of "deeded" in :17,18,20 serves to rub in the paradox- that the whole land, including the field and cave. were deeded to Abraham *by God* and *for ever*. "Deeded" translates the same Hebrew word used of God 'establishing' His covenant (Gen. 6:18; 9:9,11; 17:7,19). The weakness of human deeding is set up against the power of God's eternal deeding. And that establishing was ultimately through the Lord's death. And Abraham has just been taught this in Gen. 22; God there swore by an oath, on His own immortal life, as it were, that He would truly fulfil the promises to Abraham. But now Abraham seeks to 'establish' that in his own strength and with his own wealth. As Hebrews 6 explains, we have anchor-firm hope and consolation, because the promise of salvation has in fact been further confirmed or established / made sure by the Lord's death. Because of this further confirmation, our Hope is "stedfast" (Heb. 6:19), the same word for "made sure" in Rom. 4:16. And again the same word in Heb. 9:17, the covenant / testament is "of force", it is established, by the death of the Lord Jesus.

GENESIS CHAPTER 24

24:1 *Abraham was old, and well stricken in age. Yahweh had blessed Abraham in all things*- The promised blessings referred to the things of the Kingdom and the Lord Jesus, but Abraham had a primary experience of these blessings in his secular life; we too experience the Kingdom blessings "now but not yet". Peter interprets the blessing as the forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:25,26). The stress on their material blessings therefore points forward to our spiritual riches of blessing in Christ. Even earlier in Abraham's life,

"Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold" (Gen. 13:1). Other references to Abraham's wealth occur in Gen. 13:6 and Gen. 14:23. Jacob too was blessed with material wealth (Gen. 31:16; 33:11 AVmg.). His parting with Esau because they were both so wealthy (Gen. 36:7) echoes the division between Abraham and Lot and Abraham and Abimelech for the same reason (Gen. 13:6). The similarities between these incidents serves to emphasize the wealth of the family. The prosperity of Lot in Sodom is also highlighted (Gen. 14:12 Heb.). Each of them seems to have accumulated wealth in their own right in addition to inheriting it.

Rashi claims that "blessed" has the same numeric value as "son"; as if the blessing had been fulfilled in having Isaac as his son. But in fact the blessing had to be fulfilled through Isaac in turn having a son. And he was unmarried; maybe because he had turned into an introvert, a mummy's boy who had been obsessed over by his parents, who named him 'laughter' because *he* was *their* joy; and as a result of the abuse [possibly sexual] from his older half brother Ishmael. This is why Isaac always appears as passive, even in his agreeing to be offered by Abraham. It was unusual for a chieftain's son to be unmarried by 40. He clearly was dominated by his mother, and therefore we read that he was "comforted" over his mother's death, three years after her funeral, by the appearance of Rebekah- who is thereby presented as a surrogate mother for him. Hence we read that they got married in his mother's tent.

24:2 *Abraham said to his servant, the elder of his house, who ruled over all that he had*- Presumably Eliezer. Eliezer had once been chosen by Abraham to *inherit* all that he had (Gen. 15:2); but he had now made him just manager over it all, and signed it all over to Isaac after his death (:36). And yet Eliezer very commendably seeks only the best for the Abraham family and the extension of God's purpose through them. We note that Abraham was extremely wealthy- with 318 servants. "All" that he had had originally been set to transfer to Eliezer- until Isaac was born. "All" Abraham had was under Eliezer. But now it had all been given to Isaac, although Eliezer managed it. If Isaac died childless, then it would return to Eliezer or his descendants. The oath he took not to marry Isaac to a Canaanite may not have applied to his family, who were from Damascus. So he was keenly aware of the advantage to him of a "no deal".

Please put your hand under my thigh- This appears to be a reference to Abraham's circumcised, reproductive organ. The oath was relative to the covenant made with him, which Abraham knew included Isaac and the raising of a Godly seed in Isaac's line. Clearly Abraham didn't think that the promised blessings would be given automatically; he realized that he and his descendants must do what they could to realize them and live according to them.

24:3 *I will make you swear by Yahweh, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I*

live- It could be argued that Abraham was again trying to force through the fulfilment of God's promises. He had been told that he would have a great seed, and the promises of blessing were made to Isaac and Ishmael alike. But Abraham and Sarah wanted the Divine purpose to extend through their beloved Isaac; and so therefore Abraham wished to ensure that he married someone who had also been exposed to Yahweh worship. More positively, it could be argued that Abraham realized that having a common faith in Yahweh was critical to the production of a Godly seed, and he simply wanted the best for his son in spiritual terms. Although as discussed on :6, this view is problematic. Perhaps he was seeking to stop Eliezer marrying Isaac off to his own daughter or relative.

In this chapter we have several occurrences of "Yahweh Elohim"; here and also in :7,12,27,42,48; the phrase also occurs in Genesis 2 and 3 often, as well as in Gen. 26:24; 27:20; 28:13; 32:9. There is a theory that Genesis is comprised of two accounts, one written by someone who used the Yahweh Name, and another by one who used *elohim*. They supposedly were fused together. But the occurrence of the names together makes this theory problematic.

24:4 *But you shall go to my country, and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac*- It follows that there were none of Abraham's country or kindred, which he had been commanded to leave, living anywhere near him. He had truly and fully obeyed the command to separate from them, although as noted on Gen. 11 and 12, it took him decades to get there.

24:5 *The servant said to him, What if the woman isn't willing to follow me to this land? Must I bring your son again to the land you came from?*- Servants were accustomed to fulfilling requirements to the letter, but not taking any initiative. This is where the parables which speak of us as servants have an element of unreality- for we are servants who are left to trade talents and manage the household affairs of our Lord on our own initiative. And for the one talent man, he felt this was too much to ask.

24:6 *Abraham said to him, Beware that you don't bring my son there again*- Abraham knew that Canaan and not Mesopotamia was the promised land, and he wanted Isaac to remain within the things of the Kingdom, rather than returning to Abraham's land of origin. We see here how totally Abraham now self-identified as a man of the *eretz* and had fully broken with his background. Abraham considered that if a woman wasn't willing to come and live in the promised land and live the Kingdom life now, then she wasn't worth marrying in order to raise a Godly seed.

At first blush, Abraham's concerns may appear contradictory: he is a) concerned that his son doesn't return to where Abraham had come from, and yet b) he wants his son to marry someone from there, and not from Canaan. I suggest that here we see Abraham in weakness, again. He had been commanded to separate from both his native land,

and his family- in order to receive the promises of a new land and a new family, through his "seed". He had very grudgingly and half heartedly obeyed these commands, with God almost forcing him to fulfil these conditions. He wanted Isaac to not return to their ancestral homeland; to fulfil the 'land' promise. But he seemed less interest in the 'seed' promise. For he wants his son to marry into his own natural family, which was surely a studied rejection of the spirit of the commandment to separate from his own family. And yet, God worked through that weakness, as we see in the providential chosing of a wife for Isaac. Even though the connections with Padanaram and Rebekah's family were to be extremely destructive and difficult for the next generation, i.e. Jacob. There seems no real reason for Abraham insisting his son marry back into his own family. They were equally idolatrous as the women of Canaan. Laban's daughters were clearly idolaters, Rachel in particular. And Laban in Gen. 31:53 swears by the gods of Nahor rather than the God of Abraham. It is specifically stated that Abraham's father was an idolater. "The city of Nahor", Abraham's brother, is therefore associated with idolatry. It is almost as if he resented the command to break with his family, and even at this late stage in his life, was seeking to get around it by insisting his son marry back into that family.

It is simply not the case that there were no true believers in Canaan, for we have encountered Melchizedek, who was a priest of the true God- and presumably he was a priest to some body of people in Jerusalem who also believed in the true God. So the Biblical data is that the family in Padanaram were idolaters; but there were in fact true believers in the Jerusalem area of Canaan. But Abraham wanted to keep marriage within his wider family, even though he had been commanded to totally separate from them. And we must factor in the repeated evidence within the record that Abraham was not totally obedient to the call to separate from his family [he married his half-sister; only separated from his father when his father died, rather than when he was asked to; only separated from Lot when Lot himself chose to separate]. See on :14. Gen. 31:3 records God telling Jacob whilst he lived with Laban to return to the land and people of his fathers- Canaan. This is the very opposite of Abraham's reasoning here- that the land of his fathers was Mesopotamia. The real land of his fathers was not there in Mesopotomia, but Canaan. Yet Abraham had not perceived that, for he reasons exactly the other way around.

24:7 *Yahweh, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house, and from the land of my birth, who spoke to me, and Who swore to me, saying, 'I will give this land to your seed'*- See on 1 Pet. 1:10. As with many Christian youngsters today, the avoidance of marrying those in the surrounding world just seemed too much to ask. But Abraham knew that a way would be made. As God had *taken* Abram from Ur and Haran and Lot, so God would *take* a woman from there, suitable for Isaac.

Abraham was made to us wander from his father's house (Gen. 20:13). God was the one who brought about Abraham's obedience. "From thence [Haran]... *God* removed him into (Canaan)" (Acts 7:4 R.V.). Yet Abraham was, in the end, a willing participant in the process. It could be argued that even here, Abraham was slipping backwards- because he wants his son to marry into his own family, just as he had married Sarah and his brother had married his own niece. Yet Abraham believed that as God had *taken* Abram away from Ur and Haran and Lot, so God would *take* a woman from there, suitable for Isaac. That Abraham did finally break with his family is hinted at by the way that Laban speaks of "the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor- may they judge between us (Gen. 31:53 Heb.). Laban recognized that Nahor and Abraham worshipped different gods- whereas we know that initially, they worshipped the same gods. Heb. 11:8 records things from a positive perspective too, as if there was instant obedience from Abraham: "By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went". Truly, the Biblical record imputes righteousness to Abraham, and thus sets a pattern for all of us, the equally faltering and stumbling children of Abraham. The comment "So Abram departed [Heb. 'went'- s.w. Gen. 11:31; 12:1], as the Lord had spoken unto him" (Gen. 12:4) is surely the beginning of the wonderful theme of righteousness being imputed to Abraham!

"The God of Heaven" (:3,7) is an unusual term for the time of Abraham, and is commonly used in the books inspired around the time of the exile. This could suggest that Genesis was edited, under inspiration, at the time when Judah were in exile. The relevant themes are clear- God's people as wanderers amongst the nations, being exhorted not to mix with the surrounding world nor intermarry with them.

He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there- Abraham told his servant that God would send His Angel before him, so that his mission to find a suitable wife for Isaac would succeed. The Angel prepared in prospect for the success of the mission; but it still depended upon the woman's freewill. The whole incident in Genesis 24 can be read as typical of the search, through the preaching of the Gospel, for the bride of Christ. And yet Abraham realized that even with the Angels preparing the way, there has to be some element of human freewill. It was possible that despite all the preparation, some might still refuse.

24:8 *If the woman isn't willing to follow you, then you shall be clear from this my oath. Only you shall not bring my son there again*- The implication could be that Isaac would have to remain single, and God would raise up a seed for him in some miraculous way. We are reminded of how Abraham said that he and Isaac would return, after sacrificing Isaac. The promises meant to him what they should to us- that somehow, even if we don't see the way, if the path seems impossible- they will be fulfilled. Despite God potentially preparing the way for individuals to become part of the bride of the promised

seed, the Lord Jesus- there is still the genuine possibility that we may not respond, preferring the cozy status quo of our lives rather than pushing off into the unknown and resigning all we one held dear. Abraham twice stresses that Isaac is not to return to live in Mesopotamia (:6,8), in loyalty to the command to leave there and separate from it. Yet the command was to sever from both his land and his family of origin. He is keen to obey the command to separate from the land, in order to receive a new land; but less enthusiastic to separate from his family. Just as his seed seem more interested in the promise of the Kingdom of God than in the things of the Lord Jesus, Abraham's seed.

Abraham doesn't say what Eliezer should do in the case that his mission failed. This omission is very obvious. The conclusion might be that he implied Isaac was to remain single and therefore have no child. Somehow he believed that the promise of a seed would still be fulfilled even though there was no visible way it could be. Abraham had been here before; he had been asked to sacrifice Isaac and had agreed. He had learned that faith in God means trust, trust that He will somehow fulfil His promises even though the path to that fulfilment is invisible and humanly impossible.

We note that Isaac did in fact send his son Jacob "back there again" to find a wife. He didn't learn the lesson, and retained the weakness of his father, in not separating from the original Abraham family. And Jacob suffered because of that. What the father allows or cuts himself slack over will likely be repeated by the son, on an even bigger scale. As we see with David and Solomon with horses and women.

24:9 *The servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter-* As noted on :2, this request to touch Abraham's circumcised reproductive organ was because the whole question of a wife for Isaac was related to the covenant. It was to be done in response to the covenant, which implied that Abraham's seed would marry within the faith.

24:10 *The servant took ten camels of his master's camels, and departed, having a variety of good things of his master's with him. He arose, and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor-* Ten camels could carry a lot. It would have been an impressive display that the promised blessings had received an incipient fulfilment. "For all the good things of his master were in his hand" (AV) helps us to see the servant as representative of the Lord Jesus in His role as the seeker of the bride, as well as being the groom. The Hebrew for "good things" is used of the blessings of all "good things" which were to come upon Abraham's seed (Dt. 6:11; Josh. 23:14,15); and this language is behind the description of the things of the new covenant as "good things" (Heb. 9:11; 10:1; Rom. 10:15).

Abraham had been asked to separate from Mesopotamia and his entire family. He struggled over the decades to do this, only doing so when Lot left him. We wonder why Abraham should assume that his family there knew about Yahweh and would have more spiritually minded young women there than in Canaan. They were after all idolaters; we

must give due weight to Josh. 24:2: "Thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old time beyond the River, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor: and they served other gods". But Abraham is apparently sure that the family of Nahor will be a good family to marry back into. Perhaps he had sent message back to them about his experiences with Yahweh, and they had positively responded. Laban does uses the Yahweh Name; but his later behaviour suggests he didn't believe in Him. And we hardly get the impression that Eliezer knew the family. So perhaps Abraham's attraction to his father's family was still so strong, that he saw them more positively than he ought to have done.

24:11 *He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the evening time, the time that women go out to draw water*- The well was the logical place to go to meet local young women. Moses wrote Genesis, and he will go on to record how he also met his wife by a well. And we think of the Lord meeting the Samaritan woman at a well, and Jacob meeting his wife likewise. Clearly there is a kind of Divine hallmark stamped on all these experiences. He works in the same outline manner with us all, and there are points of connection between our lives and those of others, both in our generation and in Biblical history. Man is not alone, we are not adrift, at the mercy of the winds of fortune. God is active through His Spirit, and working according to a plan.

24:12 *He said, Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham*- "Kindness" is a word often associated with God's keeping covenant with His covenant people. It is a way of pleading the promises, asking God to fulfil His promises to Abraham, rather than simply wishing for God to be "kind" to Abraham. The fulfilment required a Godly , and that was what Eliezer was seeking. He prayed according to God's will. "Success" is literally 'to bring the face to'. Jacob uses the phrase in Gen. 27:20 in claiming to have had "success" from God in bringing venison so quickly. //

24:13 *Behold, I am standing by the spring of water. The daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water*- God of course knows all things; but like David in the Psalms, Eliezer shares with God his location and situation. This is not to inform God, as it were; but rather for our benefit. It helps us to verbalize our situation before God, it brings about an openness toward God on our side.

24:14 *Let it happen, that the young lady to whom I will say, 'Please let down your pitcher, that I may drink', and she will say, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels drink'--let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master*- This raises the issue of whether it is correct to set God signs to fulfil. Yet God seems to have worked through it in this case. The condition which Eliezer set was pretty tough; to water ten camels was a major task which would have taken some hours, and it was already evening (:11). The family would worry what had become of their young lady, and the only appropriate thing to do would be to

accompany the woman back home. The chance of a woman making this offer was very slim; so slim that we wonder if Eliezer might possibly have been trying to release himself from the responsibility. And as they had come on a long journey, the servants riding the camels would have been quite capable of watering their camels as they had done many times already on the trip. We note that Eliezer prays, he is no atheist, and yet maybe he doubts whether the promises to Abraham will be fulfilled; he sets this rather difficult hoop for anyone to jump through, and then says that if it happens, then he "will know that You have shown kindness to my master". I have earlier suggested that "kindness" is a technical term which often refers to the covenant. Seeing the condition being set was so unlikely, it could be argued that he was trying to disprove the fulfilment of the promises. God could have ignored this kind of manipulation; but He didn't, and instead brought Eliezer to his knees by actually making the girl jump through the hoop. For God clearly made Rebekah respond as she did, when she had no reason to. The whole incident is parabolic and typical of the calling out of the bride of Abraham's seed; and we too are made to do things which we otherwise would never have done. Thus the Spirit works, to bring us to be the Master's bride.

"Appointed" translates a Hebrew word which carries the idea of being declared right; it has a moral sense to it, and is similar in form, although not identical with, the word used about Abraham being 'counted righteous' on account of his faith (Gen. 15:6). The reference is not to prior choosing or predestination, but to being declared as the right one; the theme of imputed righteousness is therefore continued. It was not that Rebekah was spiritually minded, but rather that she, like her relative Abraham, was counted right because she believed on some level.

The human chances of a woman offering to do this were very slim. It takes a long time to water one camel, and there were ten of them. Other people would've wanted to use the well, and Rebekah had to draw a far larger amount of water than anyone else would be needing. 'Can I just fill my bucket?' would've been the obvious request from everyone else in the line. What does this reflect about the attitude of Eliezer? He was setting God an apparently impossible gambit, throwing down an unlikely gauntlet. And God came through it. We note in :12 that the servant "said" rather than "prayed"; and so in :45 "Before I had done speaking *to my heart*". He spoke to himself rather than praying directly to Yahweh, whom he only considered 'the God of my master' (although the flow of events brings him at times to fall on his face before this amazing God). This would contribute to the sense that Eliezer is not a personal worshipper of Yahweh but is just throwing down a gauntlet to Yahweh. Surely the logical thing would have been to seek out the relatives of Abraham first. But instead he sets up this apparently impossible hoop for God to come through. This would explain why as she was doing the hard and long work of watering the camels, Eliezer “was watching her silently, to find out whether or not the LORD had given him success” (:21). We wonder what were his thoughts. It was as if had she failed to water the tenth camel, he would've turned tail and returned

to Canaan. That is how I read that. But when she struggles through to the end, he has to grudgingly accept that indeed, this is of God. And this makes sense of how he "was wondering" as he watched her- for the same Hebrew word is used of cities being "waste and desolate" (Is. 6:11). He was desolated that his plan had gone so wrong. Rebekah had indeed done exactly what he thought she would never do- to offer to give his camels drink also.

The way he insists that she leave her family immediately could also be read as his almost pushing the plan towards failure. For it was most unlikely that a young woman would just up and leave immediately. If a relatively random stranger turns up and offers you a fortune to take your young virgin daughter to a distant land- who would immediately agree? Especially when the terms were, that she left immediately. I suggest Eliezer was trying to elicit a "No deal" out of it. In any case, only a relatively poor girl would come to draw water herself. She would be either a servant, or from a family who had few servants. He turned up with 10 camels loaded with wealth, rather like arriving with a cavalcade of expensive vehicles. And he proposes the marriage to a poor girl drawing water. It was very unlikely she would believe him or agree. Again, he is setting her up to say no. Likewise he gives the girl very expensive golden nose rings as soon as she had watered the camels. These were a sign of betrothal (Ez. 16:11,12). They were totally disproportionate as a mere "thank you" for watering camels. Did he expect her to just agree to marry someone far away, to whom she had been verbally introduced by a stranger met at a well? I suggest Eliezer was setting her up to say "No". He had turned up with 10 camels, at a time when camels were the transport of the mega wealthy; most folks travelled by horse or donkey. And asks this village girl by a well to marry his master's son in a foreign land. We must note carefully that he offers the betrothal presents *before* he even knows which family she is from (only in :23 does he ask what family she is from). I conclude that he offered this random girl the betrothal gifts before he knew whether she was a relative or not. He wanted her to refuse, so he could be free from the obligation to get a wife for Isaac from Mesopotamia. Time and again he is surprised. He sets the condition that the girl must offer to water all the camels; and she does. He offers her betrothal gifts- and she accepts. He goes to her home, and demands she leave immediately. She agrees. All his best efforts to elicit a refusal are turned against him.

Perhaps he wanted to marry off his own relative to Isaac. He may have reasoned that because he was from Damascus, the prohibition on marrying a Canaanite didn't apply to him. Rebekah's family come over later as avaricious. They agreed because of the huge wealth offered to them; for to let their daughter or sister go so quickly was unheard of in a culture where such agreements took much time. In :33, the LXX and some manuscripts strangely [at first blush] have Eliezer setting the table and putting food on it. This reading has been dismissed because it seems so unlikely, and an affront to hospitality. But perhaps the reading is true- and it would be another indication that

Eliezer was setting up the family to reject his offer. He himself states that his deal with Abraham was that if the relatives refused to let the girl go with him, then he was free of his duty to find a wife for Isaac. And he seems to be trying to engineer that refusal. Abraham's words "if the woman should not want" (:8) are twisted by Eliezer into "if you come to my clan and they refuse you..." (:41). Eliezer is therefore trying to provoke the girl's family to say "no". Rebekah's unexpected agreement, rather like her offer to water the camels, is upstaging all Eliezer's best efforts to stop the deal happening. It was unusual that the girl herself should be made the deciding factor in the dispute as to whether she should leave immediately. It was "no deal" unless she left immediately; for Eliezer was still desperate to achieve a "no deal" despite his recognition that Yahweh was at work in all this. Her family likewise were looking for a "no deal", for they say they cannot respond positively, nor negatively. Both sides were looking for Rebekah to say "no", and that was why she was summoned and given the deciding vote in the matter. But she says "yes". Clearly the whole thing was overruled to show that this marriage was indeed made in Heaven, despite both of the wider parties trying to stop it.

The heroine of the story is Rebekah, who perceived the hand of God and said yes straight away. Abraham's motivations were also mixed, as discussed on :6. We too look back on our lives, and the major choices within them- baptism, marriage, career path etc. And our motives were mixed. But still God worked through it all, to bring forward His loving purpose with us. We can indeed read this story as that of providence, faith etc. But there is a back story to it, and careful imagination and re-living of the text removes the idealized, romantic view of 'providence' which many wish to see in it. Life is not a bed of roses, faith coexists with unbelief, and human motivation is mixed. Just look at your own life.

Abraham has earlier spoken rather disparagingly of "This Eliezer of Damascus" whom he only reluctantly would have as the inheritor of his wealth (Gen. 15:2). It was in Eliezer's interests that Abraham's child would not marry nor produce children- so that he and his descendants could inherit the wealth. Eliezer addresses Yahweh as the God of his master Abraham, as if he did not fully accept Yahweh as his own God. Perhaps we can infer a degree of scepticism in him; for he has already opined to Abraham that a woman would be unlikely to follow him all the way back to Canaan. Nor would her family probably be very enthusiastic about such a proposition. And so whilst the prayer was sincere and genuine, it likely reflected a scepticism as to whether God would really respond. If no woman fulfilled the challenge, he was likely ready to return to Abraham and say 'Just as I warned you. No deal'. He has no contingency plan. It was this slim chance or nothing. That is the logic of the situation. The whole experience surely ought to have persuaded him of the truth of Abraham's God. And we also see that although Abraham's desire to take a wife from Padanaram was not purely motivated, and possibly downright wrong (see on :6), God clearly worked through it. Rebekah's hard work ethic,

running to be generous to foreigners, matched the spirit of Abraham in his old age. It was a marriage made in Heaven, but brokered and arranged through Eliezer's scepticism and almost cynical giving God an apparently impossible test.

24:15 *It happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher on her shoulder-* This is the classic example of God hearing prayer before it is spoken. Prayer is therefore for our benefit rather than for the sake of transmitting information to God which He didn't know. We note from Is. 65:24 that this experience of prayer being heard and answered before it is uttered is one of the joys of the Kingdom age; and yet this is part of the Kingdom life which we can even now experience. The details are added to encourage us to play Bible television with the words- her pitcher on her shoulder, silhouetted against the setting sun; and a relative of Abraham just as he had wished for.

24:16 *The young lady was very beautiful to look at, a virgin, neither had any man known her-* The three terms are all saying the same thing- a "young lady... virgin... neither had any man known her". The triple emphasis is to prepare us to expect that she is ideally suited to marry and bear a child into Abraham's line. When we go on to read that she was barren for 20 years, we are seeing how God doesn't automatically use those who are ideally qualified for a role. He may even delay or impede their usage, so that all is of His Spirit and grace rather than of the flesh. And we have all surely seen this in life many times. The word "neither" is used in the Semitic sense of 'not [only] B but also A". This must be remembered when we read things like "Christ sent me not to baptize"; the idea is "not [only] to baptize".

She went down to the spring, filled her pitcher, and came up- As noted on :15, we are given the picture of her walking down the steps to the well and then climbing up again with her pitcher full- as if the Divine cameraman has zoomed in upon her, and we are watching her from where Eliezer was sitting.

24:17 *The servant ran to meet her and said, Please give me a drink, a little water from your pitcher-* As observed on :16, the Divine camera is positioned where Eliezer was sitting, and it remains there. We see Eliezer running toward her, having prayed and set up a situation whereby if she responded in a most unusual way, then she would be the one. We notice the sense of speed in the narrative; he runs to meet her, she hurries (:18) in response, Eliezer refuses to eat at Laban's house until the matter is finished, and then he and Rebekah both wish to return to Abraham immediately. Once we are moving in step with the Spirit, life takes on a great speed once we perceive that every movement of ours will unleash the Spirit to lead us further.

24:18 *She said, Drink, my lord. She hurried, and let down her pitcher on her hand, and gave him drink*- As we have seen in the previous verses, it's as if the Divine cameraman is zoomed very close in now; we see the "pitcher on her hand" and can imagine her letting it down to give drink to this stranger. Once a large pitcher was full and balanced on the head, it was a major inconvenience to let it down. She would naturally have wondered why the man had not run up to her before, seeing he was watching her, and asked for water before she had put it up on her head. The way Eliezer does this could almost lead us to think that he was setting her up to fail the preconditions which he was setting God. The normal reply would have been: 'Sorry I can't, now the pitcher is balanced on my head'. And in no way with the sun going down would the woman then offer to water ten camels of a stranger. Perhaps he was really looking for a way out of his mission; he set up the preconditions which appeared impossible for anyone to reach, and set the conclusion- that if they were failed, then he would be free of the oath and could return home. The fact Rebekah was moved by the Spirit to fulfil them all... therefore made him collapse before Yahweh in deep devotion, having been transformed from cynic to believer by Rebekah's response.

It shouldn't just be the nearness of the Lord's return that makes us urgent. Our decisions to give over each part of our lives, radically, to Jesus should be made not just because life is short and the Lord is at the door; but also because it might otherwise be too late to undo the damage a self-engrossed life has already caused, to the self and to others. Rebekah responded immediately to the call to go marry Isaac, in a story which is clearly to be read as an acted parable of the search for a bride for Jesus. Her 'quick' response is one of her characteristics (Gen. 24:18,20,26,46,64). Abraham likewise "rose up early" after his night time vision, requiring him to offer his son to God (Gen. 22:1,3). Joshua "therefore" started to attack the confederacy of local kings, in the middle of the night, immediately after God had assured him of victory (Josh. 10:9). David could write: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (Ps. 119:60). We cannot be passive on receiving the opportunity to serve God. We will urgently seek to do something with what we have been enabled to do for the Lord: "The servant who got five bags *went quickly* to invest the money and earned five more bags" (Mt. 25:16 NCV).

24:19 *When she had done giving him drink, she said, I will also draw for your camels, until they have done drinking*- As noted above, this was all a most unlikely response. She is presented as having no reason for making it. It was "evening", sun was setting; to water ten camels was a major job; the man had come running to her exactly when she had already got her own pitcher balanced on her head, and she had to take it down again, unstop it and give him drink from it, meaning she had to pour the rest away (:20). Why make this response? Surely God made her make it, in order to meet the rather bizarre preconditions which the [sceptical?] Eliezer had set up. There are times when we reflect that we have done or said something which was not what we naturally wanted to do. Or we do something having no idea why we did it. This is the movement of the Spirit,

and in the great parable of our salvation and calling, Rebekah's humanly irrational response speaks of the Spirit's movement in our lives, that our response may be of grace and not of human volition.

24:20 *She hurried, and emptied her pitcher into the trough*- I suggested on :19 that she had to unstop her pitcher to give Eliezer water, and once it was unstopped and she had given water to a stranger, she had to pour the rest of it away. This heightens the sense of extraordinary inconvenience which she was being put to, and yet she so willingly responded.

And ran again to the well to draw, and drew for all his camels- Her hurrying may have been because the sun was going down and she didn't want to return home after dark, nor have her family worrying about her absence. But the rest of the narrative suggests that the 'hurrying' was because God's purpose was being worked out by willing people. He may appear very slow, but when people are willing, the speed of the Spirit's movement is amazing.

24:21 *The man looked at her amazed, remaining silent, to know whether Yahweh had made his journey prosperous or not*- I suggested on :18 that Eliezer had set hoops for the girl to jump through which may have appeared unreasonable, in order to get himself out of the oath to find a wife for Isaac and return home. But his ridiculous preconditions have all been met. And yet despite being "amazed", or 'stunned' as the Hebrew means, he apparently still doubts whether Yahweh has prospered his journey. However, once the camels are watered, he then gives her the engagement presents (:22). It was as if he had to wait until the camels were all watered before proceeding. Or the Hebrew could imply that he was so stunned that he couldn't speak, because he had known / perceived that Yahweh had answered positively the question as to whether the journey had prospered or not. It clearly had been, and he was stunned, at how his skepticism and setting up a humanly impossible precondition had been answered.

Ask, believing that you will receive. Otherwise, prayer becomes just a conscience salver, rattled off to calm ourselves rather than meaningfully request something from the throne of Heaven. Eliezer had the answer to his prayer, just as he had asked; but, initially, he didn't believe it had happened. We are *so* similar. It is in those moments that we realize just what a momentous thing it is, to ask something of God, to be performed on this earth. And to realize it actually happened. He did it, for me, a little ant crawling on the surface of a small planet that is hurtling through space, in a remote part of His universe...

24:22 *So it happened, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold*- "The man" was a messenger, and so Rebekah ranks amongst those who showed

hospitality to strangers and thereby entertained messengers / angels unaware (Heb. 13:2). The half shekel was later the price of the redemption money, the sign that one was numbered amongst Israel (Ex. 38:26). Lange's commentary demonstrates that such a nose ring (Heb.) and bracelets of that weight were the engagement presents used at the time, and are still used amongst some Bedouin today. Rebekah is presented as having no say in the matter; she was moved to respond, and then for this she was decorated with engagement presents for an unknown man in an unknown distant land. It all rather sounds like the call of Abram- he didn't understand, but said yes to God, and was carried away by event and circumstance to an unknown land- the very same land to which Rebekah was now called away. So it is with our calling to become the bride of the Seed, the Lord Jesus. The essential and only critical thing is to remain part of the program, to keep responding, to never say "no".

24:23 *And said, Whose daughter are you? Please tell me. Is there room in your father's house for us to lodge in?*- Eliezer comes over as very 'forward'. It was not the done thing to invite yourself as a guest, especially when Eliezer had a group of servants and ten camels who also needed a bed for the night. The whole incident speaks of how God takes the initiative in coming into our lives with the unusual call, and our responding to it, partly from our own volition but largely from the prompting of the Spirit.

24:24 *She said to him, I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor*- Genealogy and self-identity was usually traced through males. But she identifies herself according to her grandmother Milcah, and this was of course the way of identifying herself as one of the Abraham family. Perhaps she had indeed heard of Abraham's experiences with Yahweh and chose to identify herself with that family; and God responded to that by sending Eliezer to call her away to marry into it. Now we see the significance of the comment in Gen. 22:20 that Abraham heard that Milcah had born children to his brother Nahor. "Milcah" means "queen" and this idea was behind Sarai being renamed to Sarah.

24:25 *She said moreover to him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in*- Her response is as unusually positive as her offer to water the ten camels and give Eliezer water when her sealed pitcher was already balanced on her head or shoulder. She after all was the unmarried daughter, and such agreements had to be made by the male head of the family. 'Something' made her respond like this; that is the impression we get throughout the record. And that 'something' was the Spirit. It was not that a message was preached and she responded in faith. She was as it were made to respond, just as Abram was, by his own father taking him out of Ur. We too cannot claim that our positive response to the Gospel was all by dint of our own devotion, faith, appreciation and intellectual purity of understanding.

24:26 *The man bowed his head, and worshiped Yahweh*- As noted on :21, the man was 'stunned'. He had set up an apparently possible precondition in order to prove that this

mission was over and failed; but God met that precondition. And so he gave in, and humbles himself before Yahweh. The Hebrew for "worshipped" means to prostrate. Eliezer fell down on the ground beside that well, as if in the presence of an invisible being. This is how real the invisible God came to be for him.

24:27 *He said, Blessed be Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His loving kindness and His truth toward my master. As for me, Yahweh has led me in the way to the house of my master's relatives*- See on Gen. 25:23. I suggested on ::21 and :26 that Eliezer had begun to doubt whether the promises to Abraham [the usual referent of "kindness and truth"] would really be fulfilled in this way. But he praises Yahweh for fulfilling them. The "as for me..." may suggest he still didn't feel that this Yahweh was his personal God; he felt he had simply been used and directed miraculously as this wonderful God worked out His purpose and fulfilled His promises.

The same Hebrew words for being 'led in the way' are used of how God led Israel in the way to Canaan, also by an Angel (Ex. 13:17,21; Neh. 9:12). Moses was retelling this story to encourage his primary audience, as well as us; that experience is not random, but part of being led.

The AV "I being in the way, the Lord led me..." would suggest that if we make the effort to follow in the way demanded by the promises of grace, then we will be led further. We think of how as the believers ministered to the Lord, they were led further to reach out to the Gentiles; we are led ever further (see on Acts 13:2).

24:28 *The young lady ran*- There was a definite trait of energy and industrious activity amongst the Abraham family, indicated by the record of Rebekah running to respond to the call of Eliezer to marry Isaac (Gen. 24:18,20,28,58). Laban too was spritely (Gen. 24:29). And Abraham as an old boy *ran* to meet the Angels, he *hastened* into the tent, and personally *ran* unto the herd rather than wave his wand at the servants (or the wife) to do it (Gen. 18:2,6,7). The way in which it is stressed that he got up early in the morning gives the same impression (Gen. 19:27; 20:8; 21:14; 22:3; the same is said of Jacob, Gen. 28:18 and Laban, Gen. 31:55). The mixture of zeal and business acumen is reflected in the way both Abraham and Lot greeted the Angels in a similar, outgoing, gentlemanly manner (Gen. 19:1-3 cp. Gen. 18:1-6). Note how Rebekah immediately says "I will go" (Heb. *elek*)- just as Abraham had been called to "go" from Ur (*lek*, Gen. 12:1); "and he went" (*wayyelek*, Gen. 12:4). This would seem to suggest an undesigned similarity of character between the family members.

And told her mother's house about these words- We note "her mother's house" and not "her father's". We do not encounter her father in the record, so perhaps he was dead. Or as the women lived in separate dwellings, she may have gone and told them first.

24:29 *Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban. Laban ran out to the man, to the spring*- We can conclude that she left Eliezer and his caravan at the well, and ran home with the good news; for Laban then runs out to the well to meet Eliezer.

24:30 *It happened, when he saw the ring, and the bracelets on his sister's hands*- They would have been valuable, and his basic materialistic instinct is portrayed here. When he saw them, he was interested.

And when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, This is what the man said to me, that he came to the man- This is similar to how the Queen of Sheba only believed the words she heard once she saw things (1 Kings 10:5,6). And that basic psychology is true to this day; the message of the gospel, the Divine promises, only becomes real when concrete evidence is seen in human lives of the primary realization of the blessings in the here and now.

Behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring- Again we are invited to visualize the scene, the cameraman as it were travelling with Laban as he ran.

24:31 *He said, Come in, you blessed of Yahweh*- Although Laban is not presented as very spiritual, he uses the Yahweh name. It seems for sure that Abraham had sent message back to his family about his experiences with Yahweh. Perhaps it was news of positive response to it which led Abraham to seek a wife for Isaac from there. Laban recognizes that the Abraham household had been blessed by Yahweh; because he saw the material blessings which the camels were laden with. These were but a foretaste of the more essential spiritual blessings.

Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and room for the camels- The preparation must have been very quick, because the well was only running distance from their home. Laban's later invitation of Jacob into his home was also motivated by hopes of material gain rather than any desire for real spiritual fellowship. Rebekah is portrayed differently; despite the influence of Laban upon her, she focused upon the spiritual rather than the material.

24:32 *The man came into the house, and he unloaded the camels. He gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him*- We note that Eliezer is willing for the camels to eat, but not for himself; until the Lord's work is done. He is presented as taking thought for the life of his animals. But the text may suggest that although Rebekah and Laban had offered "straw and provender", Eliezer chose to use his own, and to use his own water- so that the discussions about spiritual things would not be compromised by any sense of material obligation. We note that he had his own water; his request for water from Rebekah was therefore part of his testing her. And likewise the Father brings many things into our lives, the response to which is not important of itself; but the process is all important, for what we show ourselves to be.

24:33 *Food was set before him to eat, but he said, I will not eat until I have told my message. He said, Speak on*- As noted on :32, Eliezer was careful to ensure that the discussion about the essential question was not in any sense distorted by being in the debt of the host. And meals were long drawn out occasions. In our seeking of a bride for the Lord Jesus, our attitude must be the same. And this was why the Lord asked His preachers to not greet those they met on the way (Lk. 10:4), however rude it seemed; but to focus directly and without distraction on the invitation of people to salvation. But see on :14.

24:34 *He said, I am Abraham's servant*- Eliezer has a commendable humility. He uses the standard word for "servant", when he could have introduced himself as the master of Abraham's household; which would have been a very senior position. In our work as seekers of the Lord's bride, there is to be a similar humility.

24:35 *Yahweh has blessed my master greatly. He has become great. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male servants and female servants, and camels and donkeys*- The allusion is to the promise of Gen. 12:2 which Abraham had received whilst still living in Mesopotamia; that he would be made great. If Abraham had shared that message with others even at that stage, they would realize that the strange promise had indeed been fulfilled in a primary sense. What is attractive and compelling in our presentation of the Gospel is that there has been an incipient fulfilment of promised blessings in our lives now; not in terms of material blessing, but the essence of the Kingdom life is to be seen in us right now.

24:36 *Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master when she was old*- The suggestion could be that the promises of becoming "great" and "many" had been fulfilled in a material sense, but Abraham had hardly become numerous. And that was why Eliezer had come; to seek a bride for Abraham's one legitimate son, so that the promised blessings of the seed could come true through her.

He has given all that he has to him- It was usual for a father to divide the inheritance amongst all the children, with the firstborn getting a double portion. But whilst Abraham did provide for his children by Keturah, he gave all he had as inheritance to Isaac. This reflects how Abraham considered Isaac as his one and only legitimate son. The others were by concubines (Hagar and Keturah). And we can better perceive the magnitude of the sacrifice which Abraham had been asked to make, in sacrificing this son. The language is very much that of the father in the parable of the prodigal son- all that he had was the elder son's. But that son went out into the night in bitterness and left the family.

24:37 *My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live*- Although Abraham spent much of his life in Canaan, he always felt himself as one passing through, living in their land. We too,

no matter how settled and stable our lives may be, are to feel likewise; that this land is not ours, but we are passing through. The day of eternal inheritance is still coming, and is not fully now.

24:38 *But you shall go to my father's house, and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son'*- This was not precisely what Abraham had said in :4. Perhaps Eliezer, realizing he was amongst the very close relatives of Abraham, interpretted his commission that way.

24:39 *I asked my master, 'What if the woman will not follow me?'*- Perhaps both Rebekah and her family had the impression that Abraham's son was looking to return to his ancestral homeland. But the condition of becoming part of the Abrahamic blessing and seed was to separate from family and to go to Canaan; exactly as Abraham had had to do, as they presumably knew full well.

24:40 *He said to me, 'Yahweh, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you, and prosper your way. You shall take a wife for my son of my relatives, and of my father's house*- Because our Angel has been so zealous in acting for us, we too should be zealous in return- thus Abraham's servant, knowing that God had sent an Angel before him to prepare the way for his mission of finding a wife for Isaac, was eager to be as zealous as possible to do his part in the work- "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord (the Angel) has prospered my way" (:56). There are many other examples of this. Because the Angel is with us, we must joyfully and enthusiastically do our part. See on Hag. 2:4. He felt he was on a roll, being led onwards by the Angel- and he didn't want anything to interrupt that. The sensitive believer will perceive similar situations, time and again, as we seek to follow the leading of the Angel / cherubim before whom we walk. If we walk in step with the Angel, success is assured.

Here clearly the Angel was physically sent. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10. Moses was writing these things for Israel in the wilderness, who were likewise lead daily by an Angel, to the same land of Canaan. Abraham felt that he walked 'before Yahweh', reflecting how he too saw that he was following an Angel, as Israel were. But the idea is also of covenant relationship, for Abraham had asked that Ishmael might also live before Yahweh, i.e. still be in covenant with Him (Gen. 17:18). And God had agreed, although Ishmael didn't want to know.

On a practical level, a worthy wife in order to raise a Godly seed must herself personally have responded to the call to leave all; she must have personally acted in the spirit of Abraham, in response to the same promises. And Eliezer would not even take a meal from her family until this had been established. Perhaps the equivalent for us is that

romance and personal considerations should come after the basic spiritual compatibility is established between two persons.

24:41 *Then will you be clear from my oath, when you come to my relatives. If they don't give her to you, you shall be clear from my oath'*- The events recorded in Gen. 24 concerning a wife being sought for Isaac are all capable of symbolic interpretation; the steward [= the ministry of the preacher] is sent to seek a wife [= the bride of Christ, the ecclesia] for Isaac [cp. Jesus], and told not to bring Isaac back- i.e., they *had* to succeed in their search, and they would; as the shepherd of the Lord's parable sought the sheep until it was found. Yet there was the recognition that she *may not* be found ("If they don't give her to you..."); and yet the response to the question 'Peradventure the woman will not follow me?' was that the Lord would prosper the way "and you *shall* take a wife for my son" (:40). This wasn't blind optimism. The possibility of failure was entertained. But there was a positivism that Yahweh's intention would be carried out. The Lord Himself *marvelled* at the unbelief of men (Mk. 6:6), despite knowing what was in man. Surely He could only have genuinely felt such marvel because He began with such an essentially positive spirit.

24:42 *I came this day to the spring, and said, 'Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, if now You do prosper my way which I go*- Again we get the impression that Eliezer didn't fully believe that the journey was being prospered. Maybe he had stopped at other towns in the area and not found anyone appropriate. And so he sets a most unlikely condition for Yahweh to fulfil His promise, as he was about to return home. And God made Rebekah perfectly jump through that hoop.

24:43 *Behold, I am standing by this spring of water. Let it happen, that the maiden who comes out to draw, to whom I will say, Please give me a little water from your pitcher to drink*- As mentioned earlier, once the pitcher was full and on her shoulder or head, it was quite an inconvenience to get it down again, unstop it, and give some water to a person; :20 seems to say that she emptied the rest of the pitcher into the trough after Eliezer had done drinking.

24:44 *And she will tell me, 'Drink, and I will also draw for your camels' - let her be the woman whom Yahweh has appointed for my master's son*- All who heard the account would have agreed that this was really an impossible hoop to set for God to make someone jump through, and Rebekah's response was counter instinctive, counter cultural and so unusual that one could only say that God made her do it. Just as our response to the call is induced by the Spirit.

24:45 *Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. She went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, 'Please let me drink'*- Prayer is largely carried out in the mind – how we 'speak in the heart' is

effectively read as our prayer to God. Thus our self-talk merges into prayer; Hannah's "prayer" appears to have been the same (1 Sam. 2:1). Solomon's prayer for wisdom is described by God as "in your heart" (2 Chron. 1:11). This close link between thought and prayer is developed in the Lord's teaching in Mk. 11:23,24. In Hannah's time, such prayer in the heart was unheard of. Relationship with the gods was seen as a question of going into a "house of prayer", it was not personal. But the promises to Abraham were of a personal relationship with Yahweh: "I will be their God".

24:46 *She hurried and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'. So I drank, and she also gave the camels a drink*- Eliezer is careful to recount things exactly as they happened, with no exaggeration, omissions or additions. It was so clearly the hand of God.

24:47 *I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him'. I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her hands*- This technically should have happened after the girl and her family had agreed. Eliezer had gone ahead and taken the initiative, in a way which would have otherwise been seen as rude and countercultural, and disrespectful to the family. But this is the insistent demand of the Gospel's call. It's why people were baptized immediately in the New Testament, the same hour or day they believed. This is not in fact the order in which he had done things- he offered and then gave her the signs of betrothal, and only then enquired which family she was from. He did so because he was trying to elicit a "No" from her. What he did was so bizarre that he now recounts it otherwise.

24:48 *I bowed my head, and worshiped Yahweh, and blessed Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter for his son*- Biblical genealogies often skip generations, and this is an example. "Right" is the same word translated "truth" in :27, where it is used [as so often, e.g. Gen. 32:10] of the certainty of the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. And Eliezer goes on to ask them to deal "truly" (:49) in response. God's mercy and truth to us are to be reflected in our responding with these things. Covenant relationship with Him is the ultimate truth or reality of our lives.

The same Hebrew words for being 'led in the way' are used of how God led Israel in the way to Canaan, also by an Angel (Ex. 13:17,21; Neh. 9:12). Moses was retelling this story to encourage his primary audience, as well as us; that experience is not random, but part of being led. Abraham had been led out of Ur to Canaan almost against his will, and Eliezer now likewise had been led to a wife for Isaac, with him kicking and struggling all the way. And it seems he did bow before Yahweh, the God of his master whom he had sceptically half believed in, when he perceives this.

24:49 *Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. If not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left*- As noted on :48, the kindness and truth of God in the covenant must be responded to "truly" by men. Eliezer comes over as high pressure, forcing them to make a decision before he had even eaten a meal with the family. This speaks of the urgency of response to the Gospel. We are not lamely standing on streets holding out tracts for any who may wish to walk up to us and take them. Rather are we to entreat and implore men to see the intensity of our position, and to respond.

24:50 *Then Laban and Bethuel answered, The thing proceeds from Yahweh. We can't speak to you bad or good*- This is precisely what Laban says years later to Jacob; that he couldn't speak bad or good to him (Gen. 31:29). We feel that Laban and Bethuel were not exactly enthusiastic about going God's way, but rather felt they could say nothing against it, because His hand was so clearly evident.

24:51 *Behold, Rebekah is before you. Take her, and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as Yahweh has spoken*- There is no record that Yahweh had spoken specifically that Rebekah should be Isaac' wife. But the path of providence was effectively God's spoken voice; and we likewise can perceive God's voice to us through such situations.

24:52 *It happened that when Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself down to the earth to Yahweh*- The cultural thing to do would have been to thank the family. But instead he prostrates himself on the ground to Yahweh, as if in all these acts of providence, he sensed the Angel, or God Himself, standing there albeit unseen. He sensed very much the presence of God, just as we do in such times and situations.

24:53 *The servant brought out jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and her mother*- Ten camels' burden of expensive gifts would have been worth the equivalent of a million or more dollars in our terms. But this was the value Abraham placed upon a Godly wife for his son. It speaks of the invaluable importance of marriage within the faith in order to raise a Godly seed.

24:54 *They ate and drank, he and the men who were with him, and stayed all night. They rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away to my master*- The immediacy of response was not part of the deal, but it was perhaps implied. They would have been exhausted after the long journey; but the urgency of the work in hand, the following of the Spirit, was such that nothing was to delay them.

24:55 *Her brother and her mother said, Let the young lady stay with us a few days, at least ten. After that she will go*- This sounded reasonable, and indeed it was, from a human viewpoint. But Eliezer was aware that the flesh always seeks the opportunity to use delays and procrastination in order to get out of spiritual commitment. And constantly, we see the man aware of the urgent need to follow the Spirit's leading. The spirit of all this explains why baptism was practiced immediately in the New Testament, as it should be today.

24:56 *He said to them, Don't hinder me, since Yahweh has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master*- This should be our attitude- following the leading of the Spirit, and not allowing anything or anyone to delay us. All procrastination in such cases is of the flesh, seeking to put the brakes on our response to the Spirit; hence Israel should not "delay" or "hinder ourselves" to offer the first fruits (Ex. 22:29). We can easily get caught up for a whole period of our lives, delaying instead of following. The same word translated "hinder" is used of how Jacob "stayed" with Laban (Gen. 32:4) far longer than he should have done. He failed to learn the lesson; Rebekah and Eliezer had refused to be hindered or delayed with Laban. Situations had repeated themselves, and Jacob had failed to learn the lesson from history, even within his own immediate family history.

The 'prospering' of the way was in direct answer to Eliezer's question as to whether his way had been prospered in :21. This was a characteristic of Joseph, whose way was 'prospered' by God likewise (Gen. 39:2,3,23), despite many hard experiences. Joseph was potentially a primary fulfilment of the great seed of Abraham, as was Solomon, who also 'prospered' so long as he followed God's word (1 Chron. 22:11,13; 29:23; 2 Chron. 7:11). Hezekiah was another potential fulfilment of the seed, and he too prospered (2 Chron. 31:21; 32:30); and the way of the Lord Jesus was prospered above all (Is. 48:15; 53:10; 55:11). But every member of the seed likewise will "prosper" in their path to the Kingdom, although not necessarily in material terms (Josh. 1:8 cp. Dt. 28:29; Num. 14:41). That 'prospering' is the work of the Spirit; the same word is used repeatedly about the work of the Spirit in human lives (1 Sam. 10:6,10; 11:6; 16:13; 18:10; Jud. 14:6,19; 15:14 s.w. "the Spirit came mightily / to cause to prosper upon him").

24:57 *They said, We will call the young lady, and ask her*- He likely thought she would flunk the decision; but she didn't. See on :59.

24:58 *They called Rebekah, and said to her, Will you go with this man? She said, I will go*- There was a definite trait of energy and industrious activity amongst them, indicated by the record of Rebekah running to respond to the call of Eliezer to marry Isaac (Gen. 24:18,20,28,58). Laban too was spritely (Gen. 24:29). And Abraham as an old man

ran to meet the Angels, he *hastened* into the tent, and personally *ran* unto the herd rather than wave his wand at the servants (or the wife) to do it (Gen. 18:2,6,7). The way in which it is stressed that he got up early in the morning gives the same impression (Gen. 19:27; 20:8; 21:14; 22:3; the same is said of Jacob, Gen. 28:18 and Laban, Gen. 31:55). The mixture of zeal and business acumen is reflected in the way both Abraham and Lot greeted the Angels in a similar, outgoing, gentlemanly manner (Gen. 19:1-3 cp. Gen. 18:1-6). Note how Rebekah immediately says "I will go" (Heb. *elek*)- just as Abraham had been called to "go" from Ur (*lek*, Gen. 12:1); "and he went" (*wayyelek*, Gen. 12:4). This would seem to suggest an undesigned similarity of character between the family members.

24:59 *They sent away Rebekah, their sister, with her nurse, Abraham's servant, and his men*- It was most unusual for a woman to be allowed such total freedom of decision, especially with respect to her marriage. But as noted on :50, Laban felt that God's hand was at work, and so he feared to speak against it. But we note he was not particularly "for" it; he failed to have the enthusiasm to keep in step with the Spirit which was seen in Eliezer and Rebekah. And so he left it that she could decide herself. He likely thought she would flunk the decision; but she didn't.

24:60 *They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and let your seed possess the gate of those who hate them*- She was barren for 20 years and didn't have so many children. But the Divine promises were fulfilled through her seed. We see here the contrast between spiritual and secular viewpoints; the Divine way of fulfilling these promises and hopes was so different from the secular imagination. And so it is as our own lives unfold. "Seed" here is singular; but the idea is that her specific seed would become very many, just as promised in Gen. 22:17,18.

24:61 *Rebekah arose with her ladies. They rode on the camels, and followed the man. The servant took Rebekah, and went his way*- 'Following the man' reminds us again that everything in this incident is parabolic of the calling of the bride of Christ, the seed of Abraham. We are to respond immediately, and we go to Him into an unknown land and situation, following "the man", "the servant", also representative of the Lord Jesus.

24:62 *Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he lived in the land of the South*- This was the very well associated with Hagar and Ishmael. We wonder what Isaac's thoughts were. If he were to be the seed through whom the promises were to be fulfilled, then it was surely necessary for him to marry and have faithful children. But he was 40 years old. And now, those prayers and hopes were to be answered in the arrival of Rebekah. Or he may have reflected, as I explained previously, that Ishmael could have

been the seed, he had been circumcised into the covenant, and had received the same promises, and Abraham's prayer that Ishmael might live before Yahweh had been heard.

24:63 *Isaac went out to pray in the field at the evening. He lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, there were camels coming*- Surely he was praying about Eliezer's mission, and a faithful wife through whom to continue the seed. On one hand, God is sovereign and shall bring about His purposes. But that sovereignty meshes with human freewill, so that we too must make our moves in the way of faith, and with prayer. "He lifted up his eyes" and saw his bride approaching, just as she "lifted up her eyes" and saw Isaac (:64). It really was a marriage made in heaven.

24:64 *Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel*- Her lifting up her eyes and seeing Isaac is complementary to Isaac lifting up his eyes and seeing her coming towards him (:63). From this symmetry we can reason that she lifted up her eyes from prayer, as he had done. They were both praying for the same thing, and had their answers in a sublimely beautiful way.

24:65 *She said to the servant, Who is the man who is walking in the field to meet us? The servant said, It is my master. She took her veil, and covered herself*- Eliezer and Rebekah were apparently travelling on the same camel out of the ten camels. He took very personally his responsibility in the matter; his diligence is prophetic of ours in seeking out the Lord's bride. The fact Isaac was walking alone after praying alone in a remote spot speaks much about him; and he represents the Lord, who likewise did this. She veiled herself because the wedding ceremony had not yet been undertaken.

24:66 *The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done*- In the parable of redemption here, the servant represents the preachers of the Gospel. The Lord Jesus uses similar language in Mt. 18:31 and Lk. 17:10, of His servants coming and telling Him what had been done.

24:67 *Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife. He loved her. Isaac was comforted after his mother's death*- Clearly Rebekah is presented as filling the emotional hole left by the loss of Sarah. Rebekah is not given a new tent, as was usual, but instead took Sarah's tent. "He loved her" may sound obvious, but in contracted marriages both then and now, marriage is often not love marriage. This is a commendable note; that he loved his wife. Later we will read of their physical affection, so strongly felt between them that they met up privately for intercourse when separate from each other (Gen. 26:8). The whole account of Isaac's love for Rebekah has the ring of psychological credibility to it; and such things are major internal evidence reasons for believing the Bible to be Divinely inspired.

GENESIS CHAPTER 25

25:1 *Abraham took another wife, and her name was Keturah*- It would seem that at the time of the promises, Abraham had other children by Keturah, another "concubine", as she is described in 1 Chron. 1:32. Indeed :6 speaks of his "concubines" plural. It seems we are intentionally left to reflect whether in fact Abraham had this concubine, and probably others, at the same time as Sarah; or whether he married her after Sarah's death. But this term "concubine" is only really applicable to other women taken during the lifetime of the wife or wives. The word is repeatedly used in this sense throughout the Bible. Although the children of Keturah and Abraham are only recorded in Gen. 25:1-4, it seems to me that this isn't chronological; this a notice inserted at this point as a genealogical note, rather than implying that Abraham only took Keturah after the marriage of Isaac in Gen. 24. It can also be that now at the end of Abraham's life, the point is being made that Abraham was not at all a perfect man; righteousness was imputed to him, and he is presented as having had only one wife and only two children. But this is as it were a 'PS' to remind us he had had plenty of other children by at least one concubine- and none of them turned out very well in spiritual terms. "Keturah" means 'perfumed' and it never says much for a woman in the Bible when she is named after her cosmetics. In fact, apart from Isaac, who comes over as very passive most of the time and drunkenly blessing his sons at the end of his days, the rest of Abraham's children were no less than a disgrace to him. He was surely not correct to throw them all out of the inheritance and buy them off with gifts, so that he could give everything to his one favourite son. But God recognized his feelings in repeatedly reminding him that he saw Isaac as his only and beloved son, the only one of his sons he loved, as it could be translated. And God ran with that, and asked him to all the same be willing to sacrifice him. We recall how Rom. 4 says that Abraham is the parade example of how God justifies the *un*Godly. Remember that at the time of the promise in Gen. 15, Abraham was impotent- hence his bitterness at not having any child, and Rom. 4:19 describes his having faith that he would overcome this problem. Having recovered his virility, it could be that he eagerly had children by Keturah to as it were prove himself. Yet one wonders therefore how long he maintained the intensity of his faith that specifically by Sarah he would have a child. Yet that faith of Abraham at the time of the promise in Gen. 15 was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness, is held up as our example and glorified throughout the New Testament- when it would seem that in fact Abraham didn't always maintain the intensity of the faith he had at that time. And God Himself had to reassure him: "Know of a *surety*" (Gen. 15:13), as if God recognized the element of doubt within the faith of Abraham- although God elsewhere holds up that faith to us as such a wonderful example.

Circumcision was a sign of the covenant through Isaac, hence the resentment and bitterness of Zipporah over the circumcision issue; and it seems Moses capitulated to her on this. Their marriage is sure proof that fundamental spiritual differences at the start can only lead to anger and break up later on.

25:2 *She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah*- Zipporah was a Midianite, a descendant of Abraham through Keturah; and yet she didn't practice circumcision. Ishmael had been circumcised as a sign that if he wished, he could "live before" God, in covenant relationship. We wonder if the same possibility was open to all Abraham's children or seed, but they declined.

Job's friend Bildad was a descendant of Shuah (Job 2:11).

The names of Abraham's children are not very spiritual, and their descendants are often noted for bad behaviour. The Midianites are presented as sinners, Sheba and Dedan are against Israel in Ez. 38, Asshur or Assyria was their evil enemy. We could argue that Abraham was a failed father. He was not a good parent to his many sons- he used his wealth to send them far away and buy himself out of responsibility to his children. And focused in an obsessive way upon Isaac. And yet through this weakness, he still shows faith and devotion to God by being willing to sacrifice even Isaac to God.

25:3 *Jokshan became the father of Sheba, and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim*- Sheba and Dedan are mentioned in Ez. 38 as amongst those who in the last days turn against the children of Jacob, members of the group of ten neighbours who invade the land under the leadership of Gog. The old jealousy which began here over the apparent favouritism afforded Isaac... will then play itself out in its final climax. Sheba and Dedan were also sons of Cush (Gen. 10:7), and one theme of the genealogies of Abraham's other sons is that they all intermarried with surrounding nations and lost any sense of ethnic purity; see on :14. The theme of needing to marry within the family of God is strongly developed in Genesis, beginning with the sons of God marrying the daughters of men and losing the faith in Gen. 6, and being stressed in Gen. 24 with the search for a suitable wife for Isaac. Abraham's other children all merged into their surrounding worlds. However, "Sheba" here may refer to the Sabeans, who stole Job's herds (Job 2:11).

"Leummim" may simply mean "other nations". It cannot be identified with any location or nation. The idea is that the promise that Abraham would be a father of many nations had its primary fulfilment through the children he had by his concubines. Although they chose not have a part in God's salvation purpose at the time, they could have had; just as Ishmael could have continued in the covenant.

25:4 *The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah*- Is. 60:6 and Ps. 72:10 envisage Ephah and other children of Keturah

as ultimately saved along with Israel in the Kingdom age. The blessing upon Abraham will ultimately come true upon all his seed, by grace alone.

25:5 *Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac*- He did this even before he died (Gen. 24:36). It was usual for a father to divide the inheritance amongst all the children, with the firstborn getting a double portion- and for this to happen on his death, not during his lifetime. But whilst Abraham did provide for his children by Keturah (:6), he gave all he had as inheritance to Isaac. This reflects how Abraham considered Isaac as his one and only legitimate son. The others were by concubines (Hagar and Keturah). And we can better perceive the magnitude of the sacrifice which Abraham had been asked to make, in sacrificing this son. The language is very much that of the father in the parable of the prodigal son- all that he had was the elder son's. But that son went out into the night in bitterness and left the family.

25:6 *But to the sons of Abraham's concubines, Abraham gave gifts. He sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, to the east country*- The plural "concubines" suggests he may have had more than Keturah; it's just that her children were relevant to the Israelites in the wilderness, for whom Moses initially wrote. Abraham had been insistent that Isaac *not* go to live with any new wife in the east, by which Abraham surely means Mesopotamia, the land he had been asked to leave. By sending his other children back there, he is really saying that he didn't want them in covenant relationship or having a share in the promises to inherit the *eretz*. He has the spirit of Sarah, who didn't want Ishmael to inherit along with Isaac (Gen. 21:10). But as explained there, God gave Ishmael the chance of covenant relationship, including circumcision. The fact Abraham didn't send Ishmael back into the east perhaps reflects his acceptance of the fact that Ishmael could have had covenant relationship and a share in the promises; although he apparently chose not to. Heading east is the direction of the rejected Adam, Cain and the Babel builders.

25:7 *These are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years*- Abraham entered the promised land at 75 (Gen. 12:7), so he lived in it 100 years, the majority of his life. But despite that, he always is at pains to stress that he lived amongst the local inhabitants, as a stranger. No matter how stable and sedentary our lives may be, living in the same house for most of our years, we too are to be but passers through this world in our attitude towards it. "Days of the years" could mean that every day matters in life.

25:8 *Abraham gave up the spirit, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people*- "Full of days" (Heb.) is differentiated from being "aged" in Jer. 6:11. The idea is that he didn't live the same kind of day over and over

thousands of times; his life was rich with experience, each day was significant, as it should be for us if we are led of the Spirit.

"His people" were idolaters (Josh. 24:2), demonstrating that the separation between faithful and unfaithful is not at the point of death (Ecc. 3:19,20), but at the final judgment.

25:9 *Isaac and Ishmael, his sons, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre*- We note the absence of the sons by Keturah, who had been sent away to the east; and the implication that Ishmael was still living in the *eretz* of promise; see on :6.

25:10 *The field which Abraham purchased of the children of Heth. Abraham was buried there with Sarah, his wife*- See on Gen. 23:16. It is continually emphasized that Abraham purchased land in the very *eretz* which had been promised him as an eternal inheritance. This is the intended paradox of our lives- that we live in this world as strangers and passers through, but the earth is eternally ours.

25:11 *It happened after the death of Abraham that God blessed Isaac, his son*- This blessing is surely the blessing of Abraham; although it could mean that his flocks were miraculously increased as a sign that the greater blessing had indeed passed on to him.

Isaac lived by Beer Lahai Roi- This was the well where God had saved Hagar and Ishmael, assuring Ishmael that he could still be part of the covenant family and promises. Isaac living there would have continually reminded him that his own standing with God was by grace, and that Ishmael his half brother was also potentially a part of God's purpose. There is reason to think that Abraham was humble enough to learn from Hagar's observation, that God had seen her and she had seen Him. For at the pinnacle of his faith when he offered Isaac, he in turn names the place 'Yahweh Yireh', Yahweh has seen / will see, and will provide. The idea is identical to that spoken by Hagar, that God had seen / provided for her, and she had seen God. And we note that Isaac himself chose to settle at Hagar's well, 'the well of the living one who sees me' (Gen. 24:62 "the well Lahairoi"; Gen. 25:11). In all this we see a tacit recognition that they had learnt something from Hagar, the slavegirl whom the family had used and abused.

25:12 *Now this is the history of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bore to Abraham*- "Abraham's son" serves to emphasize that he was in some sense the seed, and could have been part of the Divine purpose if he wished; he was circumcised into the covenant, and is clearly treated separately from Abraham's sons by Keturah, who were sent to the east, back to where Abraham had come from, to as it were keep them out of the covenant.

25:13 *These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to the order of their birth: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam*- These 12 tribes make them a pseudo Israel, and yet also, as Paul develops in Gal. 4, representatives of unbelieving Israel after the flesh.

25:14 *Mishma, Dumah, Massa*- Dumah intermarried with the Edomites (Is. 21:11,12); see on :3.

25:15 *Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah*- Teman was an area through which the Israelites passed (Hab. 3:3), and they were the primary audience for whom Moses was recording Genesis. None of the names of Ishmael's sons appear to be very spiritual or God centred.

25:16 *These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their villages, and by their encampments: twelve princes, according to their nations*- The names of Ishmael's sons make a statement about their final acceptance in God's Kingdom, in language which is picked up in the later prophecies about them in Is. 60:6,7; 43:19,20: "In the high places a powerful people will experience a miracle of God. For they shall cause sweet odours to ascend, calling His fame to remembrance. Their burden will be lifted, they will become mighty in power, conquerors of the desert, strong in defence, numerous in population, at the forefront of the nations".

Abraham's prayer that Ishmael might be accepted into the covenant was heard [his name means 'God has heard']. The same promises were made to him as to Isaac; his 12 tribes (Gen. 17:20) could also have become some kind of people of God. But in this world, they chose not to; although for Abraham's sake, their latter day representatives will finally be saved.

25:17 *These are the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years. He gave up the spirit and died, and was gathered to his people*- We note the subtle difference with how Ishmael lived "years", but Abraham lived "days"; see on :8. As noted on Gen. 27:1, Isaac was 137 when he was struck by a premonition of death. This has the ring of psychological credibility; for he would've subconsciously been aware that Ishmael his brother had died at that age. This is another one of many internal evidences that the Biblical record is credible and dovetails within itself so perfectly that only a Divine hand could have brought it about.

25:18 *They lived from Havilah to Shur that is before Egypt, as you go toward Assyria*- Havilah is on the Euphrates and Shur is on the Egyptian border. These were both boundaries of the land promised to Abraham. It could be argued that in this sense, his seed posessed the land. But I would rather see here a lamentation that the intended seed ["In Isaac shall your seed be called"] did not in fact inherit the area intended for them. And so the fulfilment of the promise was recalculated and reinterpreted to mean that the seed is now all in Christ, and the "land" promised will finally be the whole earth.

He lived opposite all his relatives- Or, to the east of his relatives, referring to the encampment of Isaac. He followed the general trend of moving East, as did Cain and the Babel builders, returning to Mesopotamia, rather than living in the land of promise, unlike Jacob and Joseph, who wanted their very bones to be buried in the land of their hopes. He returned to Egypt where his mother Hagar was from, choosing to live just outside the promised land.

This area was relevant to the Israelites as they passed through it on their wilderness journeys. Again we see that the initial relevance of the account was for that generation.

25:19 *This is the history of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham became the father of Isaac*- The way Biblical history is written contrasts strongly with the way secular history is written, focusing as it does on mega movements of peoples, international events etc. Biblical history- and the records of Israel's early history are classic examples- is articulated in the last analysis through the story of individuals. The account of Isaac's family is prefaced by the note: "These are the generations of Isaac" (Gen. 25:19 AV). We expect a genealogical list- but instead we get the accounts of human lives. That history was the 'generation' of Isaac. In this we see a reflection of how God views history- the growth, actions, thoughts, struggles, spirituality and passing of persons. The value placed by God upon individuals is seen by the way in which He inspired Biblical history to be written. Humanly written history tends to focus upon megatrends, the glories and successes of a nation as a nation. God's history focuses upon people. And the Bible is hardly a history of glorious successes- it's a record of one human failure after another, endless rounds of attempt and failure, a historical path that leads God from one disappointment to another with us. Human history records human failure only as it were as a foil, a context, to the successes of the heroes. God's heroes are the lowly, the poor of this world rich in faith like Hannah and Mary, and the megatrends of society's history are passed by. But this is how much He values people on an individual level.

25:20 *Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Paddan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian, to be his wife*- Isaac really is an example of waiting for the right woman to marry and refusing to marry anyone who doesn't tick all the right boxes on the spiritual front. It is twice emphasized here that Rebekah was a "Syrian". Jacob is likewise described as a "Syrian" (Dt. 26:5). Aram ["Syria", s.w.] was Rebekah's cousin (Gen. 22:21-23); he appears to have been a dominant force and source of identity in the wider family. The later attacks upon Israel by the Arameans were therefore part of the huge family feud which has always gone on amongst the descendants of Abraham. From these considerations it appears quite inappropriate to argue that Jewish people are ethnically pure and separate from the Arabs; their beginnings and early history were absolutely intertwined with each other.

Identity as "Israel" was and is a matter of personal spiritual choice and culture, not ethnicity. The arguments of the Judaizers in the first century depended heavily upon definitions of "Israel" in ethnic terms, but they are null and void according to Biblical history.

25:21 *Isaac entreated Yahweh for his wife, because she was barren. Yahweh was entreated by him, and Rebekah his wife conceived*- When Eliezer first met Rebekah by the well, she must have appeared the ideal candidate through whom Isaac could raise a Godly seed. She was attractive, hard working, healthy, spiritually aware- and from within the wider Abraham family. And she was willing to sacrifice all she had known for the sake of emigrating to Canaan and bearing the seed. But she was barren for 20 years. Those who seem to have ideal qualifications are often not used for the job, until they are humbled and made to realize that all is of grace and not of human strength and ability. And Isaac and Rebekah's desire to bear the Abrahamic seed would have been honed by 20 years of prayer. The delay was surely to increase the intensity of that desire. We don't read that Isaac took any concubines in that period, and given the [poor?] example of his father Abraham in this, that surely is commendable. Unlike his father, he didn't seek to force the fulfilment of the promises in his own ways and on his own terms.

25:22 *The children struggled together within her*- "Struggle" is Heb. to bruise or crush, suggesting the struggle between the two seeds of Gen. 3:15; and Gal. 4 and then Gal. 5:17 confirms that they represent the struggle between flesh and spirit. Paul may have alluded to the situation in his description of flesh and spirit in conflict within his own body (Rom. 7:23).

She said, If it be so, why do I live?- This may be pre-natal depression and nothing more. But it could also reflect her belief that she was the bearer of the promised seed; and so she wondered why there were twins within her, already in conflict with each other. The truth is that the seed of Abraham is only developed as such through struggle with the flesh. The seed of the spirit must "separate" from the fleshly seed (:23).

She went to inquire of Yahweh- The judgment will be the time when God 'requires' of us our behaviour. And yet the Hebrew word is used about our enquiring / searching to God in prayer now (Gen. 25:22; Ex. 18:15; Dt. 4:29; 12:5; 1 Kings 22:5), as well as His 'requiring' / searching of us at the last day (Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 1 Sam. 20:16; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8). There is a mutuality between a man and his God.

25:23 *Yahweh said to her, Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples will be separated from your body*- The desire of Esau's descendants to “cut them off from being a nation” in Psalm 83 runs counter to God’s clear statement here: “Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples…”. Note that they were not to be of a different ethnicity, as both Jews and Arabs often claim [for they were from the same parents], but different types of people. The "separation" spoke of the separation of flesh from spirit through struggle; see on

:22. The elder serving the younger is not necessarily determinative, i.e. forcing the babies into certain paths. It also has the element of prediction; this was how it was going to work out because that was how the two people were going to be.

The one people will be stronger than the other people- Who was the stronger? Hosea 12 suggests it was ultimately Jacob, who by his strength had power with God. And yet Esau was likely physically stronger; and there is the paradox of how God works with men.

The elder will serve the younger- God had promised Rebekah that the elder (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob); and yet her concern to trick her husband into blessing Jacob rather than Esau was studied rejection of that promise. And Jacob followed her in her faithlessness- in this area. He perceived the promises of God through her eyes, rather than his own. Just as many relatives of believers do today. Likewise Isaac saw the promises as "mercy and truth" (Gen. 24:27); and so did Jacob (Gen. 32:10). The blessings of Gen. 27 never came true in this life; for Esau never served Jacob, nor did Jacob serve Esau. It could be argued that they will come true in the Kingdom; or that "Jacob" is to be understood as the church and "Esau" represents the flesh. But another possibility is that here again we have a potential scenario. This could have happened; but Jacob failed to live up to it and experience it. He made decisions which precluded these things coming true for him, and it could be argued that in Gen. 32,33 he resigned the blessings of the firstborn. And God accepted that; see on :31.

25:24 *When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb*- The "behold" could suggest she didn't fully believe the Lord's answer of :23, that she had twins. Perhaps she understood those words in some other way than meaning that she would have twins. She was all psyched up to bear a seed for Abraham and Isaac, and the idea of having twins who would fight each other was outside of her imagination.

25:25 *The first came out red all over, like a hairy garment. They named him Esau*- "Red" connects with the redness of the earth which we encounter in early Genesis; "Edom", who is Esau, is another form of "Adam". He was of the earth, and a representative of the flesh (see on :21). The fact the twins emerged with Jacob holding Esau's heel means they were born in the same sack, rather than, as some twins, in separate sacks. In the case of twins which develop in the same sack, one usually gets more oxygen than the other, and emerges red faced in comparison to the pale and aenemic twin. And this is clearly the case here. The subsequent development of such twins matches exactly what we read here about Esau and Jacob. The record has the ring of truth to it. And this gives more force to the argument that there was predestination at work here; Esau was going to have the temperament which he had, and Jacob the one he had. And Esau's temperament was going to veer towards the thinking of the flesh rather than the Spirit. We are unwise to dwell too much on why some do not believe; rather are we to perceive that our own faith is a gift from God, a grace we must respond further to and are

culpable for if we refuse to. Romans 9 is clear, that in one sense things were set up from their birth. And yet Hebrews presents Esau as an example not to be followed, for he represents those who shall be condemned at the last day. It is true that he was born with a strong proclivity to the wrong behaviour he later displayed; just as was Jacob. But the point is that how we are born, with our unique set of weaknesses and temptations, is not deterministic in moral terms. We are not victims of the way we were born, nor of our nature nor nurture. We can rise above them, and are held to ultimate account if we do not.

25:26 *After that, his brother came out, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel. He was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them*- This meant that Rebekah was barren for 20 years. "Jacob" literally means 'heel catcher' or 'supplanter'. From the womb his character was set, it appears. Romans 9 presents them as the parade example of calling and predestination. And indeed they are. But Paul introduces that topic directly in the context of exemplifying grace, and that salvation is not of works or human strength. The fact there is an element of predestination is proof enough that our faith and salvation are not purely of ourselves. Jacob always wanted to be the firstborn, and the way as an infant he tried to catch Esau's heel to prevent it becomes programmatic for how he was.

25:27 *The boys grew. Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field*- He followed the characteristics of Nimrod (Gen. 10:9).

Jacob was a perfect man, living in tents- By grace, righteousness has to be imputed to us. The spiritual blindnesses and deficiencies of our brethren can be so agonizing to behold; and yet we too have ours, as Jacob had his, and the fact we have them does not mean that we (or they, or Jacob) will not be saved in the end. Jacob didn't quite make it to the spiritually perfect / mature status with which he is credited right here at the beginning. Job is an identical case; he is labelled "perfect" at the beginning, but at the end of his spiritual growth, he didn't quite get to perfection. The weakness of Jacob meant likewise. Thus the record is written in such a way as to make Jacob out to be the righteous one; he is described as "perfect" at a time when he had not even accepted Yahweh as his God. Thus what he eventually was is said of him at the beginning, but with no hint that this is the case; the impression is given that he was always "perfect" from the start. Jacob is here described as living in tents with his righteous father and grandfather; whereas there is ample evidence that he was quite used to the tough outdoor life, and was an accomplished shepherd. Heb. 11:9 implies that he had faith in the promises and was indeed an heir of them at this time; even though he did not see them as personally applying to him then (Gen. 28:20), and was more involved in idolatry than he should have been.

Jacob was 77 when he fled from Esau. As far as we know, he had lived all that time

"dwelling in tents"; and Heb. 11:9 adds the information that at this time, faithful Abraham lived together with Isaac and Jacob in the same tents. Jacob's living in tents is understood as an act of faith; choosing the temporal life rather than the permanent one. Jacob grew up with Abraham and Isaac. He would have known the promises backwards. He lived, as far as we know, a single life, staying at home with his mother, who evidently doted on him, openly preferring him to Esau. Yet at this time, Jacob did not accept the Abrahamic promises as really relevant to him, nor did he worship Yahweh as his God (Gen. 28:20). Familiarity bred contempt: "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel... thy first father (i.e. natural Jacob" hath sinned" (in this way) (Is. 43:22,27 AV).

25:28 *Now Isaac loved Esau, because he ate his venison. Rebekah loved Jacob*- The Abraham family were characterized by division, partly due to over favoritism by the leaders. The divided nature of the new Israel is a sad reflection of it. Isaac is not portrayed as particularly stellar in his faith, "just" holding on to the faith of his father Abraham. His attractions were to the things of the flesh; he liked Esau because he brought tasty meat for him to eat. The prophetic word about the sons appears to have been ignored by Isaac.

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come" (Heb. 11:20). Yet the record of this in Gen. 25 doesn't paint Isaac in a very positive light. The AVmg. seems to bring out Isaac's superficiality: "Isaac loved Esau, because venison was in his mouth". This seems to connect with the way Esau threw away his birthright for the sake of food in his mouth. Esau was evidently of the flesh, whilst Jacob had at least some potential spirituality. Yet Isaac preferred Esau. He chose to live in Gerar (Gen. 26:6), right on the border of Egypt- as close as he could get to the world, without crossing the line. And he thought nothing of denying his marriage to Rebekah, just to save his own skin (Gen. 26:7). So it seems Isaac had some marriage problems; the record speaks of "Esau his son" and "Jacob (Rebekah's) son" (Gen. 27:5,6). The way Jacob gave Isaac wine "and he drank" just before giving the blessings is another hint at some unspirituality (Gen. 27:25). Isaac seems not to have accepted the Divine prophecy concerning his sons: "the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23), seeing that it was his intention to give Esau the blessings of the firstborn, and thinking that he was speaking to Esau, he gave him the blessing of his younger brothers (i.e. Jacob) serving him (Gen. 27:29 cp. 15). A*nd yet*, and this is the point, Isaac's blessing of the two boys is described as an act of faith; even though it was only one of his passing moments of faith and was done with an element of disbelief in God's word of prophecy concerning the elder serving the younger, and perhaps under the influence of alcohol. Yet according to Heb. 11:20, this blessing was done with faith; *at that very point in time*, Isaac had faith. So God's piercing eye saw through the haze of alcohol, through Isaac's liking for the good life, through Isaac's unspiritual liking for Esau, through his marriage problem, through his lack of

faith that the elder must serve the younger, and discerned that there was some faith in that man Isaac; and then holds this up as a stimulant for our faith, centuries later! Not only should we be exhorted to see the good side in our present brethren; but we can take comfort that this God is our God.

God's words "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated [loved less]" are understandable once we see them as alluding to this statement- that Isaac loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob. God is saying that He had Rebekah's perspective; and Isaac is thereby presented as totally out of step with God's position. In fact, apart from being willing to be offered as a young man, Isaac persistently comes over as spiritually weak and every recorded incident of his life is negative. And yet he is presented as a founding father of the faithful, and the Lord speaks of him as certainly being in the Kingdom.

25:29 *Jacob boiled stew. Esau came in from the field, and he was famished*- The stew was of lentils (:34), not meat. Again the Lord's parable of the prodigal appears to allude here in a strange way; for there, the older brother also 'comes in from the field' and effectively despises his own birthright by refusing to accept his younger brother's repentance (Lk. 15:25). In this case, Jacob is set up as the prodigal, wasting his inheritance amongst the unbelievers, and finally returning home- to be welcomed rather than rejected by his elder brother. The Lord's parable clearly eyes Esau as the elder brother, but his acceptance of Jacob at the end is seen by the Lord as commendable.

To sit in the tents and boil stew was classical female work. Jacob is portrayed as a mummy's boy; and yet it would seem that Rebekah had more faith than Isaac, and perhaps this was passed on to Jacob.

25:30 *Esau said to Jacob, Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am famished. Therefore his name was called Edom*- "Feed me" is a Hebrew term usually used for animals feeding; and Esau displays his animal instincts, wanting the immediate with no further thought for the implications, dominated by the need of the moment, seizing the present pleasure, avoiding the present pain. This is the characteristic of all the rejected; for he is presented in Hebrews as representative of all who shall fail of God's grace at the last day. It says little for Isaac that Esau was his favourite son. Indeed there is little positive to be said for Isaac apart from his basic faith, and his willingness to go along with Abraham's intention to sacrifice him. Although even that could be understood as passive going along with his father's demand, and sons agreeing to be sacrificed to the gods was not at all unheard of in those days. The fact Isaac preferred Esau, but God chose the crafty Jacob, is indeed as Paul interprets it in Romans 9- the election of grace. And we likewise must see the grace of predestination and calling as the parade example of God's grace to us; we were not called because we were better than others, or had some potential which others don't have. We were called by grace alone, and that is the only answer to the question 'Why me?'. Perhaps "Edom", "red", became his nickname from then onwards, and it stuck. For "Esau is Edom" (Gen. 36:1,8). The Hebrew is

literally something like "that Red, that Red there!". Esau is presented as utterly sensual, going after the desire of his eyes. He could have been playing on words, to the effect "Feed with that Red, me the Red one". He was thus personally associated with his belly, his appetite, his food. He didn't even call the lentils by their name; just 'that red stuff'. He is presented as primitively just seeking to fulfil the lust of the eyes and flesh, with no attempt at delayed gratification. The redness of his flesh would've worn off over time; he was known as 'reddy' or 'the red one' because of this incident with the red stew, not his skin colour.

Jacob's basic dishonesty is seen by the way in which Esau begged Jacob for "the red", which he maybe thought was a kind of blood soup [a strange thing for Yahweh's people to be eating at the time!]- and yet Jacob actually only gave him a dish of lentils. This would explain why Esau later claimed he had been twice deceived by Jacob (Gen. 27:36). The mere sale of the birthright was hardly deception; but if the bitterness of it all was that even in that hard bargain, Jacob didn't really give Esau the food he craved... then we can understand Esau feeling Jacob had twice deceived him.

25:31 *Jacob said, First, sell me your birthright*- Jacob's perception of the promises as only for his personal, physical benefit was clearly evidenced in the way in which he was so bent on obtaining the birthright from Esau. This was no sign of spirituality, but rather of his obsession with material acquisition. We can be sure he arranged to be boiling that broth just at the right moment. It was hardly an off-the-cuff decision to ask Esau for the birthright. He not only disbelieved the promise that the elder would serve the younger, but he misunderstood it, thinking that God's promises were dependent upon human works and wit to be fulfilled. He spoke of how he would bring upon himself the blessing God had promised him (Gen. 27:12). Later, he reveals the same attitude when he describes his children as the fulfillment of the promises of present fruitfulness (Gen. 32:10), but also the children he had obtained by his own service (Gen. 30:26); he thought that his own effort and labour had fulfilled God's promises. He reasoned that Laban had been rebuked by God because God had seen how hard he had worked (Gen. 31:42). He explicitly says that if God further increases his flocks, it would be a sign that he was righteous (Gen. 30:33). Like Job, he had to learn that God's blessings are not primarily *physical*, and that we do not receive them in proportion to our present righteousness. And yet during this learning process, God patiently went along with him to some extent.

Perhaps psychologically, Jacob was driven to do what he did by his father's preference for Esau over himself. It was his way of striking back; and that act of selfishness was however used by God to fulfil His purpose of the elder serving the younger. But he failed to perceive that the promises were essentially of spiritual things, and the blessing of the firstborn was not the same as the Abrahamic promise. He effectively hands back the birthright to Esau after the night of wrestling, when he says "Take [away] my blessing..."

because he had experienced God's grace. The blessing of the firstborn involved the other brothers bowing down to the firstborn (Gen. 27:29), so Jacob's protracted and emphasized bowing to Esau (Gen. 33:3,6,7) was likewise a way of resigning from the birthright which he had been born trying to grab hold of, and the desire for which had obviously filled his mind. We too are led to resign all our material, secular aspirations and dreams for the sake of God's grace. And in Jacob's case, he was born with the desire for the firstborn status, with his little hand desperately trying to grab his brother's heel to stop his brother being the firstborn. But encounter with God's grace [as happened to Jacob in Gen. 32] is enough to reorient a man away from even his natural, born-with passions and obsessions towards [in this case] materialism and jealousy. In Jacob's case his very name, 'heel catcher', reflected this obsession which was so strong it had become his self-definition; until he encountered God's grace. The blessing of the firstborn as given by Isaac involved the firstborn being "Lord" over his brothers; but Jacob repeatedly calls Esau his "Lord" in Gen. 32,33. Jacob's gifts to his brothers are described with a standard Hebrew word for "gift" [*minha*]; but in Gen. 33:11 Jacob then starts to consciously refer to them as *berakah*, the word for "blessing". And he urges Esau to take [s.w. 'take away'] his "blessing". I discussed on Gen. 25:23 how the blessing of the firstborn never came true- perhaps because Jacob's resignation of the firstborn blessings in Gen. 32,33 was accepted by God.

There are no examples of birthrights being sold or bartered over. Jacob was simply revealing a lot about himself- how by all means he sought to get the birthright. The Lord's teaching may well negatively allude to Jacob at this point- "If [even] your enemy hunger, feed him".

25:32 *Esau said, Behold, I am about to die. What good is the birthright to me?*- Esau's attitude is alluded to by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:32 as being typical of the mentality of those who have no faith in the resurrection which the promises to Abraham implied: "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die". "I am about to die" are almost the words found on the lips of his father Isaac (Gen. 27:2). This is what happens within families- sons repeat the words and attitudes of their fathers. We have here yet another ring of truth to the record; that these are the actual words spoken by these men, millennia ago.

25:33 *Jacob said, Swear to me first. He swore to him. He sold his birthright to Jacob*- Esau's behaviour is seen as the essence of all who shall be finally rejected (Heb. 12:16); they want the immediate rather than the things of eternal consequence. Whether or not there was any physical item which defined the birthright, such as a scarlet thread placed on the firstborn- a verbal oath was considered binding.

25:34 *Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils*- I suggested on :30 that Esau thought the stew was a blood broth, but Jacob deceived him a second time by giving him lentils rather than a blood meat stew.

He ate and drank, rose up, and went his way- The same words used of how Eliezer did likewise after securing Rebekah as a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24:54). We are intended to see the contrast- the way taken was so different. Eliezer was respecting the covenant, whereas Esau despised it. "Rose up" is elsewhere translated "establish" and is used of the establishing of the covenant (Gen. 26:3). So it could be that we are to understand that after reviving from his exhaustion, Esau confirmed the agreement. Instead of establishing the covenant with him, he had as it were disestablished it.

So Esau despised his birthright- The idea is that he considered his birthright worth no more than a bowl of soup. The phrase “vile person” ['despiser'] in Dan. 11:21 connects here to Esau who "despised his birthright". If the first usage of a word in Scripture is significant, then Gen. 25:34 is indeed helpful here– because it is used of Esau, father of many of the Arab tribes. And it recurs in describing Edom in Obadiah 2, Goliath the Philistine / Palestinian (1 Sam. 17:42), “Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian” (Neh. 2:19), and Haman the persecutor of the Jews (Esther 3:6). All these men were Arab prototypes of the “vile person”, the ruler of Assyria, who is to again persecute God’s people. And his provenance is of Esau, of the relatives of Israel who live nearby to them.

Whilst the Abrahamic promises did not demand fulfilment through the firstborn, it would be fair to assume that they imagined that the firstborn was the promised seed. So Esau's despising of the birthright was in practice a reflection of his attitude to the promises of the seed.

GENESIS CHAPTER 26

Gen 26:1 *There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham*- The recollection of the famine in Abraham's days is to point up the fact that Isaac found himself in an identical situation to Abraham, and failed in precisely the same way. Circumstances and situations repeat between the lives of God's people, and between our lives and those of Biblical characters. This is so that we might learn the lessons; or upon failure, reflect and discern the similarities.

Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, to Gerar- He ought to have learnt from Abraham's mistake, and not led himself into temptation. The desire to go to Egypt was likely because the famine meant that his flocks, his wealth, would be decreased- rather than that he would literally die of famine. So as so often, the fear of losing wealth leads believers into temptation and failure. And Abraham had failed in this same way in the very same place, Gerar, again with an Abimelech. And the failure was whilst Sarah was pregnant with Isaac. Her rejuvenation had made her physically attractive to Abimelech despite her age. At Gen. 17:21 there were 12 months to the birth of Isaac ("My covenant I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time next year"). By Gen.

18:10, there were 9 months to the birth of Isaac: "I will certainly return to you when the season comes round. Behold, Sarah your wife will have a son". And immediately this incident in Gerar is over, Sarah gives birth (Gen. 21:2). It is natural for all of creation to be protective of the pregnant mother of your child. But Abraham says he fears dying for her. He presents as deeply faithless and selfish. If she, as a pregnant woman, was accepted into another man's harem, the consequences for her and the child could have been fatal. For the king would have slept with her and then discovered she was pregnant with another man's child. Abraham is presented as absolutely selfish. Just as in Gen. 12:13 he asks her to lie about their marriage "that it may go well with me because of you". And yet God allowed that to happen: "And it went well with Abram because of her" (Gen. 12:16).

Gen 26:2 *Yahweh appeared to him, and said, Don't go down into Egypt. Live in the land I will tell you about*- The fact Isaac lived in Gerar (:6) could be read as rank disobedience. Or perhaps he reasoned that as Gerar was on the edge of the promised *eretz*, he was justified in doing so. But living on the edge of Divine things leads to temptation. Whether Gerar was in "Egypt" or the *eretz* of promise was debatable; and instead of removing himself from temptation, Isaac took himself to the edge, and therefore fell into it. See on Hos. 4:15 for a similar failure in later Israel.

Gen 26:3 *Live in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you. For to you, and to your seed, I will give all these lands*- As noted on :1, his fear was that he would lose the material blessings of large flocks because of the famine if he remained in "this land". He was being asked to do something counter instinctive. And he didn't want to. He ought to have recalled how Abraham resigned the best pasture land to Lot, and was then told that to look out over the land Lot had chosen, and believe that this land would be his eternal inheritance. And so Isaac was promised that he would be given all Egypt and "all these lands" eternally. The phrase may suggest that certain lands were in view; perhaps like Abraham, Isaac was on an elevated point from where he could view "these lands", and was promised them. Or maybe we have here the first hint that the promise of inheriting one land, the *eretz,* was to be extended to the inheritance of all lands, "the world", the entire planet (Rom. 4:13).

And I will establish the oath which I swore to Abraham your father- The oath to Abraham would be established or repeated to him. That is evidence enough that the Abrahamic blessing was not simply inherited; it had to be established or confirmed to each individual, on their choice. Ishmael clearly didn't want this, despite being circumcised into the covenant. We read in Jer. 34:18 of those of Israel who did not establish or confirm the covenant oath (s.w.). People today allow the promises to be established to them by baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:27-29). We encounter the same word at the end of the wilderness journey, where Moses urges the peoples' faithfulness so that Yahweh might "establish His covenant" with them (Dt. 8:18; 28:9,13); and we note that despite

their disobedience, He still "established" the covenant with them, by grace alone (Dt. 9:5). The idea of an "everlasting covenant" being established with God's people (Ez. 16:60) perhaps means that from that time onwards, it would be unconditional, not requiring the human side of reconfirmation. It may therefore refer to our eternal existence. Or the idea could be that from God's side, His offer is eternally there, He is always offering the covenant- and it is the indifference of men which leads to their not confirming it.

Gen 26:4 *I will multiply your seed as the stars of the sky, and will give to your seed all these lands*- Paul's point in Gal. 3:16 is that "seed" is singular and ultimately refers to the Lord Jesus. The singular seed becomes many because people from all nations become "in" Christ by baptism into Him and abiding in Him (Gal. 3:27-29). And yet whether Isaac perceived that is doubtful; perhaps he was driven to understand it that way by the fact that so far as we know, he and Rebecca had only two children, the twins. And that after waiting 20 years. This would have been considered a most *not* blessed marriage and fruitfulness. But again we see the Divine hallmark, of working through human weakness. It was to be through that apparent lack of blessing that the greatest conceivable blessing was to come.

In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed- The Hebrew text says that "a great mixture" of people "went up also" with Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 12:38). There can be no doubt that this refers to the many references in the promises that the seed would come to include such a "mixed multitude" (Gen. 17:6; 22:17; 26:4; 28:3,14; 35:11), thereby showing that by reason of leaving Egypt and passing through the Red Sea these Gentiles became part of the seed (cp. 1 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 3:27-29). But the supreme fulfilment of these promises will be after the 'Red Sea' of the last days. And the "blessing" promised was of relationship with God and forgiveness of sin (Acts 3:25,26). We have to note that immediately after this blessing, Isaac himself is anything but a blessing to the people of Gerar. His dishonesty about his wife was a source of potential cursing for the people, as Abimelech points out. Isaac became very wealthy "in that land", in their land- and like a colonialist, left their land taking his wealth with him and leaving no blessing behind him. The local inhabitants fear him, asking him to make an oath that he will do them no harm (:29). All very far from the idea of Abraham's seed being a blessing to the Gentiles. Again we see the patriarchs so far from fully believing and living the promises given to them. But it was their basic and continued faith in them which is our pattern- for we too believe, despite so much weakness and disbelief, and failure to live according to the implications of those promises.

Gen 26:5 *Because Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My requirements, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws*- Here again we see the huge significance of Abraham's faith. The promises made to him were available to future generations because of his faith, although individuals still needed to personally respond to the

covenant. We wonder whether there were more laws and requirements given to Abraham than are recorded in Genesis. Or perhaps Moses expressed it this way for the sake of his primary audience, Israel in the wilderness, who were being given the various requirements of the law. Another possibility is that we have here a case of intensive plurals, whereby the one great law or requirement is spoken of in the plural. And the greatest law or command he obeyed was surely to be willing to sacrifice Isaac. As we noted on chapters 11 and 12, Abraham's obedience to God's word of command to leave Ur and break with his family was "obeyed" very poorly and slowly by him; but God counts such obedience to him.

Gen 26:6 *Isaac lived in Gerar*- See on Gen. 25:28 and Gen. 26:1,2.

Gen 26:7 *The men of the place asked him about his wife. He said, She is my sister, for he was afraid to say, My wife, lest, he thought, the men of the place might kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to look at*- See on Gen. 25:28. If he had remained firmly within the *eretz* rather than practicing the spiritual brinkmanship of living in Gerar (see on :1,2), the situation would not have arisen. He repeats the failure of Abraham precisely. Rebekah was indeed his relative, but that was a stretch of the word "sister". The contrast is clearly made with the way that in the New Testament, a husband should be willing to die for his wife.

Gen 26:8 *It happened, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was caressing Rebekah his wife*- Isaac is an example of a man who wouldn't be whom God intended him to be- at least, not all the time. His fear stopped him, and it robbed him of the joy God intended for him. It was due to his fear, his lack of faith in God's promises, that he passes off his wife as his sister when he thinks Abimelech or his people have an interest in her. But Isaac and Rebekah slip off for some intimate time together, and it's noticed that Isaac was "Isaacing ["playing" / "laughing"] himself with Rebekah"- *Yitshaq metsaheq et Ribqah* (Gen. 26:8 Heb.). He was 'being himself' with her, living up to his name, Isaac, which means 'laughter'. It was his fear and lack of faith which had led him to *not* be himself. And we so very often make the same mistake. And yet I observe that Isaac must have really loved his wife to do this; and it gives force to the simple statement that Isaac loved Rebekah, despite it being an arranged marriage and not a love marriage (see on Gen. 24:67).

Gen 26:9 *Abimelech called Isaac and said, Behold, surely she is your wife. Why did you say, 'She is my sister?' Isaac said to him, Because I said, 'Lest I die because of her'*- Again, the contrast is clearly made with the way that in the New Testament, a husband should be willing to die for his wife. Abimelech and his people had already had this experience with Isaac's father Abraham. They must have found God's people rather

enigmatic; their personal morality and integrity was low, lower than the surrounding peoples. And yet they strongly believed in their God's promises, and were greatly blessed by Him. Their God was the God of all grace, quite different to their gods.

Gen 26:10 *Abimelech said, What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us!*- These are the very words the Abimelech had used to Abraham. See on :9. The fact Rebekah was in this situation for "a long time" (:8) points up the morality of the Gentiles as being superior to that of the supposedly holy family. They didn't rape her, nor have casual sex with her; if indeed she was taken as a wife, she was subject to a long period of ritual preparation before having sex with her. "Abimelech" is likely a generic title for the rulers of the area, but it could conceivably have been the same Abimelech with whom Abraham dealt. He too realized that sins of ignorance were still reckoned by Yahweh to be sins, and brought guilt. The idea of sins of ignorance was probably unknown amongst the local religions; but the one true God was far more sensitive to sin than they were. "Easily" is literally 'as a light thing'. In their morality, casual sex with a stranger was a light thing; but Abimelech tacitly recognizes that they were answerable to Yahweh, and for Him, such sins of ignorance were not a light thing, and would bring guilt.

Gen 26:11 *Abimelech commanded all the people, saying, He who touches this man or his wife will surely be put to death*- The Abimelech kings appear far more gracious and honourable than the Abraham family who wandered in and out of their territory; the way Abimelech threatens his own people with death if they touch Isaac or his wife, after they had been deceitful to him, is an example. Yet it was not the nice people of the world, but this wandering, spiritually struggling family whom God loved and worked with. See on Gen. 20:16. "Will surely be put to death" may be a comment to the effect that Yahweh, Isaac's God, would surely take vengeance in such a case. Or perhaps Abimelech reasoned that it would be better if his authorities punished such an offender with death, than that Yahweh take vengeance upon them all. He clearly feared and respected Yahweh, realizing that He would judge even sins of ignorance.

Gen 26:12 *Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year one hundred times what he planted. Yahweh blessed him*- One hundred fold yield is incredible; 25 fold yield would be good. Especially as this was in time of famine. Abraham likewise was greatly blessed immediately after making the identical failure. We would rather expect there to be some punishment; but there was none. Instead, the opposite- blessing. Punishment is often an ineffective way of achieving correction and growth. Hence the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer in this life. It was the pouring out of grace which led to Abraham and Isaac realizing the depth of their failure.

The Abraham family's considerable wealth is a theme in the records. Here and :13 provide quite some emphasis of the same point. Eliezer commented on Abraham's material wealth: "The Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great (note the repetition)"; he then goes on to enumerate a long list of possessions: flocks, herds, silver, gold, menservants, maidservants, camels, asses. Truly "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things" (Gen. 24:1). This suggests that the patriarchs' material prosperity was a primary fulfillment of the Abrahamic blessing in their lifetime. Peter interprets the blessing as the forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:25,26). The stress on their material blessings therefore points forward to our spiritual riches of blessing in Christ. Even earlier in Abraham's life, "Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold" (13:1). Other references to Abraham's wealth occur in 13:6; 14:23. Jacob too was blessed with material wealth (31:16; 33:11 AVmg.). His parting with Esau because they were both so wealthy (36:7) echoes the division between Abraham and Lot and Abraham and Abimelech for the same reason (Gen. 13:6). The similarities between these incidents serves to emphasize the wealth of the family. The prosperity of Lot in Sodom is also highlighted (14:12 Heb.). Each of them seems to have accumulated wealth in their own right in addition to inheriting it.

Gen 26:13 *The man grew great, and grew more and more until he became very great*- "Great" is the same word used in Gen. 12:2; that Abraham's seed would be "great". As noted on Gen. 24:35, the greatness of blessing had a primary fulfilment as demonstration of how the greater, spiritual blessing would likewise become true.

Gen 26:14 *He had possessions of flocks, possessions of herds, and a great household. The Philistines envied him*- There is a theme of envy in the accounts of Isaac and Jacob. The Philistines envied Isaac; as (we can assume) Laban did Jacob; Rachel envied Leah (Gen. 30:1); Joseph's brothers envied him (Gen. 37:11; Acts 7:9). Family friction certainly stalked the generations, as it has done amongst the new Israel. Jacob against Esau, Isaac against Jacob, Ishmael against Isaac, Sarah against Hagar, Joseph's brothers amongst themselves (Gen. 45:24). Envy of Israel by the world and friction within Israel has been a continued characteristic (what similarities with spiritual Israel?). Yet there was also a soft streak there; Esau and Jacob evidently had a certain affection for each other and willingness to truly forgive (Esau more so than Jacob!); Abraham truly cared for Lot's fate in Sodom on at least two occasions; and the brothers genuinely cared for Benjamin and the grief of their father.

Gen 26:15 *Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped, and filled with earth*- This was due to their envy (:14). Flocks were the measure of wealth, and to cut off the water supply was a way of diminishing them. This reflects the basic human feature of wanting to bring others down to our level, the tall poppy syndrome. Abraham is repeatedly called "his father" (see on

:18). We get the idea that he was living out parental expectation to some degree, as Jacob also did. Abraham was a hard act to follow; and yet unlike many sons in that situation, Isaac did not lose faith because of it.

Gen 26:16 *Abimelech said to Isaac, Go from us, for you are much mightier than we*- Moses was primarily writing for the Israelites in the wilderness, who had suffered the same treatment from the Egyptians. He was seeking to teach them that circumstances repeat, just as they had in the lives of Abraham and Isaac; and they were to learn from that.

Gen 26:17 *Isaac departed from there, encamped in the valley of Gerar, and lived there*- I suggested on :2 that God had in fact asked Isaac to remain in the promised *eretz*, and his living in Gerar was in disobedience. At best, seeing it was somewhere on the borders of the *eretz*, he was practicing spiritual brinkmanship; and because he placed himself close to the edge, he went over. Like Abraham, he seems not to have learnt the lesson. For he leaves Gerar town and lives in the valley nearby; and therefore the friction continued with the local Philistines [a term which may then have included Abimelech and the people of Gerar]. The record of the patriarchs is full of such examples of not learning lessons, partial obedience, rank failure- and yet an abiding basic faith in God. And that is what makes them our pattern. The following narrative about conflict over water sources could have been avoided- if Isaac had followed the spirit of what he was asked to do, and actually left the area. Instead of just leaving the town of Gerar and taking his huge flocks to the valley nearby.

Gen 26:18 *Isaac dug again the wells of water, which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father. For the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham*- And yet immediately after Abraham's death, the Lord had richly blessed Isaac (Gen. 25:11). Blessing would have been understood in terms of fertility; growth in flocks or good harvests. Yet this was achieved without the water sources which were seen as so important to achieve wealth. All the time, Isaac was being shown that blessing was by grace alone. But like us, the Abraham family struggled so hard to accept this. See on :22.

He called their names after the names by which his father had called them- As noted on :15, this could reflect an obsession with his father, and a living out of parental expectation.

Gen 26:19 *Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found there a well of springing water*- As noted on :18, the whole business of the wells was to try to teach Isaac about God's

grace. They dug, but God responded by giving them a spring of water, welling up from Him, rather than the stagnant water usually found when a well hits the water table. The implication could even be that they dug in search of water, but found a natural well of springing water which for some reason had as yet been undiscovered. Again, this was grace. This would explain the argument in :20.

Gen 26:20 *The herdsmen of Gerar argued with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, The water is ours! He called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him*- I suggested on :19 that Esek was a natural well of springing water which for some reason had as yet been undiscovered. It was not as it were dug down to by Isaac's workers. And so the local people claimed it was theirs, because it was in their territory.

Gen 26:21 *They dug another well, and they argued over that, also. He called its name Sitnah*- "Sitnah" is a form of *satan*, to be an adversary or make an accusation. That is all 'satan' means as a word. The Hebrew translated "argued" can as well mean that they fought together (s.w. Ex. 21:18).

Gen 26:22 *He left that place, and dug another well. They didn't argue over that one. He called it Rehoboth. He said, For now Yahweh has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land*- The response to contention should be to walk away, rather than "argue", bearing in mind as noted on :21 that the Hebrew can mean that they actually fought over it. Isaac had already been blessed with amazing fruitfulness by God's grace (see on :12). But here Isaac reasons that having his own personal water supply would make him more fruitful. He had failed to realize that fruitfulness was given not by water supply but God's grace; see on :18. The immediate relevance to the wilderness generation of Yahweh making room for Isaac in Canaan was that He had promised to also make room for *them* in the same land; the same word is translated "enlarge" (Ex. 34:24; Dt. 12:20; 19:8). Perhaps Isaac was thinking that now he finally had his own territory within the land, with his own secured water supply. But he failed to fully believe that the entire *eretz* was promised to him.

Gen 26:23 *He went up from there to Beersheba*- As noted on :22, Isaac was thinking that now he finally had his own territory within the land, with his own secured water supply. But he failed to fully believe that the entire *eretz* was promised to him. And so as soon as he considered himself settled in permanently, he has to move to Beersheba. The reasons aren't given; but the lesson is that the true seed of Abraham never really settle down. We are kept on the move, especially if we are tempted to think that we have a settled place now.

Gen 26:24 *Yahweh appeared to him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham your father. Don't be afraid, for I am with you, and will bless you, and multiply your seed for My servant Abraham's sake*- The encouragement not to fear was perhaps because Isaac had had to flee Rehoboth, where he thought he had settled permanently (see on :23), because of some aggressors; perhaps his comment to Abimelech that "you hate me" (:27) has something to do with it. *God* would be the source of blessing for Isaac, through His grace; and not because Isaac had his own secured private water source and apparently secure, permanent territory. And instead of focusing so much upon the literal land aspect of the promises, he was bidden refocus upon the seed. Likewise the idea of inheriting a literal Kingdom on earth can become so focused upon that the things of the Lord Jesus are obscured or distorted; and thus the New Testament without doubt focuses more upon Jesus than upon the literal aspect of His future Kingdom.

Gen 26:25 *He built an altar there, and called on the name of Yahweh, and pitched his tent there. There Isaac's servants dug a well*- As explained on :23 and :24, Isaac had thought that Rehoboth was to be his permanent home, especially as he had his own private, secure water supply. But the hand of providence moved him on from any sense of permanence in this life; for that is not the spirit of the seed of Abraham, who are merely passing through this world, which they shall eternally inherit in future. Isaac seems to have learnt the lesson this time; for he pitches his tent, calls on Yahweh, and digs a new well in tacit recognition that Rehoboth was not the final well after all (see on :23).

Gen 26:26 *Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath his friend, and Phicol the captain of his army*- This was similar to how they had come and made a treaty with Abraham in Gen. 21:22,32. The names may well be titles rather than personal names. The language used is identical to that in Gen. 21; Isaac was being led through some of Abraham's experiences, so that he would be the true seed of Abraham not just ethnically, but spiritually. And the same is true of us; Abraham is father of all the faithful (Rom. 4:16) in that his life and path is in essence that of us all. We are therefore led through similar experiences to him.

Gen 26:27 *Isaac said to them, Why have you come to me, since you hate me, and have sent me away from you?*- Isaac's criticism of them seems unreasonably aggressive and paranoiac. Abimelech is consistently presented in Genesis as being of great integrity and far higher morality than the Abraham family. Isaac thinks that they "hate" him; but Abimelech can truly say in :29 that he has done nothing but good to Isaac. He had sent Isaac away "in peace" and not with any personal animosity (:29). I suggest that Isaac

was a fearful man, and he had an irrational fear about Abimelech. It was this which led him to leave Rehoboth, after he had imagined that there he finally had found some permanence, and a secure private water source- see on :23,24. The "fear" he had, which God comforted him about in :24, was therefore an irrational fear. But God worked through it, as He works through our irrational fears, in order to keep Isaac on the move, and to save him from losing his pilgrim status and mentality, by settling down in Rehoboth. Even if Abimelech did indeed "hate" Isaac, he had the Abrahamic promise that he would possess the gate of his enemies, those who "hate" him (Gen. 24:60 s.w.). Perhaps Abimelech realized this more than Isaac did, and therefore wanted to make peace rather than experience God's judgment. We recall his fear of Divine judgment if any of his people had slept with Rebekah.

Gen 26:28 *They said, We saw plainly that Yahweh was with you. We said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, even between us and you, and let us make a covenant with you*- Despite Abimelech's poor experiences with Isaac and Rebekah due to their lack of integrity about their marriage, Abimelech could not but accept that Yahweh was with Isaac. And he didn't want to be the enemy of God's people. He had a definite fear of Isaac and his God. The oath between Abimelech and Abraham had been for three generations, including Isaac (Gen. 21:21,22). But Abimelech felt the need to confirm it with Isaac personally; reminding Isaac that God's oath to Abraham and his seed likewise had to be personally reaffirmed by those in subsequent generations. Maybe Isaac's lack of integrity led Abimelech to question whether Isaac still felt bound to Abraham's oaths. The incident was therefore used in Divine providence to help Isaac see that he must personally reaffirm Abraham's covenants- including, supremely, that with Yahweh.

Gen 26:29 *That you will do us no harm, as we have not touched you, and as we have done to you nothing but good, and have sent you away in peace'. You are now the blessed of Yahweh*- Abimelech makes free use of the Yahweh name. He knew something of the promises about "blessing", and considered that Isaac had received blessing from Yahweh. Those material blessings, however, were but attention grabbers, to signpost that generation to understand that there were far greater spiritual blessings yet to come. But as in our lives, the Kingdom life is also now as well as not yet.

Gen 26:30 *He made them a feast, and they ate and drank*- Eating and drinking at such a feast was a sign of the confirming of a covenant; in this case, the *re*confirming of a covenant already made in Gen. 21:21,22. The memorial feast, the breaking of bread, is our equivalent of this; it is an opportunity to personally reconfirm our part in the new covenant.

Gen 26:31 *They rose up some time in the morning, and swore one to another. Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace*- Abimelech had insisted that *he* had sent *Isaac* away in peace (:29); but now Isaac does that to Abimelech. We are left with the impression that Isaac was unreasonably paranoid about Abimelech, although God worked through his irrational fears; see on :27.

Gen 26:32 *It happened the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had dug, and said to him, We have found water*- Isaac had moved away from Rehoboth, the dream home, as it were, where he imagined he had 'found room', and had a secure, private source of water. However, as noted on :23,24, he was moved on from there because it was God's purpose that Isaac should not settle down, but ever live the life of a pilgrim. His sacrifice of the well there was compensated for; he was taught that God can provide wells anywhere, at will.

Gen 26:33 *He called it Shibah. Therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day*- All the drama about the wells was unnecessary. Isaac thought he needed them in order to preserve the wealth, in terms of flocks, which Yahweh had given him. But now he realized that God can give wells, water and blessing without his needing to strive and argue and even fight for the wells. And he learnt this at Beersheba, where he had grown up as young man (Gen. 22:19). He came full circle, back to his roots with his faithful father Abraham. And so many lives have done the same.

Gen 26:34 *When Esau was forty years old, he took as wife Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite*- Isaac his father had also married at 40. This again has the ring of psychological credibility; that he thought of marriage at the same age as his father. But at 40, Isaac had taken special care to marry within the faith, whereas Esau did the opposite. Abraham had bought property from the Hittites (Gen. 23:10,16,18,20)- this is emphasized multiple times. And that is understood in the New Testament as an act which reflected the great paradox- that he bought land which was his as an eternal possession. But Esau married into them, instead of recognizing that he merely lived amongst them on his spiritual pilgrimage to a far greater destination. We learn from Gen. 27:46 that Rebekah was 'weary of her life' because of her Hittite daughters in law. Rebekah had sacrificed all she knew and once held dear for the sake of marrying within the faith, as explained in Gen. 24. She found her son marrying outside of the faith to be a source of huge mental agony. The names of the girls and their fathers are all suggestive of idol worship.

Gen 26:35 *They grieved Isaac's and Rebekah's spirits*- Gen. 24 explained the great

lengths and sacrifices they both went to in order to honour the principle of marrying within the faith, in order to raise the Godly seed. They of all believers would have been so heartbroken to see their son marrying unbelievers; but often we are tested in family life on the very issues over which we ourselves have taken a strong stand. The grief of spirit was intense; Gen. 27:46 records that Rebekah was 'weary of her life' because of these daughters in law.

GENESIS CHAPTER 27

Gen 27:1 *It happened, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said to him, My son? He said to him, Here I am*- Isaac was 117 and Jacob 57. "*His* elder son" (:5 also) compares with Jacob being described as Rebekah's son (:6). If Esau was of integrity, he would at this early point have explained that he had sold his birthright to Jacob. Isaac presents poorly here, in spiritual terms. Rebekah had been told that the elder would serve the younger- but Isaac either ignored that because it was God's word through a woman, or because he just wanted to all the same bless his older son, who was his favourite. He specifically states that the younger son is to bow down in service to the older son- as if Isaac specifically wants to undo God's principle stated 58 years previously. Over the years, he presumably forgot it, or just renegotiated it in his mind until the statement became irrelevant to him. As noted elsewhere, Isaac presents poorly throughout his life apart from possibly in being willing to be sacrificed- although a father being asked to sacrifice his son was something which the surrounding gods and religious cults often demanded, and Isaac may have gone along with it on that basis. For it is Abraham rather than Isaac who is warmly commended by God after the event. And yet, Isaac is held up as an example of faith and the Lord Jesus assures us that Isaac will be in the Kingdom. So as with Abraham, Isaac was counted righteous because of a core basis of faith, even though that faith was weakly articulated in his life. We should also be aware that the father had the right to choose who should receive the blessing of the firstborn; Jacob himself later demoted his firstborn son Reuben from "firstborn" status (Gen. 49:4), replacing him with Judah. And the Nuzi documents record how in those times, a father could indeed do this and it was not at all uncommon. So Isaac's insistence on giving Esau the firstborn status and blessing was a conscious act, and directly against God's intention. The blind Isaac was most impressed by "Esau's" hairy hands and the scent of the field on "his" clothes. The identity test for the firstborn, in Isaac's view, were completely secular and not spiritual. He loved Esau because Esau was a hunter and a macho man; not because of anything spiritual. "Who then was it who hunted game and brought it to me?" (:33) reflects how Isaac thought that the characteristic of being a hunter, with hands as hairy as the animals he hunted, was the prime characteristic of the firstborn whom he sought to bless. When it was well known that Nimrod, the

antiChrist figure of earlier history, was characterized by his mighty hunting (Gen. 10:9,10). Isaac had become dominated by the thinking of the world around him, whereby kings and leaders were caricatured as succesful hunters. Thus King Ashurbanipal is presented as a mighty hunter of lions in many reliefs uncovered. Isaac likes to imagine that the smell of Esau's clothing is of a "field blessed by Yahweh", as if he was right in blessing Esau because Yahweh had blessed Esau with prowess in hunting. This of course was a totally wrong position. Yahweh's blessings were by grace alone, and given directly. And they are not given on any human basis; whereas Isaac discerned his firstborn, as he thought, using his human senses of touch, smell and hearing.

Gen 27:2 *He said, See now, I am old. I don't know the day of my death*- Isaac didn't die for another 43 years. Now Isaac was 137 (Gen. 41:46; 45:6; 47:9; 30:25 cp. 29:18,21,27); which was the age at which his brother Ishmael had died, 14 years before. The Biblical record is Divinely inspired, and the psychological 'ring of truth' about the incidents confirms this. It is normal and psychologically credible to get a fear of death when you come to the age at which your brother died. Isaac, and indeed all in the family, believed that the blessing of Yahweh (:7) was contingent upon it being given by Isaac. If he were to die, then, the blessing wouldn't be given. The idea of personal blessing direct from God, according to the Abrahamic covenant, was not appreciated by them. "He [Isaac] blessed him" (:23) is stressed. They felt that blessing and relationship with Yahweh had to be mediated through a living person, the elder of their family. Just as Israel turned away from direct encounter with Yahweh at Sinai, and wanted Moses to interact with Him on their behalf. This is the basis for religion, and it is the very opposite to personal spirituality. And they were persistently missing the point- that blessing from God was that of forgiveness, personal relationship with Him ["I will be their God"] and future eternal possession of the land. Jacob realizes this in Gen. 33, when he asks Esau to "take away my blessing". But just as his blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh reflects how he still sees parental blessing as important, we find in Gen. 49:25 that Jacob pretty much repeats the [relatively meaningless] blessing of Isaac in his words to his favourite son Joseph: "the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb". Indeed, Jacob's likewise rather meaningless blessings of his sons repeat elements of the blessing of Isaac which he deceitfully received: "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you" (Gen 49:8); "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Gen 49:10). We too may at some moments realize that nothing at all matters apart from God's spiritual blessings; but we may revert to hankering after material blessings, and still take that attitude to our grave planks. See on :29.

Gen 27:3 *Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison*- About Jacob's last recorded words were his memory of how he took "Shechem... out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow" (Gen. 48:22). Perhaps subconsciously he wanted to prove to himself and others that he was not weaker than Esau, and was as adept at the use of bow and weapons as he had been. The connection is made the stronger once we realize that "quiver" is "scabbard" and refers to a sword. The ideas of "sword", "bow" and "take..." are repeated. And later Scripture stresses that Israel [Jacob] did *not* get the land in possession by their sword nor bow. Again, Isaac is set up as not at all understanding how blessing- true blessing- is mediated. Just as many today do not understand.

Gen 27:4 *Make me savoury food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat, and that my soul may bless you before I die*- The grammar seems to suggests that eating the food was necessary to impart the blessing; see on :9. Clearly Isaac is thinking in human terms; for the only blessing ultimately worth having came from *God*, not from Isaac's "soul", and was not bestowed through having a ritual meal. However we note the understanding they had that blessing and covenant relationship were somehow attested by a meal. This continues in our time with the memorial feast, the breaking of bread, serving the same function. Isaac believes that the blessing must somehow be mediated through food, over a meal. This is the force of "*that* my soul may bless you before I die". He is surely alluding to how Esau sold his birthright over food, feeling he too was about to die [and falsely thus feeling, because he didn't then die, and Isaac too didn't die for some years]. Isaac is seeking to reverse the sale of the birthright. Hence he stresses in :29 "Be lord over your brothers", literally 'become senior to your brother'. Isaac was trying to reverse the sale of the birthright, instead of accepting God's word that the elder must serve the younger. Isaac really does not present well here in spiritual terms.

Isaac blessed his sons by faith concerning things to come (Heb. 11:20). "Things to come" is literally "to come", and consistently this term is used in Hebrews about the things of the coming Kingdom of God. Abraham "would after", in the coming age, receive the eternal inheritance of the land (s.w. Heb. 11:8); our "continuing city" is "to come" (Heb. 13:14); the fire of judgment "shall" (s.w.) devour the condemned at judgment day (Heb. 10:27); we have only a foretaste of the powers of the world "to come" (Heb. 6:5); the world "to come" (Heb. 2:5) is that of the Kingdom, when we "shall be" saved (Heb. 1:14). The other examples of faith in Hebrews 11 are of faith in the future Kingdom and in the things of the Lord Jesus. So we are to deduce from this that Isaac's blessing of his sons was done with a perspective of the Kingdom within him- even though so much of his blessing was misplaced, wrong and unspiritual. And so often we see this in the NT

comment upon Old Testament incidents, such as Sarah's angry words to Hagar, and her mocking reference to Abraham "my lord being old also...".

Gen 27:5 *Rebekah heard when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it*- See on Gen. 33:10. The fact Isaac spoke to Esau privately, away from Jacob and Rebekah, could reflect his awareness that Esau had sold the birthright to Jacob but he chose to get around that. Isaac also seems to be in studied disregard of the opening prophecy that Esau as the firstborn would serve Jacob the younger. All through the lives of the patriarchs we see weakness, and they were saved by God's grace and their faith in that grace, with occasional works which reflected that faith. But the general picture of their lives is not spiritually positive. In this sense they become our "fathers".

Gen 27:6 *Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying*- One form of Bible study by questions is to ask questions like 'What should Jacob have replied to Rebekah in Gen. 27?', 'What should Eve have said to the serpent'?

Gen 27:7 *'Bring me venison, and make me savoury food, that I may eat, and bless you before Yahweh before my death'*- Rebekah appears to have added "before Yahweh" (:4). The blessing of being the Abrahamic seed and covenant relationship ('before God' is used in this sense in Gen. 17:18) was not predicated upon the paternal blessing of Isaac, but was given by God, by grace. But Rebekah assumed that the birthright was the covenant blessing; and she was bent on making the prophecy about the elder serving the younger somehow come true in her own strength and by her own device. This can so easily be our weakness too. She confused material blessings with the covenant blessings of Yahweh- which are forgiveness and salvation. The only blessings worth having. She also fails to appreciate that the covenant blessings come from Yahweh Himself- not from a man like Isaac.

Gen 27:8 *Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command you*- This is clearly alluding to Adam obeying his wife's voice and falling into sin; doing what she commanded rather than what God commanded. And Isaac was surely intended to see the parallel, especially as the narrative included eating and blessing [and cursing]. We too are set up with situations where we are intended to see the Biblical parallel, and act accordingly. This is where basic knowledge of the Bible text is valuable; and moreso, the willingness to perceive that we are really intended to see the links and act accordingly.

Gen 27:9 *Go now to the flock, and get me from there two good young goats. I will make*

them savoury food for your father, such as he loves- One goat was quite enough for two men to eat. Two goats suggest some kind of ritual meaning to the meal; we noted on :4 that Isaac felt the blessing had to be somehow mediated through a meal. This was a quite wrong understanding of "blessing", for true blessing is from God and not man. We note that the only other reference to two young goats is when the phrase is used about the ritual of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:5,7,8), where one represented the sinner who must die, and the other the righteous who was set free.

Gen 27:10 *You shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death*- As noted on :4, they all understood that the blessing was predicated upon the meal ["so that..."]. Her emphasis was clearly upon the word "you". She was aware of the sale of the birthright, and also wished to force to come true the prophetic word about the elder serving the younger. But blessing is of God; although the memorial feast, the breaking of bread, continues this theme of blessing being associated with a meal. But the meal is a celebration of the blessing already given, a reaffirmation that we want to be part of it; the meal doesn't of itself give blessing. This is the error of transubstantiation, and the essence of that misunderstanding is seen here.

Gen 27:11 *Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man*- The way Jacob is described at the time as "smooth", without a covering of hair, may be a hint that he needed a covering of atonement. Jacob's concern was how to get away with the deception, rather than any moral issue with what Rebekah was suggesting. "Smooth" is only elsewhere used about flattery (Prov. 5:3; 26:28; Ez. 12:24). It could be that by "smooth" there is a contrast set up with the hairy Esau to suggest Jacob was like a smooth lamb and Esau the kid of the goats hairy from birth; as explained on :16, "hairy" is usually translated "kid of the goats". The parable of the sheep and goats would then suggest Jacob as the righteous; but he was so far from that at this time, and was only counted as a sheep by grace.

Gen 27:12 *What if my father touches me? I will seem to him as a deceiver, and I would bring a curse on myself, and not a blessing*- See on Gen. 25:31. The true blessing of God according to the Abrahamic promises could not be taken away by men, nor simply due to human failure. And yet Jacob had yet to come to perceive that. And the Divine blessing was given by God; it was not 'brought upon oneself' by dint of human device and skill. It took Jacob a lifetime to come to perceive this grace. "Touches" is the same Hebrew word translated "search" or "felt" when Laban felt all over Jacob's possessions in search of the stolen idols (Gen. 31:34,37). The word "recognize" is likewise common in both incidents; see on :23. We are intended to join the dots between our experiences in life. Jacob was intended to see how he had earlier survived such a 'touching' when he

was in the wrong- but to what end? He was to later give back his blessing to Esau, rejoicing instead in God's gracious blessing of him (see on Gen. 33:11).

Gen 27:13 *His mother said to him, Let your curse be on me, my son. Only obey my voice, and go get them for me*- The lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons are held up in the NT as our examples. And yet their records are absolutely shot through with reference to the spiritual weakness of those men, and even the suggestion that as men they were not 'nice' people. They, the archetypical believers, aren't good people. Indeed, the records seem to juxtapose their weakness against the more humanly acceptable behaviour of the world around them. The whole business of Jacob obtaining the blessing from his slightly drunk father Isaac is almost comical; dressed up with skins, with his mum prodding him under the ribs saying "Go on, go on, it's my sin not yours"; Jacob must have been willing the old boy to hurry up, knowing as he did that Esau was about to come in with his meal. Yet this was the most Godly family on earth at the time.

There was no recorded curse from Isaac upon Jacob, and in any case if there was there is no record of it coming upon Rebekah. The whole idea of blessings and cursings uttered by men appears somewhat phony; they were indeed held to be of great value, but the Biblical record demonstrates that it is the Divine blessing and cursing which is important. Thus Jacob's later blessings of his sons don't all seem to have had direct fulfilment; and likewise the expected curse from Isaac either doesn't come or is not carried out. It should've been obvious that Isaac would realize the deception; but both Rebekah and Isaac assumed that what mattered was whether he uttered a curse during the blessing ceremony. And if he didn't, and blessed Jacob, then this could not be retracted. They predicated the receipt of blessing upon the ceremony; but Jacob was slowly brought to realize that it is direct Divine blessing which is to be sought above all, rather than some secular blessing from an old man.

Gen 27:14 *He went, and got them, and brought them to his mother. His mother made savoury food, such as his father loved*- Went, got and bought to her... all emphasize his total obedience and complicity in the plan. The only other times the Hebrew phrase "savoury food" is used outside of this incident is in Prov. 23:3-8, where the "dainty food" is used in the context of deceivers who want to get rich; and as so often in Proverbs, we appear to have a commentary upon this earlier Biblical incident: "Don’t be desirous of his dainties, since they are deceitful food. Don’t weary yourself to be rich... Don’t eat the food of him who has a stingy eye, and don’t crave his delicacies: for as he thinks about the cost, so he is. Eat and drink! he says to you, but his heart is not with you. The morsel which you have eaten you shall vomit up, and lose your good words".

Gen 27:15 *Rebekah took the good clothes of Esau, her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob, her younger son*- These clothes were likely those of the firstborn, and they would have had religious meaning; just as they did when given to

Joseph. This would explain why the clothes were not in Esau's own dwelling, but in that of Isaac and Rebekah. Rebekah didn't have to go into Esau's home, and in full view of his pagan wives, grab his best clothes. Isaac liked to think that the smell of these robes was as the smell of the field or garden which God had blessed- perhaps an allusion to Eden. Esau usually led the family worship in these clothes- and yet he was very far from the true God. This shows the low level of spirituality which there was in the family.

Gen 27:16 *She put the skins of the young goats on his hands, and on the smooth of his neck*- Esau was "hairy", the same word translated "kid [of the goats]" (Gen. 37:31; Lev. 4:23 etc.). The word is also used of idols made to goats (2 Chron. 11:15 "devils" AV). Clearly Esau is being set up as an idolater by his very appearance.

Gen 27:17 S*he gave the savoury food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob*- The level of detail increases, as it often does in the Biblical narrative when we are being invited to re-imagine the scene, playing "Bible television" with the information presented. Here, we see Rebekah putting bread and meat into Jacob's literal hands. The last time we have heard of Jacob with cooked food, he was again involved in a deception. He ought to have learnt from his mistakes, but like us, he didn't. At the time.

Gen 27:18 *He came to his father, and said, My father? He said, Here I am. Who are you, my son?*- The question "Who are you?" suggests that Jacob's carefully practiced imitations of Esau's voice just weren't much good. He would've panicked at the question. Jacob foresaw that the same question would be asked as he came to meet Esau (Gen. 32:17 s.w.); consciously or subconsciously, Jacob came to realize that the fruit what he had done in that tent with Isaac was being demanded of him.

Gen 27:19 *Jacob said to his father, I am Esau your firstborn. I have done what you asked me to do. Please arise, sit and eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me*- His proud claim to his father that "I have done according as thou badest me" (27:19 AV) when he had effectively done nothing of the sort was the basis for the character of the elder brother in the Lord's parable (Lk. 15:29). Time and again, Jacob emphasizes his works: "I have *done* according as thou badest me (AV)... my days (of service) are fulfilled (therefore) give me my wife... did not I serve with thee for Rachel? (notice Jacob's legalism; Gen. 29:21,25)... give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee... thou knowest my service... how I have served thee (Gen. 30:25-33)... with all my power I have served your father (Gen. 31:6)". This trust in his own works was what prevented Jacob from a full faith in the promises. It was only the night of wrestling and his subsequent handicap that drove it from him.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the family understood the blessing as being predicated upon eating this ritual meal; it had to be eaten *that* the blessing might be given. But this betrays a total lack of appreciation of the fact that the only blessing worth having, that from God, is not given by man, and is not dependent upon a meal or ritual.

Gen 27:20 *Isaac said to his son, How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son? He said, Because Yahweh your God gave me success*- "Your God" is almost cynical; the sort of thing an unbaptized child of a believer might say to their parents. It was only at the very end of his life that Jacob was to talk of God as "my God"; it took him a lifetime to find God for Himself, rather than seeing Him as merely his father's deity. And the same happens in the lives of many born and bred into believing households. "Success" translates a Hebrew word which has only so far been used in the Hebrew Bible in Gen. 24:12, where the mission to find a wife for Isaac is met with Divine "success" through finding Rebekah. Perhaps Isaac and Rebekah had often rehearsed the story, and used this word- which Jacob now uses. As if to say: 'Just as your God gave amazing success in your search for a wife, so He gave me'.

Gen 27:21 *Isaac said to Jacob, Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not*- Jacob was to use the very same words "come near" when he too was blind and Joseph's sons were brought before him for blessing (s.w. Gen. 48:10,13). It's not simply that what goes around, comes around. Even in his old age, God was still working with Jacob to help him realize how his aged father must have felt at that time. The same Divine hand works in our lives to help us appreciate how others feel, whom we have hurt. It's not punishment nor judgment, as it were; but more an attempt at our education and spiritual maturity, as thereby our deeper repentance is elicited. And God was still at work in Jacob's life when he was very old, as He works with us too right to the end.

Gen 27:22 *Jacob went near to Isaac his father. He felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau*- For "felt", see on :12. Later, Jacob was to beg God to deliver him from "the hands of Esau" (Gen. 32:11 s.w.). He was being taught how wrong he had been to impersonate those hands and make them his own. God ever seeks to reform, rather than simply punish. His hope and intention was Jacob's repentance; and when Jacob finally meets Esau, he hands back to him the blessing he had stolen (see on Gen. 33:11). Laban was also going to 'feel' all over Jacob's possessions in order to find the idols Rachel had stolen. And Jacob would be saved by grace then, surely being reminded of how he had been 'felt' by his father and had got away with his deception. He would have later reflected how indeed, his life had been a constant experience of grace. Life circumstances sometimes repeat in order to teach us that lesson. "The voice is Jacob's" may not have to be a reference to his tone of voice,

because Jacob was surely impersonating Esau. Rather the reference may be to how Jacob spoke with the kind of words Jacob would speak, rather than the ever crude and brash style of Esau. There is a clear connection with Peter being betrayed by his own voice- and again, without doubt, what Jacob does here is condemned by later Biblical allusion and connection.

Gen 27:23 *He didn't recognize him*- The same word translated "recognize" is found in Gen. 31:32, where Jacob invites Laban to "recognize" what is his, and Laban 'feels' his possessions in search for his lost idols; see on :12. Again we marvel at how the Divine hand repeated the essence of circumstances in Jacob's life, in order to lead Jacob to repentance and a transparent life, rather than a deceptive one. The same word is also used in Gen. 37:33, again in connection with deception involving a garment; Jacob's sons bring him the robe of the firstborn, worn by Joseph, and Jacob 'recognizes' it (s.w.), although he draws wrong conclusions from it. He was again being put in the seat of his father Isaac; although Jacob would only have realized this deception some years later, when he met Joseph and the whole deception was exposed.

Because his hands were hairy, like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him- Jacob was smooth skinned, but he placed skins on his hands to deceive Isaac that he was Esau. Yet we read: "his hands were hairy". Were Jacob's hands really hairy? No. He made them *appear* hairy, and this is the perspective the record adopts, without correcting it. It doesn't say 'Isaac didn't realize, because Jacob's hands *seemed* hairy'. This helps us understand the New Testament usage of the language of demons.

Gen 27:24 *He said, Are you really my son Esau? He said, I am*- It's possible that "I am" is an allusion to the Yahweh Name, and that Jacob was thereby swearing by Yahweh. His point blank lie thereby becomes the more reprehensible. The question could be yet another expression of doubt by Isaac, as in :21. But the question and answer could also have been the beginning of the ritual by which the firstborn received the blessing.

Gen 27:25 *He said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless you. He brought it near to him, and he ate*- The verb translated "bring / come near" occurs often here (:21,22,25,26,27). We also find a similar cluster of occurrences when Jacob draws near to and meets Esau years later (Gen. 33:3,6,7). Clearly the hand of providence, the working of the Spirit, was seeking to remind Jacob of this earlier incident in his life, just as the Spirit restimulates memories and situations so that we might better understand both ourselves and the others who were involved. And Jacob did respond, for he hands back to him the blessing he had stolen (see on Gen. 33:11).

He brought him wine, and he drank- The taking of bread (:17) and wine over a meal was all part of a ritual for confirming a covenant; and we see the essence of it in the breaking of bread service. But we suspect that the intention was to get Isaac drunk. “Deceiving and being deceived” is so true of Jacob (2 Tim. 3:13). Laban likewise used alcohol and darkness (cp. blindness) to deceive Jacob into marrying Leah rather than Rachel.

Gen 27:26 *His father Isaac said to him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son*- The kissing was likely part of some ritual. For "come near", see on :25. Kissing a parent was a sign of leaving them and becoming independent (Gen. 31:28; 1Kings 19:20). Just as Abraham prematurely gave all that he had to Isaac even before he died, so it seems Isaac now wished to do to his firstborn Esau. This shows how much he loved Esau and wanted by all means for him to be his primary "seed". And in that desire we see an unspirituality and lack of faith in the prophetic words to Rebekah about the elder serving the younger. It was as if Isaac wished by all means to reverse it. God didn't allow him to do so; and yet He worked through the unethical and sinful behaviour of Jacob and Rebekah. God works through sin to the extension of His purpose; rather than turning away from sinners in disgust.

Gen 27:27 *He came near, and kissed him. He smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him, and said, Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which Yahweh has blessed*- The clothes had a distinctive smell, and they were used in family worship. The smell may have been from incense, which might suggest that their religious rituals were not as spiritual as they might have been. The whole question of "blessing" in its human sense is and was very subjective. Isaac liked to imagine that the ritual clothes of Esau even smelt of Yahweh's blessing; but that was in his imagination. Yahweh would bless the field if there was obedience to His covenant (Dt. 28:3); but there was none of that with Esau. We too can imagine spirituality in those we love, especially family members, when it simply isn't there.

The Hebrew for "smelled the smell" is only used elsewhere of God receiving acceptable sacrifice and being pleased with it (Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31). But the spirituality of this family had descended into mere tokenism and ritualism. Isaac "smelled the smell" of spiritual acceptability just because a man was wearing certain clothes which had a distinctive smell, perhaps from incense.

Gen 27:28 *God give you of the dew of the sky, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and new wine*- Isaac's mind was focused very much on earthly realities. He had failed to appreciate that his noticeable material blessings were really but visible indicators towards the far greater spiritual blessings which the covenant promises were

centred upon. And he makes no reference to the all important aspect of the Abrahamic promises- the seed.

The fatness of the *eretz* may refer to Canaan, the best part of the *eretz* promised. Isaac later wishes that wherever Esau dwells shall be likewise blessed (:39).

There are many examples of where God worked through Jacob's weakness, and blessed him in spite of it, imputing righteousness to Jacob. Thus Jacob's use of red stew to wrest the birthright from his red brother was used by God to give him the birthright (the words for "red stew" and "Esau" are related), even though Paul evidently disapproved of Jacob's attitude (Rom. 12:20 surely alludes here); his evil deception of his father was used by God to grant him the physical blessing (Gen. 27:28 is confirmed by God in Dt. 33:28), even though at the time he was dressed like a goat (27:16), connecting himself with fallen Adam and the rejected at the day of judgment; “Deceiving and being deceived” certainly rings bells with Jacob (2 Tim. 3:13). Laban likewise used alcohol and darkness (cp. blindness) to deceive Jacob into marrying Leah rather than Rachel.

Gen 27:29 *Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers*- This was a willful attempt to reverse the Divine statement that the elder would serve the younger. Isaac really doesn't come over as very spiritual. he wished Esau, as he thought, to be lord over Jacob because he seems to have disliked Jacob and wanted the Angel's words about his dominance over Esau to be untrue. And yet he had faith. It could be argued that his words here were *i*nitially fulfilled in Edom / Esau being dominated by Israel (2 Sam. 8:14; 1 Kings 11:15; 2 Kings 8:21; Ps. 60:8,9). But it seems to me that Isaac's blessings were not so much prophecy as simply his personal wishes, although within that there was still faith (Heb. 11:20).

Let your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you. Blessed be everyone who blesses you- "Your mother's sons" is a strange way for Isaac to talk about his own sons. He clearly considered Jacob to be more of Rebekah's child than his. We note the plural "sons", as if there may have been other unrecorded sons born later. The record of Isaac's blessing of Jacob is framed to portray Jacob as a type of Christ: "Let people serve thee" = Zech. 8:23; Is. 60:12 "nations bow down to thee" = Ps. 72:11; "Be Lord over thy brethren" = Phil. 2:11; "Let they mother's sons bow down to thee" = 1 Cor. 15:7. But Jacob was so far from being the true Abrahamic seed at that time. The fact was that Jacob bowed down to Esau, thereby recognizing that this blessing was not for him; Jacob hands back to him the blessing he had stolen (see on Gen. 33:11). The language of cursing and blessing is indeed taken from the Abrahamic promises; but there is no reference to blessings in the promised seed. Isaac seemed to

understand the promises on a far too immediate and material level. Isaac's pronouncement of a curse upon any who cursed Jacob meant that he could not himself curse Jacob; so Jacob's fear of receiving a curse was therefore mitigated.

He effectively hands back the birthright to Esau after the night of wrestling, when he says "Take [away] my blessing..." because he had experienced God's grace. Jacob will seven times call Esau his "lord", bowing seven times to him [remember that the Hebrew word for "blessing" is a form of the verb *berak*, to bow down], five times calling himself Esau's servant. Clearly he was resigning this blessing of the firstborn, and Isaac's blessing of Jacob was thereby rendered null and void. The blessing of the firstborn involved the other brothers bowing down to the firstborn (Gen. 27:29), so Jacob's protracted and emphasized bowing to Esau (Gen. 33:3,6,7) was likewise a way of resigning from the birthright which he had been born trying to grab hold of, and the desire for which had obviously filled his mind. We too are led to resign all our material, secular aspirations and dreams for the sake of God's grace. We realize that what was once nearest and dearest to us, was all in the end much ado about nothing. And in Jacob's case, he was born with the desire for the firstborn status, with his little hand desperately trying to grab his brother's heel to stop his brother being the firstborn. But encounter with God's grace [as happened to Jacob in Gen. 32] is enough to reorient a man away from even his natural, born-with passions and obsessions towards [in this case] materialism and jealousy. In Jacob's case his very name, 'heel catcher', reflected this obsession which was so strong it had become his self-definition; until he encountered God's grace. The blessing of the firstborn as given by Isaac involved the firstborn being "Lord" over his brothers; but Jacob repeatedly calls Esau his "Lord" in Gen. 32,33. Jacob's gifts to his brothers are described with a standard Hebrew word for "gift" [*minha*]; but in Gen. 33:11 Jacob then starts to consciously refer to them as *berakah*, the word for "blessing". And he urges Esau to take [s.w. 'take away'] his "blessing". I discussed on Gen. 25:23 how the blessing of the firstborn never came true- perhaps because Jacob's resignation of the firstborn blessings in Gen. 32,33 was accepted by God.

Gen 27:30 *It happened, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob had just gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting*- Isaac must have been willing the old man to get a move on. He obviously knew that the deception would be uncovered, but he had the idea that the words spoken at the ceremony were all powerful. He totally failed to understand that ultimately, all blessing is from God and not from man, and is not predicated upon any human ceremony. Jacob went away from "the face of Isaac" (Heb.) just as he was to flee from the face of Esau. The idea of being in the presence of / seeing the face of recurs in the incidents connected with Jacob's meeting of Esau, years later. Again, God was seeking to help Jacob join the dots and realize his need for repentance and for the face /

presence of God, seeing he had ended his relationship with the face / presence of his earthly father and brother.

Gen 27:31 *He also made savoury food, and brought it to his father. He said to his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that your soul may bless me*- Again, the misunderstanding is repeated; the blessing was seen as dependent upon eating the food and doing the ritual. And the blessing was seen as most definitely proceeding from the person ["soul"] of Isaac. The Divine blessing was of grace and mediated through direct personal relationship between God and man.

Gen 27:32 *Isaac his father said to him, Who are you? He said, I am your son, your firstborn, Esau*- The insistence that he was the firstborn indicates that he refused to take seriously the selling of his birthright. Like us all, he liked to think that time works a kind of atonement for the past. But because the image of past events becomes distorted and far smaller on our horizon as the years pass, we should not think that the consequence of human action likewise diminishes; especially in God's sight. The mention of "firstborn" is a hint that Esau was already beginning to guess what had happened; and that has the ring of psychological credibility to it. We can be certain that what we are reading actually happened.

Gen 27:33 *Isaac trembled violently, and said, Who, then, is he who has taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before you came, and have blessed him? Yes, he will be blessed*- The violent trembling was not simply in anger at having been deceived. Isaac realized that he had been trying to reverse the Divine statement that the elder would serve the younger; "Yes, he will be blessed" shows how he recognized this. He makes no attempt to annul what he has said in blessing. He trembled before God, knowing that he had gone against Him and His word. And it had been reversed, albeit through human dysfunction. He recognized that as Paul put it, the gifts and calling of God are without changeability (Rom. 11:29). "Who is... he?" was not an enquiry, as all knew it was Jacob, but rather a rhetorical comment as to the nature of Jacob; as if to say "What kind of a person is he?". The reference was to Jacob's name (:36), "supplanter".

Gen 27:34 *When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said to his father, Bless me, even me also, my father*- The Hebrews were warned not to follow Esau's sinful example, otherwise at the judgment they would experience what he did: "Afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing (cp. our desiring the Abrahamic promises of entry into the Kingdom), he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it with tears" (Heb. 12:17). In view of this, the weeping of the rejected at judgment may be as a result of desperate pleading

with the Lord to change his mind. There will be a sense, as with Esau, of an irrevocable decision. Just as the foolish virgins earnestly desire to enter the feast, but all too late. The request for the blessing all the same [this is the idea of the Hebrew word translated "also"] may have reminded Isaac of how his father Abraham had requested this for his half brother Ishmael, and God had heard this. Heb. 12:17 suggests that he sought to change Isaac's mind, to get him to somehow reverse the blessing and all the same give it to him.

Gen 27:35 *He said, Your brother came with deceit, and has taken away your blessing*- Isaac doesn't immediately agree to make up some kind of blessing. And he refused to change his mind about the blessing of the firstborn going to Jacob (see on :34). Because the blessing of the firstborn had indeed been uttered already, and taken by Jacob. This belief reflects their common understanding that the blessing was solely and totally dependent upon the uttering of the words by the father, and the ceremony. There was no idea that something could be recalculated; whereas God's purpose and word is full of such recalculation.

Gen 27:36 *He said, Isn't he rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright. See, now he has taken away my blessing. He said, Haven't you reserved a blessing for me?*- "He took away my birthright" indicates that Esau thought he had done nothing wrong by selling his birthright. He chose to remember it as Jacob taking it away. The parental blessing and the birthright went together; so on one hand it seems unreasonable to count up two cases of supplanting. But in another sense, he was right. The demand of the birthright was effectively a taking of it away. And Jacob had used deceit to try to force through the fulfilment of the promise that the elder would serve the younger. Hos. 12:2,3 comment that God would punish Jacob for supplanting; so although what he did was morally wrong, God still worked through it.

Gen 27:37 *Isaac answered Esau, Behold, I have made him your lord, and all his brothers have I given to him for servants. With grain and new wine have I sustained him. What then will I do for you, my son?*- Wine seems an unnecessarily significant item in Isaac's mind. "All his brothers" suggests there were other brothers who aren't mentioned in the records. Isaac seems to imply that as he had blessed with Jacob with lordship over his brothers and grain and wine, there wasn't much left he could now bless Esau with. This comment reflects his lack of appreciation of the promises to Abraham; the blessing of the seed and eternal inheritance of the land.

Gen 27:38 *Esau said to his father, Have you but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, my father. Esau lifted up his voice, and wept*- At the time of Jacob's deception, Esau lifted up his voice and wept; and this is picked up in Heb. 12:17 as a warning to all

those who would fritter away their spirituality for sensuality. The faithlessness of Jacob is disregarded, and the emphasis is placed upon Esau. If Esau's rejection by Isaac is indeed a picture of the rejection of the goats at the final judgment, Isaac there becomes a hazy prefigurement of our future judge. And yet the record presents a scene of both father and rejected son as shaken and helpless, both dearly wishing it could be different (Gen. 27:33). The sadness of Isaac becomes a figure of the pathos and sadness of God in rejecting the wicked. Note how the LXX of Gen. 27:38 adds the detail: "And Isaac said nothing; and Esau wept". We are left to imagine the thoughts of Isaac's silence. Truly our God takes no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11). According to Heb. 12:17, Isaac did not change his mind despite the tears; the blessing of the firstborn was not given to Esau, and the other blessings now spoken were not the result of any change of mind.

Jacob too "lifted up his voice and wept" when he met Rachel (the same words are used, Gen. 29:11). It's not simply that what goes around, comes around. God was working with Jacob to help him realize how his brother must have felt at that time. The same Divine hand works in our lives to help us appreciate how others feel, whom we have hurt. It's not punishment nor judgment, as it were; but more an attempt at our education and spiritual maturity, as thereby our deeper repentance is elicited.

Gen 27:39 *Isaac his father answered him, Behold, of the fatness of the earth will be your dwelling, and of the dew of the sky from above*- Mal. 1:3 speaks of how God made Esau's inheritance waste and barren. We therefore wonder whether Isaac's words had any relevance at all; the essential thing was the Divine blessing, not that of any man. Yet Heb. 11:20 says that Isaac blessed both his sons "by faith". He had faith that Esau's seed would have blessing and in Christ, that shall be ultimately true. These blessings of dew and fatness were exactly what Isaac had bestowed upon Jacob. But now he repeats them to Esau, despite having said that Jacob had come and irreversibly taken away Esau's blessing (:35). This gives an insight into how the 'blessings' were simply the whim of Isaac and had no ultimate, binding meaning; although he was too proud to retract the blessing he had just given Jacob. He again presents as convinced that blessing depends upon *his* words, uttered at a certain point- rather than the words of God directly. Likewise "When you win your freedom, you will break his yoke from off your neck" (:40) is effectively Isaac's attempt to undo the blessing of mastery over Esau which he has just given to Jacob; and it is again a refusal to accept the Divine word that the elder must serve the younger. Isaac may have been the passive patriarch, but he is clearly struggling by all means to *not* obey and accept God's word. Even though Heb. 11:40 says he did all this "by faith". Such is God's positive view of His children.

Gen 27:40 *By your sword will you live, and you will serve your brother*- Esau was in a similar position to Ishmael (Gen. 16:12). These words could only be seen as a "blessing"

if Esau was proud to live by the sword. But the Lord Jesus alludes to this by saying that those who live by the sword shall perish by it (Mt. 26:52), and the spiritual way of life was not to take the sword. There is no evidence that Esau ever served Jacob, confirming that these blessings, although uttered in faith (Heb. 11:20), were Isaac's wishes rather than predictive prophecy. It could be that Isaac is referring back to the prophetic words that "the elder shall serve the younger" which he had tried so hard to overthrow, and is here accepting they would come true. Jacob would however have been aware of these words of Jacob to Esau when later he had to serve his brother Laban and was deceived into serving him for much longer than he expected (s.w. Gen. 29:15). Jacob deeply resented this service of his brother Laban; he was taught at length what this "blessing" of having your brother serve you meant. He was learning the feelings which Esau would have had, had this "blessing" come true. Constantly, we are seeing the attempted education of Jacob.

It will happen, when you will break loose- This could imply that Jacob meant that if Esau broke away from Jacob and lived elsewhere, outside of the land of promise, then the whole blessing and cursing would not apply to Esau. And this is what happened. Esau did leave Canaan, whereas Jacob remained there; and so these prophesied relationships between the two sons didn't come true within the land of Canaan. The later record makes this clear: “So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir” is juxtaposed with the description of Jacob in Canaan, “And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan” (Gen. 33:16,18). And again in Gen. 36:8, Esau's settling in Seir is contrasted with how Jacob lived in the “land of his father’s dwelling, in the land of Canaan” (Gen. 37:1).

That you shall shake his yoke from off your neck- Possibly a reference to how Edom broke free from Israel at the time of Ahaz (2 Kings 16:6; 2 Chron. 28:17). And Israel were in fact ruled over by the Idumean / Edomite Herods just before their final destruction as a nation in AD70, and frequently Israel are described as being yoked by the neck to their neighbours. That would rather disprove Isaac's blessing; but in fairness, blessings were seen more as wishes than as prophetic predictions. Yet Heb. 11:20 says that Isaac blessed both his sons "by faith". But his attitude at the time was weak and his understanding foggy; indeed he may well have been under the influence of alcohol at the time, and he set himself to go against the revealed word that the elder must serve the younger. And yet the Spirit in Heb 11:20 discerns that somewhere within all that confusion, there was faith. This is an extremely generous reading of Isaac at this point! And that same generous God, eager to count righteous on the basis of faith, just because we are the objects of His love, is the same God with whom we have to do. We can take comfort from this in our weakness, and be encouraged to more positively view our brethren and focus upon the positive within the general picture they present to us.

Gen 27:41 *Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him. Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand. Then I will kill my brother Jacob*- Our thoughts *are* our words; the intention is the action. In any case, there is a Biblical theme that what we say in our heart comes out into the open: "Esau said *in his heart*, The days of mourning for my father are at hand. Then will I slay my brother Jacob. And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah" (Gen. 27:41,42). What Esau said to himself became public knowledge through his actions. Isaac lived another 43 years, so Esau was held back from immediately killing Jacob by Isaac's sickness, which he apparently overcame. Jacob would later have perceived God's grace in that. The connection with Cain killing his brother Abel is apparent; but Esau clearly didn't care for the Biblical allusions.

Gen 27:42 *The words of Esau, her elder son, were told to Rebekah. She sent and called Jacob, her younger son, and said to him, Behold, your brother Esau comforts himself about you by planning to kill you*- Rebekah comes over as quite the amateur psychoanalyst of Esau (see on :44,45). She imagined him internally comforting himself with his plans to murder Jacob. She may have recalled how she had comforted Isaac after the death of his mother (Gen. 24:67 s.w.), and she saw this same need for comfort in her son at this time. The whole record has strong psychological credibility. Esau was inconsolable by anyone apart from his own inner thoughts; and Jacob was to go through this in later life, when he refused to be comforted over the loss of Joseph (Gen. 37:35). We are brought to know how others feel or felt; we are intended to examine our lives, our histories; and to learn the lessons and come to greater sensitivity and repentance.

Gen 27:43 *Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban, my brother, in Haran*- "Obey my voice" is what she had told Jacob about the whole plan of deceiving Isaac. Jacob comes over as dominated by his mother, although he was already in his 70s, and like Adam, lead by a woman into sin. The connection with Eve shows clearly that what Jacob and Rebekah did was wrong. Jacob flees, and Rebekah never sees her beloved son again. Her death is not recorded, unlike the deaths of the wives of the other patriarchs [Sarah and Rachel], and she is never mentioned again in scripture- unlike Sarah, Rachel and Leah, the other wives of the patriarchs. What she did was deeply wrong, and an attempt to force the fulfilment of God's word. And she likewise displays a great misunderstanding of Yahweh's blessing; for she adds the words "of Yahweh" to her comment that Isaac is now going to give the blessing.

Gen 27:44 *Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away*- She twice states that Esau's anger would turn away (:45). She knew her son to be a man of the moment, living for today, emotional for a moment and then calming down. The Hebrew

phrase "fury turned away" is mostly used about God's wrath turning away (Num. 25:11; Ps. 78:38; 106:23; Is. 66:15; Jer. 18:20; 32:37; 36:7; Dan. 9:16). The Bible opens here in Genesis with a picture of a livid, furious man, burning in anger because of the wrong done to him... whose anger turns away. We are intended to apply that word picture to God, and ever remember that He has feelings, and gets red hot angry at sin. His grace and patience is thereby given a backdrop, and such far greater meaning.

Gen 27:45 *Until your brother's anger turn away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him*- Rebekah knew Esau's character; just as he had effectively forgotten his sale of the birthright, so he would soon forget what Jacob had done, and calm down. He is presented as the epitome of the man of the flesh; living life for the moment, without care for longer term consequence, and seeing past history as of no meaning. "Anger" here is literally "nose"; it was as if Esau was a furious animal sniffing out Jacob as his prey and intending to kill him. We get the impression that Jacob must have run away or was hiding himself nearby; hence in :42 Rebekah sends for Jacob.

The Hebrew phrase "anger turned away" is different to that in :44, but as there, it is mostly used about God's wrath turning away. Again we observe as on :44, that the Bible opens here in Genesis with a picture of a livid, furious man, burning in anger because of the wrong done to him... whose anger turns away. We are intended to apply that word picture to God, and ever remember that He has feelings, and gets red hot angry at sin. His grace and patience is thereby given a backdrop, and such far greater meaning.

Then I will send, and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?- Rebekah feared that the revenger of blood law would mean that if Esau killed Jacob, he too would be killed perhaps the same day. For her to fear the loss of Esau that same day, there must have been credible revengers of blood nearby. I have noted so far in this chapter the double mention of Jacob being lord over his brothers, plural. There were likely other brothers, not recorded in Scripture, who would have immediately killed Esau. Rebekah paid the price for her obsession about Jacob in that she likely never saw Jacob again, as he was away for at least 20 if not 40 years. Rebekah gets no great mention for spirituality, apart from in her brave decision to immediately leave her family and go to the land of promise to marry the Abrahamic seed. Isaac likewise is not exactly stellar in his spirituality, apart from in his early willingness to be sacrificed by Abraham and his implicit faith in resurrection. Abraham and Jacob likewise only occasionally manifested the works that prove faith is real. Perhaps we are to conclude from all this that the patriarchs and matriarchs of God's people were spiritually weak, but had a dogged faith in God, which they just only occasionally demonstrated in their works. And this is sadly the family characteristic which we too bear.

Gen 27:46 *Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of*

Heth. If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these, of the daughters of the land, what good will my life do me?- Rebekah's apparent zeal against marriage out of the faith was really a cover for her desire to save her son from problems which he had only her to blame for. And yet we do remember that Rebekah had personally paid a huge price to marry within the faith, and indeed Esau's marriages out of the faith had deeply grieved her (see on Gen. 26:35). In family life we are so often tested on points where we have made a huge sacrifice, but our children act differently. For Rebekah, spiritually weak as she has been presented in the events of this chapter, life was not worth living if she failed to produce a Godly seed because her children had married unbelievers and thus denied the covenant. And yet those genuine feelings were clearly overridden by a simple desire to save Jacob's life and not be bereaved of her two sons (:45). Human motivation is never, or rarely, pure. Always there are other considerations, and our defence of the faith can so easily have more secular reasons for it.

GENESIS CHAPTER 28

Gen 28:1 *Isaac called Jacob, blessed him, and commanded him, You shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan*- This 'blessing' is so significant. As noted throughout Gen. 27, all concerned in the sad drama had failed to realize that the true blessing was the Abrahamic blessing, and not corn and wine, i.e. material things. Isaac realizes now that he had been mistaken in trying to fight against the Divine plan that the elder should serve the younger; in this sense he blessed Jacob by faith (Heb. 11:20- although the question is where his faith came in when blessing Esau). In connection with that blessing, he urges Jacob not to follow his brother and marry a Canaanite. Isaac had himself waited until 40 years old and seen his father go to huge effort to find him a wife within the faith. To remain within the Divine program of blessing, Jacob had to marry someone in the faith. And so he went to Mesopotamia subconsciously expecting to find a wife there, just as his father had found one there through Eliezer meeting Rebekah by the well.

Gen 28:2 *Arise, go to Paddan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father. Take a wife from there from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother*- Isaac had effectively taken that journey in the person of Eliezer in Gen. 24. He too had found a wife from the family of Laban.

Gen 28:3 *May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you may be a company of peoples*- I noted on Gen. 27 that Isaac's allusions to the Abrahamic promises had focused on the immediate and the material, with no attention to the important promises of the seed who would multiply. But now Isaac appears to have learnt his lesson, and understands this as the most important blessing. And he

speaks of *God* blessing Isaac, rather than of he himself blessing his sons ("that my soul may bless you", Gen. 27:25).

Jacob self-admittedly didn't believe as he slept that night at Bethel; for he said that if Yahweh would bring him safely home, only then would Yahweh be his God. But just days before that, as Jacob here sheepishly stood before his sorrowful, betrayed father; right there, right then, God promised Jacob that he would become "a multitude (LXX *ekklesia*) of people", words which could only become true through their application to Christ. The LXX gives: "Thou shalt become gatherings of nations". The idea is that the nations would be gathered together in unity through his seed.

Gen 28:4 *And give you the blessing of Abraham, to you, and to your seed with you, that you may inherit the land where you travel, which God gave to Abraham*- According to the New Testament, and the implications of the inheritance promise in Gen. 15:7, the inheritance of the land was to be eternal, and not in this life. Jacob died in Egypt and didn't inherit the promised land in his lifetime, and so the fulfilment must be yet future at the resurrection of Jacob; and he is to inherit it with "your seed with you", suggesting they too must be resurrected (Heb. 11:8-13, 39,40). Likewise the land was not given to Abraham in his lifetime; but Jacob is invited to see it as being as good as his, so sure is the promise of fulfilment. But Isaac still fails to fully perceive these things, and speaks as if Jacob would receive the full inheritance in his mortal life. But Isaac has commendably moved on from his level of appreciation of the promises displayed in Gen. 27; he accepts that *God* gives blessing, and that "the blessing of Abraham", rather than Isaac's wishes of corn and wine, were the only blessing worth having. But Isaac came to this understanding through God's patient working with the failures and misunderstandings of all the family.

Gen 28:5 *Isaac sent Jacob away. He went to Paddan Aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, Rebekah's brother, Jacob's and Esau's mother*- Jacob is now placed before Esau, in recognition that he really is being treated as the firstborn. We recall that Abraham "sent away" his sons by Keturah to the east, to this same location, because he perceived living and remaining in the promised *eretz* as fundamental to covenant relationship (see on Gen. 25:6). Later, both Jacob and Joseph wished to be buried in the *eretz*. So to send Jacob away to the east, out of the *eretz*, to relatives whom Abraham had been told to separate from, could be seen as not the best decision. For Abraham had expressly forbidden Isaac to go there, but rather must a woman be willing to leave that area and come to him in the *eretz*. And indeed Jacob did suffer spiritually from his 20 or 40 years out of the *eretz*; although his earnest desire to be buried in the *eretz* showed that he learnt the lesson at the very end of his long life.

It must be remembered that Israel are ethnically linked to the other Arab nations in the ‘land’- Jacob’s 12 sons married wives from there; some of their mothers were Arab slave girls; Jacob’s wives were Arameans, as was his mother (Gen. 28:5); historically there was much intermarriage with surrounding nations, throughout Israel’s history; Ephraim and Manasseh were half Egyptian. Rahab, Ruth etc. are all reminders of the amount of Arab blood in the average Jew. The definition of ‘Israel’ was therefore not so much on ethnic principles but rather on spiritual ones. Anyone who has walked the streets of modern Israel and pondered the question ‘What *is* a Jew?’ will have come to this conclusion, as they see Russians, Americans, black Africans… all wearing skull caps.

Gen 28:6 *Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan Aram, to take him a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he gave him a command, saying, You shall not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan*- It is twice emphasized that Esau noticed that Isaac had blessed Jacob, although the blessing in view is the Abrahamic blessing, which required raising the Godly seed through not marrying unbelievers but those within the Abraham family of faith. He wished to have whatever blessings might be going, and so he takes more wives, from Ishmael's family. And yet although Ishmael was circumcised into the covenant, he had returned to Egypt in every sense and clearly didn't want part in the covenant. Esau continues to be presented as the typical man of the flesh, vaguely interested in external appearances of doing the right thing, but not grasping the spirit of things at all.

Gen 28:7 *And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Paddan Aram*- There is sustained emphasis on Jacob's obedience to his parents, especially to his mother (Gen. 27:8,13,43; 28:7). The whole story is a foretaste of the issues involved with Christians and parental expectation in our day. It might not be going too far to say that he grew up far too much under her thumb; he meekly obeyed her faithless suggestion that he deceive his father into granting him the blessing, content with her assurance that it would be mum's sin, not his (and I imagine her pecking him on the cheek as she gave him the tray with Isaac's food on). No wonder he fell madly in love at first sight, when he first saw the girl he knew his mother wanted him to marry, perhaps at the same well where his father's servant had first met his mother. Jacob introduces himself as "Rebekah's son" (Gen. 29:12), although it would have been more normal to describe himself as Jacob ben-Isaac. Gen. 29:10 labours the point three times that Laban was "his *mother's* brother". The fact Deborah, his mother's nurse, was taken under the wing by Jacob, further suggests his very close bond with his mother; he buried Deborah under Allon-Bachuth- 'the oak of his (Jacob's) weeping' (Gen. 35:8). Jacob struggled to accept his father's God as his God. And yet he in so many ways is portrayed as deeply influenced by Rebekah his mother.

Gen 28:8 *Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan didn't please Isaac, his father*- Perhaps he refers specifically to how his Canaanite wives were a grief of mind to his parents, and his mother had said she wanted to die because of the thought of Jacob marrying such women (Gen. 27:46). Although Rebekah clearly used the 'marriage out of the faith' issue as an excuse to send Jacob away to safety, she also sincerely felt as she said she did about the matter; and we ever remember that both Isaac and Rebekah had sacrificed so much to marry only within the family of faith.

Gen 28:9 *Esau went to Ishmael, and took, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife*- The polygamy of Esau, in an attempt to please his parents, is presented as so inappropriate- as they were not apparently polygamists, and Isaac isn't recorded as taking any other wives when Rebekah was barren for the first 20 years of their marriage. The names of these women all suggest idolatry.

Gen 28:10 *Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran*- Bethel is about 70 miles from Beersheba, so Jacob would have had a few days to reflect before the dream. He went from Beersheba, "the well of the path", to Haran, "the parched place". The hint could be that this was a bad move; it was the apostate who moved eastwards. If he wanted a wife from Abraham's family there, then he could have done what his father did, and send someone to invite someone to come to him within the land or promise.

Gen 28:11 *He came to a certain place, and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. He took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep*- Jacob's sleeping with a stone as his pillow is hardly a natural thing to do- but it was done in order to induce dreams and revelations from the gods (J.G. Janzen, *Abraham And All The Families Of The Earth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) p. 108). And the one true God responded to Jacob, by showing him Angels ascending from him to God, and Angels descending from God to Jacob in response. It wasn't the other way around- because surely the idea was to show Jacob that his prayers really were being heard, Angels were in touch with God about them, and God was zealously responding even then through Angelic providence. Yet all this was done by God when Jacob was so far from Him. Just as a patient and loving father bears with his child, so God bore with Jacob; and He does with us too, and we are to reflect this in our dealings with our brethren.

Gen 28:12 *He dreamed*- This was later understood by Jacob as an answer to his "distress" (Gen. 35:3). God often sees situations as prayers, and responds; demonstrating that the effectiveness of prayer is not simply dependent upon our ability to verbalize, because this ability varies between persons.

Behold, a stairway set upon the earth, and its top reached to heaven. Behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it- See on Jn. 1:51. The idea of a stairway leading into Heaven of course has obvious connections with the ziggurats of those times; the white limestone cliffs or slopes around him merged into a ziggurat in his dreams. But note that those stairways had a temple on the ground immediately where the stairway started, and led up to a temple at the summit. On a human level, Jacob's subconscious was thinking of pagan temple systems. But God turned all this around. For the man Jacob lying there that night, in all his weakness, was a temple, connected by the Angels to Yahweh's Heavenly temple. And we too in all our weaknesses are the temples of God on this earth. Thus his idolatrous dream of a Ziggurat was turned into an assurance of Divine care for him, the shrine which topped Mesopotamian ziggurats being turned by God in the vision into the throne of Yahweh. Indeed, 'Babylon' meant "gate of God", and in thinking that he was at heaven's gates, Jacob was confusing Babylon and the true city of God. But still God worked through all this.

The stairway or ladder was "set", literally, erected or stood up. The same word is used for how Jacob later at this very same place stood up or erected an altar (Gen. 35:14). A different word is used here in :18. Jacob realized that his altars and sacrifices were ascending to God Himself personally, just as this magnificent staircase led to God, with Angels ascending and descending upon it, between God and himself. This is the power of prayer, of covenant relationship, of sacrifice and fellowship with God. The idea of reaching up to heaven and God reaching down from heaven is meant literally here, but it is also a metaphor meaning that God paid attention to the point of feeling whatever was done on earth (Gen. 11:5; 18:21; 2 Chron. 28:9; Jer. 51:9; Rev. 18:5). This sensitivity of God, and His response, is articulated through the Angels. Jacob was being taught that it is not just the situation at Babel or Sodom which elicits this huge attention; but the state of a lonely fugitive sleeping rough in the semi-desert. He deals directly with individuals. The order "ascending and descending" suggests that our situation is as it were taken up to God in heaven, and then He responds through Angelic means [descending].

We all grow up with some concept of God. This is as true for those with atheist or apostate backgrounds as it is for those steeped in Sunday School from the cradle. That concept of God which we have in our youth tends to stay with us, and in some ways dogs us for much of our lives. Growth towards a real, personal knowledge of the true God, *our* Father, is a lifelong process. Jacob grew up in the most spiritual home on earth at the time (although some of the goings on would have made the neighbours doubt this). He was brought up 'in the Truth', we could say. And yet his conception of God was woefully immature for many years. His struggle towards the true knowledge of God is not only fascinating; because Jacob's spiritual growth really is intended as *our* model. Nathaniel thought he really believed in the Lord Jesus. The Lord commented: "You shall see (usually used in John concerning faith and spiritual perception) greater things than these... you will see heaven opened, and the Angels of God ascending and descending

upon the son of man" (Jn. 1:51 RSV). It was Jacob who saw Heaven opened and the Angels ascending and descending. And the Lord's comment that Nathaniel was "an Israelite (Jacob-ite) indeed, in whom is no guile" (i.e. Jacob without his guileful side) is a reference to Jacob's name change. It confirms that Nathaniel was to follow Jacob's path of spiritual growth; he thought he believed, he thought he saw Christ clearly; but like Jacob, he was to comprehend far greater things.

Gen 28:13 *Behold, Yahweh stood above it, and said, I am Yahweh, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac*- This is another way of reminding Jacob of the promise given to Abraham, "I will be their God". Yahweh Himself was involved with Jacob; the huge staircase was to make Jacob see that his situation was directly transferred to God, and God would directly respond; for the bottom of the ladder was Jacob, more precisely, Jacob's mind. And God saw all that was there and responded there, through a huge, awesome system.

It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. The vision of Jacob's ladder showed the Angels coming and going, perhaps meaning that they are sometimes physically present with us, sometimes not. Gen. 28:13-15 are the words of the Angel to Jacob. God manifested through Jacob's specific guardian Angel then goes on to say, v. 15, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken of unto thee" (AV). At the end of his life, Jacob mentions the presence of the Angel which he had sensed all through his life. But that one Angel controlled the multitude of Angels which he saw that night in vision ministering to him. See on Gen. 18:10.

The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed- This was making specific the Abrahamic blessing, which Isaac had never clearly articulated to Jacob because he seemed so caught up in the literal, material aspects of the promises. So far as we know, Jacob had no wife nor children. He was being set up psychologically to expect that soon, therefore, he would have both. He meets Rachel, but finds that this promise was hard of fulfilment; he had to work seven years for her, and then there were major issues of infertility. All this was not God punishing Jacob, but rather seeking to hone his focus and faith in this prophetic word.

Gen 28:14 *Your seed will be as the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. In you and in your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed*- See on Gen. 12:3. Paul interprets the "seed" as singular, referring to the Lord Jesus, and the multiplication as being through individuals

being baptized into that seed (Gal. 3:16,27-29). This promise of spreading abroad geographically didn't happen in Jacob's lifetime, and so he would have been driven to faith in a resurrection and future fulfilment in the Kingdom of God on earth. The mention of the compass points would have encouraged Jacob to see himself as Abraham, who was told the same (Gen. 13:14). However, he does use the Hebrew for "spread abroad" in describing how his family has "increased greatly" (Gen. 30:30,43). The blessing of all families of the *eretz* came true in a limited sense through his seed Joseph being a blessing for them all in saving them from famine through giving all families of the earth the bread of life, pointing forward to the salvation of all peoples from all compass points in Christ (Lk. 13:29; Rev. 21:13). And so we see what we ought to discern in our lives- an incipient fulfilment of the Kingdom blessings right now.

Gen 28:15 *Behold, I am with you, and will keep you, wherever you go, and will bring you again into this land. For I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken of to you*- Heb. 13:5 combines quotes from Gen. 28:15; Josh. 1:5 and Dt. 31:16. Heb. 13:5 doesn't quote any of them exactly, but mixes them together. This is typical of how the New Testament quotes the Old, and is how the Rabbinic commentaries likewise functioned. The promises just made were eternal, and so the promise to not leave Jacob until they were fulfilled continues right up to the establishment of the Kingdom on earth at the Lord's return; He therefore will never "leave" Jacob and his seed, the true Israel of God. Which is why this promise is so frequently applied to all God's people at various points in history. "I am with you", Emmanuel, God with us, is a promise carried on to all the true seed, as Jacob himself realized when he insists that "God will be with you" (Gen. 48:21; repeated in Dt. 31:23); although it maybe took him a lifetime to realize it, seeing that in :20 he seems to question it at this stage: "If God will be with me..." (AV).

The promise of Divine keeping connects with the Angel cherubim keeping the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24); Jacob was promised to be kept in the way, however lonely that way must have seemed at the time, with the end in view being re-entry to a restored Eden. But the same word is used of how Abraham's seed were to "keep" the covenant and "the way of Yahweh" (Gen. 17:9; 18:19); and Israel in the wilderness, for whom Moses was primarily writing Genesis, also had an Angel to "keep" them in that "way" (Ex. 23:20). But the life of spiritually stumbling Jacob shows that this was and is not a tit for tat offer- 'If you keep My covenant, I'll keep you'. God kept Jacob in the way by grace, even when Jacob was not committed to keeping the covenant (see on :21,22). God unilaterally fulfilled His side of it, and it was this grace which finally led Jacob to respond. Moses uses this word "keep" multiple times in Deuteronomy, several times in almost every chapter. He urges Israel to both "keep" the covenant requirements, and also to "keep" themselves and their own hearts (Dt. 15:9). The covenant was therefore so intensely personal, and the Angel who worked to "keep" them within the covenant way (Ex. 23:20) was therefore working on a personal level with every heart within Israel. And that Angel in its work is understood as the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and

lives today (Is. 63:9,10 cp. Eph. 4:30). Under the new covenant, the Spirit is placed within our hearts to cause us to "keep" the covenant requirements (Ez. 36:27). As Jacob came finally to "keep" the covenant in which he himself had been kept by grace, we are to follow his path (Hos. 12:6).

"Bring you again into this land" is the same Hebrew word for word as in Gen. 3:19: "return unto the ground", from which Adam had been taken just as Israel in the wilderness and Jacob had originally been in the *eretz* and were being brought again to it, albeit by a long and circuitous route. The connection is to highlight the way in which there is a way out of the curse upon Adam; we shall indeed return unto the ground, but we can also be brought into the promised land- necessarily, through a bodily resurrection from the dead. This is one of so many nudges throughout the Bible that the curses upon Adam can ultimately be reversed for God's people.

God promised that He would not leave or forsake Jacob. He said the same to Israel in the wilderness, and yet predicted that Israel would leave or forsake God by forsaking the covenant and thereby God would leave / forsake them (Dt. 31:8,16,17). Likewise God did not forsake or leave Jacob's father Isaac because Isaac respected the implications of the covenant (s.w. Gen. 24:27). But the way God speaks to Jacob here appears to be unconditionally promising that He would not leave Jacob; and it was that unmerited grace which in the end elicited Jacob's response to it.

Gen 28:16 *Jacob awakened out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Yahweh is in this place, and I didn't know it*- The conflict of tenses is arresting. Yahweh *is* [present] here, but I did not [previously] know it. Although the vision was ended, Jacob realized that the promised presence of God, with Angels ascending and descending upon him, was ongoing, and not just a dream. And he admits that he had not appreciated this when he first laid down in that place, nor earlier in his life. We see here definite growth in Jacob. The same Hebrew term is found in Ex. 6:3, where we read that Yahweh revealed Himself to Jacob and He was 'known' to him thereby. So we conclude that after the dream, Jacob 'knew' Yahweh, although he had not previously done so. We note the gradual growth of Jacob in knowing or having relationship with God.

"Yahweh is" in Hebrew here means more than the present tense of the verb "to be". The idea is that Yahweh exists, right here. Moses was primarily writing for Israel in the wilderness, who had questioned whether "Yahweh is among us" using the same Hebrew (Ex. 17:7, as Jud. 6:13). Even if they had not known it, they were to realize that His presence, mediated perhaps by the same Angel who dealt with Jacob, was just as real for them as it had been for him in the desert that night. Dt. 29:26; 32:17 and other passages teach that the idols of the nations were not 'known' by Israel who worshipped them; the idea is that Yahweh alone enters into personal relationship, which is the Hebrew idea of 'knowing'. And likewise all the possible idols in our lives do not offer the personal knowing / relationship with God which He alone does.

Gen 28:17 *He was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other than God's house, and this is the gate of heaven*- "Dreadful" suggests that Jacob feared God with the fear of one who has no real relationship with Him. He was on one hand in awe at God's closeness; and yet he was afraid. I suggest this was the fear of sinful man before God Almighty. The first reference to "fear" is in Adam's words of guilt before God: "I was afraid" (Gen. 3:10). He feared because he felt he was so close to God now; at the gate of heaven. The Lord maybe used this idea in speaking of the virgins in the parable knocking at the door of the Kingdom. Jacob felt he was still "outside", at God's gate, so close, but perhaps he felt so far, and therefore feared.

Gen 28:18 *Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on its top*- See on Jn. 1:50. As noted on :12, Jacob understood this makeshift alter as his poor replica of the stairway to heaven. His humble altar and sacrifice of the oil of his spirit were a way of ascending to God Himself personally, just as this magnificent staircase led to God, with Angels ascending and descending upon it, between God and himself. This is the power of prayer, of covenant relationship, of sacrifice and fellowship with God.

Gen 28:19 *He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first*- Before that watershed night of Gen. 32, Jacob was influenced by the surrounding religious ideas, and was possibly involved with idol worship. The fact he openly says that Yahweh will only become his God *if* He brings him back home in peace is proof enough that up until age 77 at the earliest, Jacob was not an unreserved worshipper of Yahweh. Yet knowing the nature of the man, it seems impossible to believe that he was totally irreligious until the time of his repentance in Gen. 32. The connections between Jacob and idolatry are so very numerous throughout the prophets that it seems impossible to totally disconnect him from idolatry. "Luz" appears to refer to a tree which was associated with idolatry. Jacob renamed it to Bethel, the house of God, although his later life was hardly free from the influences of idolatry. But here we see the beginnings of the development of a rejection of idolatry. He also perceived that God needs no "house", for He reveals Himself deep within the heart of His people, and ascends and descends upon them, wherever they are. This was a not insignificant paradigm shift; for the 'religion' of his day as of ours tended to think in terms of having a 'house of prayer', a place you went to do your religious stuff and find contact with your deity.

Gen 28:20 *Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this*

way that I go- See on Gen. 48:20; Jer. 10:16. As Jacob set out to relatives in a distant land, hoping to find a wife, he was fully aware that he was in principle replicating his father's experience. When he spoke of God keeping him "in this way that I go" and bringing him again "to my father's house" (:21), his mind was on the story he had so often heard of how God lead Abraham's servant in "the right way" and leading back home with a wonderful wife for Isaac his father (Gen. 24:27,40,42,48,56). When at this stage in life (he was 77, remember) things suddenly took a different turn, his great hope was that God would bring him back safely "again to my father's house in peace" (28:21); he wanted to go back to the stay-at-home life. What God put him through in the rest of his life was the exact opposite of this. He says that if God does this, he will "surely give the tenth unto thee" (28:22 cp. 14:20)- exactly as granddad Abraham had done (Gen. 14:20), who had doubtless told Jacob this many a time as they 'dwelled together in tents' (Heb. 11:9). We very much get the impression that Jacob was wrapped up with his parents too much; he had not yet avowed Yahweh as his personal God, but he felt a safety in his religious family and consciously and subconsciously living out their expectations. He was like many raised "in the faith"; he had to discover it all for himself, alone, and throw away the crutches of the family environment, upon which a man shall never see his God for himself.

And will give me bread to eat, and clothing to put on- This is simply incredible in its lack of faith; '*If* God will really look after me, which includes giving me food and clothes, *if* He's as good as His word, then I'll accept Him as my God'. And yet Paul speaks of how we should serve our Master well, especially if he is our brother (alluding to Jacob and Laban), and "having food and raiment be content" (1 Tim. 6:2,8), as if the fact Jacob only expected food and clothing from God was a sign of his unmaterialism. The Spirit focused upon one part of Jacob's words and imputed righteousness to him because of them, just as the bitter and cynical words of Sarah are quoted so positively in the New Testament. At the very time Jacob said those words, he at best only half believed, and the next 20 [or 40] years of his life were devoted to accumulating far more than just food and clothing. And yet his words regarding food and raiment, sandwiched as they are between much that is wrong, are treated as a reflection of his spirituality.

Having heard the promises concerning his future seed and the present protection God would grant him, Jacob immediately seized on the latter: "If God will be with me... then shall Yahweh be my God" (:21). He brushed past the implications of Messiah, although later he came to see that these were the most fundamental things God had promised. The way he raised up (cp. resurrection) the pillar and anointed it at this time may have shown a faint conception of Messiah, but this took years to seriously develop.

“If God… then…” implies was that Jacob didn't consider Yahweh to be his God at that time. He was not totally committed to Yahweh as his God. The fact he promises to give a tenth to God *in the future* suggests that he did not then consider God to be his King, for the idea of tithing seems to have been established before the Law of Moses was given (as were many other elements of that Law; Gen. 14:20). Jacob's words sound as if he believed in 'God' as a kind of force or spirit, but did not have Yahweh as his personal God. And yet God had promised Abraham that He would be the God of his seed (Gen. 17:7,8); Jacob was aware of these promises, and yet he is showing that he did not accept their personal relevance to him at this time. The fact at the end he does call God his God reveals that he then accepted the Abrahamic promises as relevant to him personally. His offer to give a tithe to God if God delivered him would have been understood in those days as saying that Yahweh would then be his *king* (cp. 1 Sam. 8:15,17); and yet he evidently felt that Yahweh wasn't then his King. There is no record that Jacob ever did build a temple or tithe; but at the end of his life he realizes that God had kept *His* side of the deal, in that He had been with him and fed him all his life long. The fact he hadn’t kept his side of the deal made Jacob realize the huge grace of God…

The fact at the end he does call Yahweh his God reveals that he then accepted the Abrahamic promises as relevant to him personally (Gen. 49:24,25). This is an essay in the titanic difference between knowledge and belief. At baptism we tend to have knowledge, which masquerades as belief. And all our lives long we must struggle, as Jacob did, to turn knowledge into faith. His *personal* grasp of the wonder of the promises at the end is revealed in Gen. 48:4, where Jacob recounts how "God Almighty… said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession" (AV). God never actually said all this to Jacob; Jacob is quoting the promise to Abraham of Gen. 17:8 *and applying it to himself*. And with us too, a personal grasp of the wonder of it all, that it really applies to *me*, is a mark of that final maturity we fain would achieve.

So only at the end, Yahweh was Jacob's God. God seems to recognize this by describing Himself as the God of Jacob / Israel so very often. His joy, His sheer delight at Jacob's spiritual achievement is recorded throughout the Bible. The way God describes Himself as "the God of Israel" (201 times) or "the God of Jacob" (25 times) infinitely more times than anyone else's God is proof enough that God saw His relationship with Jacob as very special. "God of Abraham" occurs 17 times; "God of Isaac" 8 times; "God of David" 4 times. Remember that whenever we read "Israel", we are reading of the man Jacob and his children. That God was the God of mixed-up, struggling Jacob is a sure comfort to every one of us. God is not ashamed to be surnamed the God of Jacob (Heb. 11:16 Gk.). The clear parallel between the historical man Jacob and the people of Israel is brought out in Mal. 1:2: “I loved you… I loved Jacob”. Had Israel appreciated God’s love for the

man Jacob, and perceived that he was typical of them, then they would never have doubted God's love for them. And the same is true of us, whom Jacob likewise represents.

The covenant God made with Abraham was similar in style to covenants made between men at that time; and yet there was a glaring difference. Abraham was not required to do anything or take upon himself any obligations. Circumcision [cp. baptism] was to remember that this covenant of grace had been made. It isn't part of the covenant [thus we are under this same new, Abrahamic covenant, but don't require circumcision]. Perhaps this was why Yahweh but not Abraham passed between the pieces, whereas usually both parties would do so. The promises to Abraham are pure, pure grace. Sadly Jacob didn't perceive the wonder of this kind of covenant- his own covenant with God was typical of a human covenant, when he says that *if* God will give him some benefits, then he will give God some. Although he knew the covenant with Abraham, the one way, gracious nature of it still wasn't perceived by him.

Because of the great importance of Angels or a specific Angel in our lives, many of God's people seem to have conceived of God in terms of an Angel. Jacob (Gen. 48:15) and the patriarchs are clear examples. The extent of this is shown by Jacob vowing to his Angel at Bethel that "if God (the Angel) be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go... so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord (Yahweh) be my God" (Gen. 28:20,21). That the 'God' was definitely the Angel is shown by Gen. 31:11,13: "The Angel of God spake unto (Jacob)... I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me". So was Jacob promising his Angel that if He protected him, "then shall Yahweh be my Elohim (Angel)"- i.e. 'then I will recognize Yahweh is behind you, and I will relate to Him as I do to you'?

Gen 28:21 *So that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Yahweh will be my God*- The AV and others suggest that Yahweh becoming Jacob's God was part of the deal which Jacob was offering God. See on :20 for the implications of this. We can each personally, as members of the seed, enter into Jacob's experience at this time. David certainly did:

Gen. 28:20,21 re. Jacob	Psalm 23 re. David
He is with me	For You are with *me* (i.e. just as You were with Jacob)
He will keep me	He makes me lie down, he leads me, he restores my life
He will give me bread to eat	He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies

I come again to my father's house in peace I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever

David was a man who saw the height of Jacob, perceiving Jacob as our example, and the deep significance of his spiritual growth as our pattern. His almost fanatic devotion to "the Law" would have included the record of Jacob- around a fifth of "the Law" which he studied all the day (and deep into the night watches).

It's questionable whether Jacob ever did really return to his father's home in peace. But all the same, as is clear from Jacob's final words, he fully accepted Yahweh as his God at the end of his life. He realized that his passionate hankering after being back home with mum and dad, of returning to how things used to be... was of the flesh. God wanted him to be a man, standing alone before Him. And Jacob realized that, and made Yahweh his God all the same, despite never really returning home in peace. He likely never saw his mother again, and the record of his burial of Isaac with Esau leaves us to imagine his nervousness and inability to ever live again near Esau.

Gen 28:22 *Then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, will be God's house. Of all that you will give me I will surely give the tenth to you*- As noted on :20, this was understood as accepting Yahweh as his king. There is no record that Jacob ever did tithe to Yahweh, nor that he ever attempted to build a sanctuary, a literal "house", at the spot where he had erected that pillar. He does return there and erect a pillar later (see on :12), but he built no literal "house" of worship for God. He would've looked back and perceived how inappropriate was his bargain with God; and all he offered to do, he concluded was inappropriate. God was worthy of his all, not just a tenth; and the house of God was him, his heart, upon which Angels ascended and descended constantly because of his covenant relationship.

GENESIS CHAPTER 29

Gen 29:1 *Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the children of the east*- A 450 mile journey. Balaam was from here (Num. 23:7), and he apparently had a relationship with Yahweh. So the knowledge of the true God was somehow still around there; perhaps Abraham had told his family why he was leaving Ur, or had sent message back there of his relationship with Yahweh. But as noted on Gen. 25:6, to go to the East was a sign of leaving the land of promise and returning to where the true seed of Abraham should have left from. Jacob's parents had operated on the principle that Isaac would not go to the land of the east, rather Rebekah must leave there. So the whole journey was not on the right basis; yet still God worked through it, and out of so much failure and dysfunction there, forged the people of Israel, His covenant people.

Gen 29:2 *He looked, and behold, a well in the field, and, behold, three flocks of sheep lying there by it. For out of that well they watered the flocks. The stone on the well's mouth was large*- The repeating similarities between our lives and those of others also reveal to us that God at times arranges for us to suffer from our *alter ego*- persons who behave similarly to us, and who through those similarities cause us suffering. In this way we are taught the error of our ways, both past and present. It seems that Jacob the deceiver suffered in this way from Laban the deceiver- in order to teach him and cause his spiritual growth. For example, as Jacob deceived his blind father relating to an important family matter, so Laban deceived Jacob in the darkness of the wedding night. And Jacob learnt from this- whereas Laban [so it seems] just didn't "get it". Indeed, so many themes repeated in Jacob's life in order to teach him. For example, when he first meets Rachel, there are three other flocks of sheep waiting to be watered (Gen. 29:2); but the implication of Gen. 29:10 is that Jacob rolled away the stone from the well and watered them and ignored the other three flocks. But did not this stone return upon his own head when God rolled away the reproach of the other three women in Jacob's life (Leah and the two servant girls) but not that of Rachel, who initially remained barren? Is this the significance of the three unwatered flocks? We wonder at the significance of these three flocks of sheep. Perhaps the reference is to the division of the earth / *eretz* dwellers into the three sons of Noah.

Jacob went to Haran expecting to find a wife. He was the favourite son of his mother Rebekah, and she wanted him to marry into her family. He also, at either 57or 77 (depending how you read the chronology of his life), was eager to marry. He had always lived with mum and dad, the favourite son of his mother, staying at home with her all the time. Jacob introduces himself as "Rebekah's son" (29:12), although it would have been more normal to describe himself as Jacob ben-Isaac. Gen. 29:10 labours the point three times that Laban was "his *mother's* brother". Her marriage had been arranged at a well; she had encountered the invitation to marry Isaac at the well in Haran. And now Jacob is at a well near Haran, just possibly the same well. He was psychologically set up to fall in love with any woman from his mother's family. And a pretty girl comes to the well to water her sheep; just as his mother had done. Men have a tendency to want a wife to be a surrogate mother for them. Isaac too, Jacob's father, had been the same. He too had been a mumma's boy, the obsessive love of his elderly mother, and so he was comforted after her death by Rebekah. He took Rebekah into his mother's tent, as if he had kept her tent just as it was when she died, and slept with her there. Clearly, he treated his wife as a surrogate mother. Jacob was going down the same path. He had lived at home, apparently single, for a long time. And now he was looking for a surrogate mother. And he found her. Both Isaac and Jacob come over as weak men, mumma's boys who had not individuated from mummy and their father's house. Just as the macho man who falls for the girl who looks like his mother and irons his work clothes as she did, and cooks like mum did at home... is not really strong, psychologically, not rugged at all- but weak. He is not (at least, not yet) a real man, his own person. My point is, that from such weak, pathetically pampered mumma's boys, came the house of Israel, God's people. For *He* worked to make them men, to individuate them.

Rebekah had told him to go there "for a few days" and, by implication, to find a wife there and return with her to Canaan. This is why we read that the seven years service for Rachel seemed to Jacob but "a few days" (:20). And this is why he says to Laban at the end of the period that he has served his *days* for Rachel (:21). Jacob told himself throughout the seven years of service that this was the "few days" his mother had spoken of. He was totally dominated by the desire to do his mother's will. But he

ended up serving another 7 years for Rachel; when he ought to have just accepted Leah and returned to Canaan. Rachel was an idolater, just like the wives whom Esau had married who were a grief of mind to Rebekah. So Jacob failed to see the spirit behind his mother's reasoning, and just followed her desires on the basis of living out parental expectation. Just as many raised Christian do today, at least in the shape of their early lives.

Gen 29:3 *There all the flocks were gathered. They rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again on the well's mouth in its place*- This was their tradition- to wait until all the flocks were gathered and then remove the stone. Jacob felt this to be inefficient, as the sheep could have been grazing for the hours they were kept hanging around the well (:7). The headstrong, intelligent, hard working Jacob was to soon face years of looking after sheep day and night, consumed by the frost at night. Truly he was brought down, that he might be exalted.

Gen 29:4 *Jacob said to them, My relatives, where are you from? They said, We are from Haran*- Jacob apparently didn't know how close he was to Haran. There would've been no informative signposts on the road of the type we are used to. He addresses them as "brothers", a standard Middle Eastern form of address; but he could have sensed that he was drawing near to where his relatives lived. He was psychologically set up to expect a meeting of his relatives and his future wife, by a well- just as had happened to Eliezer in choosing a wife for Jacob's father. So he was hopeful that these indeed might be his relatives.

Gen 29:5 *He said to them, Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor? They said, We know him*- Laban was Nahor's grandson, but Hebrew genealogies frequently skip generations. The identification of Laban with Nahor is significant, in that Nahor is specifically defined as an idolater. Jacob's marriage back into the family of origin must be read as continuing a long line of such failure. Abraham was to separate from his native land and family, in order to be given a new land and family / seed. But he was very reluctant to do so. And Isaac and Jacob likewise were. But despite this refusal to fulfil the apparent conditions for the promises to be fulfilled, God still as it were drove forward His purpose to fulfil them. By grace alone.

Gen 29:6 *He said to them, Is it well with him? They said, It is well. See, Rachel, his daughter, is coming with the sheep*- The structure of the Hebrew language seems to reflect something of God's way of thinking. In Biblical Hebrew, there's no term for "yes" in replying to a question. Instead, the person answering repeats the question. Thus here Jacob asks: "Is he well?"; and the shepherds reply "Well". God's way of saying "Yes" to our prayers / requests is to repeat back to us as it were our requests; and thus the form and wording of our prayers becomes in some sense important; for what we ask for is what we will receive back, if He answers positively.

"Rachel" means "ewe", identifying her with her sheep. Jacob's heart would have been in his mouth, expecting to meet his future wife. The fact Laban used his daughter to water the sheep indicates that he was not wealthy. For this was the work of slaves. And if one young woman could control his entire flock, his flock was not large. We reflect how Laban had been made rich by the lavish presents given him in return for his sister Rebekah marrying Isaac. Back then, Rebekah had shepherded and watered the flock. But despite Laban's avarice, his economic position had apparently not progressed much. I suggested on Gen. 24 that Laban only agreed to the quick

marriage of his sister because he wanted the expensive gifts on offer. But desire for wealth has no lasting effect, as we see here. We also reflect that Jacob was from a very wealthy family; and he was marrying in to a relatively poor family. His 14 years of slave labour for his wives was therefore a bringing of him down from his previous soft and prosperous life.

Gen 29:7 *He said, Behold, it is still the middle of the day, not time to gather the livestock together. Water the sheep, and go and feed them*- Jacob displays here the typical zeal and acumen of the Abraham family. The shepherd girls were wasting time, as he saw it; they should water the animals and then take them for feeding, rather than losing feeding time milling around the well with them. However it may be that Jacob wanted to meet Rachel alone, or at least, without the presence of the male shepherds; and he therefore took the initiative to get these men watering their flocks, so that he could meet Rachel without them. He was absolutely psychologically set up to expect that he would be meeting his future wife.

Or Jacob could be read as accusing the men of being lazy- perhaps he thought they were hired hands, and were gathering the animals together to water them and then return them to their stalls. But, he considered, it was too early in the day to be doing that.

Whatever, Jacob was driven to observe that what they were doing with the flocks was not, to his mind, very wise. He comes over as hard working and knowledgeable about pasturing animals. And then... Rachel, the beautiful shepherd girl, appears on the scene. Herself the very picture of hard work; her name meaning 'ewe', she is associated with the sheep. He was psychologically set up to fall in love with her. And yet my suggestion is that he would have been better off marrying into the Canaanite worshippers whom Melchizedek had pastored, rather than into an idolatrous family. Of whom Rachel turned out one of the most fanatic idolaters. But that was his choice, and we see God confirming him in it, and setting him up to fall headlong in love with Rachel and marry into that unbelieving family. We are indeed confirmed in the way in which we wish to go.

Gen 29:8 *They said, We can't, until all the flocks are gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth. Then we water the sheep*- They may be alluding to some local custom; for Jacob alone could move the stone. It wasn't that they couldn't budge the stone. Perhaps they were fearing evaporation from the well or water warming if the stone was left off for too long. But see on :7 and :10.

Gen 29:9 *While he was yet speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she kept them*- This is emphasized (:7 too). "Coming with the sheep" would have restimulated images of his mother Rebekah coming with her father's sheep to a well near Haran. The record very cleverly presents Jacob as bound to fall in love with Rachel at first sight, and indeed he does.

Gen 29:10 *It happened, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother*- As explained previously, Jacob was psychologically set up to fall in love with Rachel at first sight. We don't read that he fell in love on first sight, but rather that he moved the stone. He had been psychologically set up to expect that like his father, he too would find a wife in Laban's family (Gen. 28:2), and God would bless him in his mission (Gen. 28:15). So when he finds that one of the pretty shepherd girls

he meets by a well is in fact Laban's daughter, his heart and whole psychology would have been elated. And so he finds the physical strength to impress the girl by shifting the heavy stone; or, as suggested on :8, to upset the local customs of only moving the stone once all the flocks were gathered. And then the stress and relief issues forth in the tears of emotional breakdown (:11). This has absolute credibility in psychological terms and confirms the internal veracity of the inspired record.

We see reflected here Jacob's psychological domination by his mother- Laban is three times called "his mother's brother". And he followed his mother's weaker side too. Rebekah rejected the promise of Gen. 25:23 in ch.27; as Jacob in Gen. 33:3-5. There is sustained emphasis on Jacob's obedience to his parents, especially to his mother (Gen. 27:8,13,43; 28:7). The whole story is a foretaste of the issues involved with Christians and parental expectation in our day. It might not be going too far to say that he grew up far too much under her thumb; he meekly obeyed her faithless suggestion that he deceive his father into granting him the blessing, content with her assurance that it would be mum's sin, not his (and I imagine her pecking him on the cheek as she gave him the tray with Isaac's food on). No wonder he fell madly in love at first sight, when he first saw the girl he knew his mother wanted him to marry. Jacob introduces himself as "Rebekah's son" (29:12), although it would have been more normal to describe himself as Jacob ben-Isaac. 29:10 labours the point three times that Laban was "his *mother's* brother". The fact Deborah, his mother's nurse, was taken under the wing by Jacob, further suggests his very close bond with his mother; he buried Deborah under Allon-Bachuth- 'the oak of his (Jacob's) weeping' (Gen. 35:8). Jacob struggled to accept his father's God as his God. And yet he in so many ways is portrayed as deeply influenced by Rebekah his mother.

Gen 29:11 *Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept*- That he should break down in tears is absolutely in line with the psychology of the situation which I have outlined so far in this chapter. The pressure release would have been enormous, mixed with joy that the apparently chosen wife for him was very beautiful. And yet God's intention was that he should marry Leah, not Rachel. Jacob was being led this way to try to teach him that marriage is not about the flesh but the spirit. For Rachel never comes over as very spiritually minded, indeed she was so attached to the family idols that she stole them when the family left Laban's encampment.

Gen 29:12 *Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son. She ran and told her father*- We note his self-identity as "Rebekah's son"- not Jacob ben-Isaac, as would've been the usual introduction. See on :10. Her running was another connection with how Rebekah, Jacob's mother, had likewise run from the well back to her father with the news.

Gen 29:13 *It happened, when Laban heard the news of Jacob, his sister's son, that he ran to meet Jacob, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things*- Again the similarities are so clear with Eliezer's visit to get Rebekah as a wife for Isaac. Circumstances do indeed repeat in human lives, so that we might discern the principles and lessons.

Gen 29:14 *Laban said to him, Surely you are my bone and my flesh. He lived with him for a month*- We recall Laban wanting Rebekah to stay with them about a month before agreeing to marry Isaac. As noted above, the similarities with the marriage of Rebekah are so clear. But the spiritual aspect wasn't paralleled at all. To continue that, Jacob ought to have explained that Rachel would have to leave the land of the east

and return to the *eretz* with him; and he should have pointed out to everyone that he had had a vision at Bethel which had assured him that this was God's program for him, and he wished to remain part of it. But the spiritual side of things was quite lacking. He apparently only saw a pretty girl who restimulated his feelings for his mother.

We note that "my bone and my flesh" means 'blood relative', and the same term is used of our relationship to the Lord Jesus within His body (Eph. 5:30). This is indeed a challenging level of intimacy; our relationship with Him is no mere occasional hobby. In a very detailed study of this language, the theologian Henricus Renckens concluded: "In Israel, in order to say that someone was a blood relation, one said: "He is my flesh and my bones" (Gen. 29:14; Jud. 9:2; cp. Gen. 37:27; 2 Sam. 5:1; 19:13 ff.; Is. 58:7)" (H. Renckens, *Israel's Concept of the Beginning: The Theology of Genesis 1-3* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964) p. 228). This is how close we are to the Lord Jesus- blood relatives. This language could in no way be justified if Jesus were God Himself in person.

Gen 29:15 *Laban said to Jacob, Because you are my brother, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what will your wages be?*- Laban had been given a fortune in the ten camels' worth of expensive presents and metals which he had been given when Rebekah married Isaac. But his avarice is clear. He saw in Jacob a good worker. We meet here the idea of 'serving', and in the next verse, the idea of older and younger siblings. Jacob had laboured wrongly and in his own strength to bring about God's prediction that between him and his brother, the elder would serve the younger. The word "serve" is so repeatedly used about how Jacob served Laban (:18,20,25,27,30; 30:26,29; 31:6,41; Hos. 12:12). Jacob had so wanted the blessing to come true, of his older brother serving him. But he never really got that in his life, and he was made to realize what serving your brother or relative [Laban] was really like. He was being made to understand how Esau would have felt if he had served Jacob as Jacob intended. We too are taught how things we once hankered after would've been, had they come true. And this is why the motif of elder and younger siblings is included in Jacob's experience of "serving", to remind him of the whole drama in his own earlier life about the elder serving the younger.

Gen 29:16 *Laban had two daughters. The name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel*- See on :15. If we are to assume these were his only daughters, then he had not been greatly blessed with children. Laban is presented as focused on material wealth and blessing, and yet never really achieving it as he wished, despite his schemes. And Jacob ought to have learnt from that.

Gen 29:17 *Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and attractive*- The reference could be to weak eyesight, which was a feature of the Abraham family. Or the reference could be to how Semitic peoples value vivacious, sparkling eyes; Rachel had these, but Leah didn't. Leah was "in appearance dull" [another acceptable translation] in comparison to Rachel. Again we see that Jacob's attraction to Rachel was of the flesh.

Gen 29:18 *Jacob loved Rachel. He said, I will serve you seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter*- Jacob had been promised that he was to "let people serve you" (Gen. 27:29) and yet he effectively said he didn't want that promise, by serving Laban for a wife (29:18,25,27); at the end he was brought through life's experiences to see that the promises are the basis of life, and that we must let God fulfill them to

us. Seven years labour was a significant dowry; the once wealthy Jacob, apparent heir of Isaac's huge wealth, was now reduced to a penniless man in love, willing to sign himself up for seven years hard manual labour in order to get married. It was a huge comedown, and he must have wondered at times how God's promise "I will be with you" would really work out, as it certainly seemed to have little cash value through all those years; "for a wife he kept sheep" (Hos. 12:12).

The deal was clearly defined- it was for "your younger daughter", perhaps stressed because Jacob was aware of the tradition to marry off the elder daughter first. He ought to have realized that it was God's plan he marry Leah, and seeing she was weak eyed, possibly an invalid, he would've served fewer years for her. But he wanted to go his own way and marry the pretty but less spiritual girl, and he suffered for it.

Gen 29:19 *Laban said, It is better that I give her to you, than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me*- The implication could be that she was already promised to "another man" but Laban was prepared to cancel that agreement. In this case, we again are left with the impression that Jacob was Divinely intended to marry Leah and return with her to his father's house in peace. But he wanted to get around that and have Rachel, and so the whole sorry saga unravelled further; and yet through it all, God worked to build up His people from such unspiritual beginnings. Just as He does with us.

Gen 29:20 *Jacob served seven years for Rachel. They seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had for her*- This may seem commendable, but we must remember the observations already made that it was the Divine 'Plan A' that he marry Leah. Instead he was obsessed with Rachel and making God's purpose work out in such a way that would reinforce his own desires. In essence, this temptation is present with all God's children. That same kind of obsession had led Jacob and Rebekah to defraud Esau of the birthright and blessing. See on :2.

Gen 29:21 *Jacob said to Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her*- We note that he didn't sleep with his betrothed for seven years, which is commendable. The fact Jacob had to take the initiative in asking Laban for his betrothed may already hint at a reluctance on Laban's part. Jacob's term "my days are fulfilled" sounds as if he had counted the days; to still feel like this toward Rachel after seven years of betrothal indicates a besotted love for her, although I have suggested earlier that this was an obsession which was ignoring the fact God had clearly intended him to marry Leah and then return to the *eretz*. See on :2.

Gen 29:22 *Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast*- Laban was perhaps expecting some attempt by Jacob to take Rachel by force, or otherwise make a scene. So he gathered all the local men to be present. Surely they knew what was being planned. See on :27 "we". The Hebrew for "feast" is literally "a drinking", and this would explain why Jacob didn't realize he had slept with Leah rather than Rachel.

Gen 29:23 *It happened in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him. He went in to her*- Surely one reason that Jacob disliked Leah subsequently was that he understandably felt she had played a conscious part in the deception. As noted on :32 and :34, she seems to have truly loved Jacob and wished that he would be joined to her in love. He clearly didn't feel joined to her nor love her, at least initially. However it's hard to imagine that Rachel didn't get wind of the

conspiracy, and was not in some way part of it too. We are to suppose that in the earlier part of the ceremony, Rachel was acting the part of the bride; and then, as stated here, only in the evening, when Jacob was drunk, was Leah brought to Jacob. The idea was clearly that once Jacob had slept with her, he had to have her as his wife. So Rachel was surely involved in the deception. After all, where was she whilst all this was going on? What did she feel, what did she say?

Gen 29:24 *Laban gave Zilpah his handmaid to his daughter Leah for a handmaid*- Laban gave Jacob his castoff maidservant, rather than Leah having her own maidens, as happened with Rebekah. This was somewhat of an insult, and an attempt to get power over Jacob in this way too. Zilpah was apparently given to Leah before the evening, if these verses are chronological. So she too was part of the deception. Jacob must have felt so alone, but that was all part of the Divine plan- to bring him to Him, just as He did at the vision of the ladder at Bethel.

Gen 29:25 *It happened in the morning that, behold, it was Leah. He said to Laban, What is this you have done to me? Didn't I serve with you for Rachel?*- We naturally enquire why only "in the morning" did Jacob realize the deception. I suggest he may well have been drunk; as noted on :22, "feast" is literally 'a drinking'. This would form a parallel with how Jacob had given Isaac his father wine when he likewise deceived him, under cover of the darkness of Isaac's blindness.

Why then have you deceived me?- Jacob was verbalizing the thoughts and words of Isaac and Esau whom he had deceived. The truthful answer was more or less: 'For money / material advantage'. And that was the answer which Jacob had to give to the same question asked of himself.

Gen 29:26 *Laban said, It is not done so in our place, to give the younger before the firstborn*- The obvious response is that he should not have therefore contracted with Jacob for her. There is however evidence that this tradition of only giving the elder first could be waived if the elder was in some way deformed or blind; and there is the possibility that Leah was indeed like this, which would explain why it was Rachel and not Leah who was out with the sheep when Jacob first met her. It would also explain why Laban was at such pains to marry her off; and why Jacob specifically made the contract stating that Rachel was the younger daughter. So in every way, Laban had deceived Jacob, just as he had deceived his own father.

Gen 29:27 *Fulfill the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you will serve with me yet seven other years*- The "we" connects with "the men of the place"; see on :22. This really left Jacob trapped; he had to agree. His obsessive love for Rachel had led him into the position; whereas if he had married Leah as it seems God planned, then he wouldn't have gotten into the impossible situation he was. For marrying two sisters was not only immoral, it was going to give rise to a miserable domestic life. He, the one time heir to all Isaac's huge wealth, was indeed brought very low.

Gen 29:28 *Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week. He gave him Rachel his daughter as wife*- He had a Divinely provided opportunity here to accept Leah as the wife God intended, and return home to the *eretz,* trusting God to keep His promise of bringing him home in peace. But his infatuation with the unspiritual Rachel and his pride led him to agree. And so many spiritual people have become obsessed with an unspiritual

partner, leading to many wasted years, and frustration of the Divine possibilities for them. And we all miss Divine possibilities and potentials.

Gen 29:29 *Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah, his handmaid, to be her handmaid*- As noted on :24, unlike Rebekah, Rachel was not given her own virgins to assist her, but rather her father's ex. We notice that Bilhah and Zilpah were "his" handmaids. No mention is made of his wife. They may well have effectively been his women on the side, perhaps having had his children, and were therefore a way of exercising control over Jacob's family. To later have children by the ex-mistresses of his hated master would've been so emotionally painful for Jacob.

Gen 29:30 *He went in also to Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years*- Jacob was under the one man: one woman ideal of Genesis; and yet he evidently didn't take this too seriously. His mad infatuation with Rachel meant that he thought nothing of polygamy. The idea of accepting one's married circumstances for the sake of principle was obviously foreign to our Jacob. Many aspects of the Mosaic Law were already in place before it was pronounced to Moses; the prohibition on marrying a second wife who was the sister of the first wife could well have been known among God's people in Jacob's time, seeing that it was a precept based on the principles of Eden (Lev. 18:17,18). "It is wickedness" was God's comment to Moses, and there is no reason to think that His essential moral judgment on this kind of thing has ever changed much. Yet Jacob thought nothing of breaching this command, and committing this "wickedness".

Likewise, Dt. 21 was clear that when in a case when a man had two wives and loved one and hated the other, and the firstborn son was from the hated / loved less wife... he was not to promote the firstborn of the loved wife to be his firstborn, and to demote the firstborn by the hated wife. But this is precisely what Jacob does. He demotes Reuben in favour of Joseph and in fact Joseph's sons: "Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, will be mine" (Gen. 48:5); Reuben "was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright" (1 Chron. 5:1). The connection is so precise that we can assume that Dt. 21 is warning Israel to not do what Jacob did. Jacob, the founding father of Israel, was far our of step with the spirit of God's law. The two passages are clearly connected; Dt. 21:17 uses the term "the firstborn of his vigour", just as in Gen. 49:3 about Reuben being the firstborn of Jacob's vigour.

Leah's reaction to Jacob's evident favouritism for Rachel was to become obsessed with having children, maybe because she saw that as a guarantee Jacob wouldn't divorce her. But from that, was built up the house of God in Israel. When she failed to conceive, she panicked that she was barren, and therefore asked Jacob to have intercourse with her servant Zilpah in order to produce children. During the first seven years of her marriage, she produced 6 sons and 1 daughter. This indicated not only an incredible fertility, but also a high womanly status in those times, seeing that she produced so many more sons than daughters. The fact none of her children died in babyhood was also remarkable for the times. Her fertility became proverbial in later Israel (Ruth 4:11). And yet despite this evident fecundity, whenever she thought she had failed to conceive, she asked Jacob to have intercourse with Zilpah. Despite knowing her fertility, Jacob did so. It seems he sacrificed basic principles in order to placate a neurotic wife who, it would seem, he didn't care too much for anyway,

seeing he made it plain he had never wanted to marry her in the first place (29:25,31). The whole sense that we get is that his relationship with Zilpah was unnecessary, and he was far too casual in his attitude to it. Leah felt she was "the hated one" (:33), she was "afflicted" (:32- depressed, miserable, victim of injustice). She was in a miserable position; Jacob loved her sister, her father had used her, and Jacob clearly felt she was guilty of going along with Laban's deception of him. Leah's father didn't love her, but had used her to trick another man in order to get more labour out of him on his farm (and Gen. 31:14-16 reflects how she felt unloved by her father). She was unloved by her husband, and jealously hated by her sister, who was more attractive than her. Rachel surely also hated Leah for having played her role in Laban's great deception on the wedding night. Leah was, in a word, unhappy. And she was unhappy all her life because of what happened on one night. The names of her children express her hope her husband would now love her, or be joined to her; she was married to a man who was not joined to her in the spirit of God's intention for marriage in Genesis. Gen. 29:32: "'Yahweh has seen my misery'; and she said, 'Now my husband will love me'"; Gen. 29:33: "Yahweh heard that I was unloved, and so he has given me this one too". Gen. 29:34: "This time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons". She longed for love and true connection with her husband, and thought having children was going to lead to that. Children were going to be her only source of human love; she was obsessed with having children. She recognizes this, and her naming of Issachar in Gen. 30:18 could mean she feels like a whore: "God has given me my reward for giving my slave-girl to my husband". Indeed it would seem from Gen. 30:20 that Jacob didn't live with Leah, but just slept with her when she begged him to, in order to produce children: "Now my husband will live with me, because I have borne him six sons. She named him Zebulun". But all this miserable existence was used in God's bigger purpose to build up the house of Israel. She had been railroaded into a marriage with a man who didn't love her; she felt it was all so unjust and unfair. And in a way it was. The only way forward for her, as she saw it, was to produce many sons for Jacob. And she produced six in seven years, plus a daughter. And none of them died, all survived to adulthood. Which was amazing for those days. Psychologically, she as it were willed herself to do this. Her firstborn Reuben means "See! A son!", as if he fulfilled her all consuming desire to produce a male offspring for Jacob. But out of the misery of her depression and tough situation, she was used to build the house of Israel. And so many dead end situations and unhappy lives are used by God to extend His purpose and to build up His people on this earth. The unloved, the used, those manipulated, or who suffer all their lives for the misjudgment of 'going along' with something unethical one evening... are used powerfully by God. What Leah did at the wedding was somewhere on the border between sin and misjudgment, somewhere between 'going along' with her father [and probably other males in her male dominated society], and the moral failure of not standing up to what was wrong. We've likely all met people like that, whose unfortunate lives were defined by an evening and night many years ago. Whereas Rachel, lover of idols, died before she reached Bethlehem, the birthplace of the Lord Jesus. She dies giving birth to Benjamin, whom she names Ben-Oni, 'son of my sorrow / affliction'; the very word used about Leah's affliction / sorrow / depression. In fact, Rachel didn't at all have a happier life. Gen. 30:1 could well be a suicide threat by her. She had the same affliction / sorrow that Leah had. Life is not so awesome for anyone; but for the believer (Leah), that sorrow is used by God for greater ends, whereas as Paul puts it, "the sorrow of the world works death" (2 Cor. 7:10). The isolation, depression, dead ends, lack of love, being used by others... is all

used towards a far more glorious end. But those whom we may feel have a great life, like Rachel- *they go through the same feelings. But unproductively, for nothing.* Their lives are not in fact awesome at all. The "Leah" type tend to look at the "Rachel" type on social media and think that "Rachel" is having an awesome life... but they suffer as much as "Leah". Whether or not Leah was culpable for going along with Laban's deception, it was after all the failure of a day or so, into which she had been railroaded. And she was suffering because of it all her life. Indeed Jacob was the deceiver who was now being deceived; he had used the darkness of his father's blindness to switch the two brothers, himself and Esau; and now, in the darkness of that night and his own drunkenness, he was himself deceived, and two siblings were switched. Jacob's anguished "Why have you deceived me?" (Gen. 29:25) is the cry of Esau; he was being made to feel how he had made Esau feel. Again, the issue is related to 'Who is the firstborn?'. The firstborn must be recognized as the firstborn and treated as such. And the answer to his question is so clear to us readers: 'Because that's what you did to your father and your brother'. It's clear enough, but from Leah's viewpoint- 'Why me? Why mess up my life just to complete this Divine circle of 'measure for measure'?'. The idea of going to Haran and marrying Laban's daughters was so that Yahweh would make Jacob "fruitful, and make you multiply so that you become a group of nations" (Gen. 28:3). Rachel was barren, so the channel for the fulfilment of God's purpose and promises was clearly through Leah. But on the ground, she only became fruitful because of the awful background situation she found herself in, driving her psychologically to become hyper fertile and to produce male offspring; as she felt that having many male children was the only answer to her dead end situation. Leah's situation appears to be alluded to in Ps. 10:12-14, where she is presented as programmatic of us all: "Rise up, O LORD; O God lift up your hand; do not forget the oppressed... But you do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief... that you may take it into your hands; the helpless commit themselves to you". There are other allusions to Leah's "affliction" as representative of all God's children (Ps. 9:12; 25:18; 31:7). "The Lord has *heard* that I am hated" (Gen. 29:33) is perhaps alluded to when David often thanks God for 'hearing' him, the hated one (Ps. 30:11 and often when he says to the effect 'They all hated me, but You heard me').

Jacob had set out for Laban's home intending to get married, and God had promised to be with him. It could be argued that he should have accepted God's choice in Leah, especially as she clearly loved him (:32,34). But he wished to force things through his way, and so ended up marrying two sisters and serving at least 14 years of his life in relative poverty.

Gen 29:31 *Yahweh saw that Leah was hated*- Jacob maybe did hate Leah because of her part in the deception practiced on him. But it is also possible to understand "hated" as meaning "loved less", he loved Rachel more than he did Leah (:30), and he possibly speaks with fondness of Leah after her death at Gen. 49:31. This is a Semitic idiom, and is seen by comparing Lk. 14:26 [hating parents] with Mt. 10:37 [loving parents less than Christ]. We note that God gave these barren women children because He felt sorry for them, as part of His sovereign purpose; there is no mention of the women and Jacob praying to God for children, as there is with Jacob's parents. Again we see the establishment of God's people Israel upon the basis of unilateral grace and Divine pity rather than human spirituality. One loved and one hated / loved less was exactly the situation God was in with Jacob and Esau (Rom. 9:13). And Jacob was the beloved one. He ought to have perceived this, and responded with a similar grace.

And he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren- Scripture repeatedly speaks as if God notices things and only then responds (also in Jonah 3:10; Ex. 3:4; Dt. 32:19; 2

Kings 14:26; 2 Chron. 12:7; Ez. 23:13; Is. 59:15 cp. Lk. 7:13). If He knew in advance what they were going to do, this language is hard for me to understand. I suggest God so enters our experience that in a sense He may limit His omniscience just as He can limit His omnipotence.

Gen. 29:31 speaks of closed and open *wombs*, not fallopian tubes. There was no need for inspiration to produce a document that was so scientifically correct that the generation contemporary with it couldn't cope with it. Indeed, the whole beauty of God's revelation is that He takes people from where they are as they are, and leads them on to higher truth without having head on confrontation with them regarding their incorrect scientific understandings.

Gen 29:32 *Leah conceived, and bore a son, and she named him Reuben*- The root meaning fallacy arises from the false assumption that a word has a "proper meaning", which can be reached by tracing it to its source. But seeing that words change their meaning, the 'root' of a word isn't really much of a guide to its meaning. Take the English word 'nice', i.e. pleasant. In the eighteenth century this word meant 'precise' rather than 'pleasant'; and it actually derives from the Latin *nescius*, meaning 'ignorant'. It's obviously wrong to read the word 'nice' in a contemporary book and think that the word therefore means 'precise', or, even more accurately, 'ignorant'. Context and usage is obviously the key. I'm constantly amazed at how respectable lexicons like Liddell & Scott use the term "prop.", i.e. 'proper meaning', with the evident understanding that the earliest use of a word is somehow its real, 'proper' meaning. This is an utter fallacy. The meaning of the names of Jacob's children are parade examples. Reuben means 'behold a son', but the inspired narrator suggests a meaning of 'affliction' because the consonants with that word are vaguely similar to 'Reuben'.

For she said, Because Yahweh has looked at my affliction-'Looking upon' is an idiom for answered prayer or God's response to human request (Gen. 6:12; 29:32; Ex. 2:25; Dt. 26:7; Jud. 6:14). Now apply this to how in Lk. 1:48 Mary exalts: "he hath looked upon…" (ASV). All this implies that Mary like Elisabeth had requested to have this child- to bear Messiah. She sees what God has done as "His mercy" to her (Lk. 1:50), as if a request had been granted.

For now my husband will love me- The way Leah comments about Jacob to Rachel "Now will my husband love me… now this time will my husband be joined unto me" (Gen. 29:32-34) all imply that Jacob's marriage was in a mess. Jacob, Rachel and Leah were indeed a tangled web. God joins together a married couple; yet Jacob, apparently, neither loved his wife Leah / Rachel, nor had allowed God to join him unto her in emotional bonding. And there he was, having kids by his domestic servants as well, his boss's cast-offs. And God *loved* this man, and worked with him *so* patiently, to build the house of Israel His people. There's comfort enough for every man and woman, reading this record. The way Jacob is simply described as the one whom God loved in Ps. 47:4 is majestic in its brevity. God loved Jacob. He really did. Simple as that. When Jacob is the one presented as having struggled with God more than any other.

We can assume from Gen. 49:4 that Reuben later committed incest with Bilhah, his father's concubine. Leah was perhaps obsessed with the fact she had produced Jacob his firstborn son, and came to dote inappropriately upon her son. Whatever happened, the seeds of his later perversion would've been sown in early childhood. Truly Jacob's family life was a tragedy and a moral shambles; and yet out of it came the twelve sons who would be the foundations of God's people. This perhaps was to

encourage us as that people, that we were created and are saved by grace and not by any moral purity or spirituality of our own.

Gen 29:33 *She conceived again, and bore a son, and said, Because Yahweh has heard that I am hated, He has therefore given me this son also. She named him Simeon*- Her hopes that Reuben's birth would lead to Jacob loving her (:32) were misplaced; he still "hated" her, perhaps literally because of her willing part in the wedding night deception, or perhaps in the sense of being loved less; see on :31. If "loved less" is the sense of "hated", then we can conclude that Leah wanted to be loved *more* than her sister. The whole situation was an unspeakable agony for Jacob, but it was of his making. The wife God gave him was Leah, but he was so infatuated with Rachel that he ignored God's clear movement, and suffered for it in his family life. And yet out of that came God's people, Israel.

Gen 29:34 *She conceived again, and bore a son. She said, Now this time will my husband be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons. Therefore his name was called Levi*- She seems to have truly loved Jacob and wished that he would be joined to her in love. He clearly didn't feel joined to her, for the reason noted on :23. The Genesis record has explained that God would help a married couple cleave or be joined together (Mt. 19:6). The fact Jacob and Leah were not "joined" therefore reflects how Jacob or perhaps both of them were resisting God's joining power.

Gen 29:35 *She conceived again, and bore a son. She said, This time will I praise Yahweh. Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing*- She actually started bearing again later (Gen. 30:17); but here we have an example of Scripture reporting things as they seemed at the time; we see something similar in the language of demons being cast out in the New Testament. The way Leah uses the Yahweh Name implies something positive about her level of spirituality; and despite feeling unloved by her husband, she felt she had something to praise Yahweh for. We don't see this kind of spirituality in the record of Rachel.

GENESIS CHAPTER 30

Gen 30:1 *When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister. She said to Jacob, Give me children, or else I will die*- Proverbs often alludes to historical portions of the Hebrew Bible, and Prov. 30:15,16 surely alludes here; the barren womb says "give!" and will never be satisfied. I suggested throughout Gen. 29 that God intended Jacob to marry Leah and return in peace to the *eretz*, but instead he became obsessed with Rachel, the vivacious but unspiritual beauty. He dreamed for 7 years of hard labour about marrying her, and instead of returning home with Leah, he agreed a further 7 years labour for Rachel. And now it turns out she is barren, and she seems to have little love for Jacob. She would've had to play a conscious part in the deception at the wedding ceremony when she was replaced with Leah. And Jacob's domestic life becomes really awful, married to two sisters, with the younger bitterly jealous of the older. And that was surely exactly how Jacob had been with Esau, seeking by all means to get equal to him, taking the birthright and then deceiving Esau out of the blessing of the firstborn. Rachel clearly blames her infertility upon Jacob, and unlike Rebekah, doesn't bring God into the situation; although fertility is from God (1 Sam. 2:6).

The repeated promise was that the Abraham family would become many, and their children would be fruitful. But there is a repeated theme that all the women struggled with fertility. This is typical of God's work. He achieves His purpose through our inadequacy. We are being prepared to rule the entire cosmos in glory, the rulers of the age to come; but we are not fit for purpose, just as Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel were infertile and yet were to build the fruitful and widely multiplying people of God; and those who are fit for purpose, like the very fertile Leah, are persuaded that they are not. As we learn in Job, He seals up the hand of man, that His hand might work. The infertility of the matriarchs is repeatedly seen as being from God (Gen. 16:2 and see Jacob's response to Rachel). So He did this, in order to glorify His ability to make fertile and bring life from death.

"I will die" is a phrase used in contemporary inscriptions to describe how a barren woman felt her line would die out if she didn't have a male heir. Probably that is the sense here- but she is displaying lack of faith in the promises about Abraham's seed. She was failing to learn the lesson of Sarai being barren when the promises of the seed were first given. It could be that she was threatening suicide unless Jacob got her pregnant, and his anger was in response to the unreasonable placement of such guilt upon him. We again see, as discussed on Gen. 29:30, that both Rachel and Leah were equally miserable- but Leah ends up concluding "From now on, I will praise the Lord", whereas "the sorrow of the world brings death" in Rachel's case.

Gen. 48:7 records Jacob stating simply that "Rachel died by me", before she reached Bethlehem, birthplace of the Lord Jesus, the great seed of Jacob. Surely Jacob has in mind Rachel's threat "Give me children or else I will die" (Gen. 30:1). "By me" could mean 'next to me', but if that were the intention then this would've been stated differently in Hebrew. The plain meaning of the text is that she died by Jacob, because of Jacob. He took false guilt over Rachel's barrenness, right to the end. Instead of giving up trying to 'make it work' through Rachel, and accepting Leah as his intended wife. And the promised seed, the Lord Jesus, came through Judah, through Leah, and not through Rachel. Hence she died without reaching Bethlehem, His birthplace. And so many die still desperately trying to make things work in their own strength, when God clearly intended another path. Rachel was obsessed with producing male children for Jacob, just as Leah was. Rachel was unsatisfied by Jacob's amazing love for her, unimpressed by his 14 years labour for her. But it was this obsession to produce male children which was used by God, dysfunctional as it was, in order to found His people of Israel. And He works through similar human dysfunctions to the same end.

Gen 30:2 *Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, Am I in God's place, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?*- Jacob saw the infertility as coming from God, and insisted Rachel was wrong to blame him for it; after all, he had had children by Leah her sister, and Rachel's suggestion he sleep with her maid was a tacit recognition that Jacob was fertile and the problem was with her. These words of Jacob were surely remembered by Rachel, and she quoted them to her son Joseph when she finally did become fertile; for he alone uses this Hebrew phrase in comforting his brothers that he is not going to judge or punish them, as he [like Jacob] was not "in God's place" (Gen. 50:19). Joseph learnt from the story of his mother's previous barrenness that we are not in God's place; and in practice, this helped him in the psychologically gigantic task of forgiving his brothers and not seeking to judge them.

Gen 30:3 *She said, Behold, my maid Bilhah. Go in to her, that she may bear on my knees, and I also may obtain children by her*- Jacob should have been aware from the situation with his grandfather Abraham and Hagar that this was unwise; Sarah's suggestion to Abraham brought nothing but grief and family feuding, and it was clearly a lack of faith in the Divine promises. But Jacob wouldn't learn from that, and again went along with the suggestion of the woman in his life. He failed to learn from his mistake in listening to his mother's idea about deceiving Isaac into blessing him. It could be that Rachel was in fact alluding to the example of Sarah as a precedent (Gen. 16:2); whereas the spiritually perceptive would have seen this as an example which ought not to be followed. The implications of "also" imply this. What Sarah did was wrong, but it was used as a justification. Just as Solomon justified his many women and horses on the basis of his father David's weaknesses. Bearing 'on my knees' is something reported often in the texts uncovered from those times. The idea was not simply that the newborn baby was placed on the knees of the surrogate mother after birth, as a sign of ownership. This ritual was done because it was thought it would give fertility to the surrogate mother. So again we see how pagan notions were used to achieve fertility; and the material later in the chaper about achieving fertility amongst animals are parallel to this. In this case "And I also may obtain children by her" would be read as meaning that Rachel hoped she would herself fall pregnant because of what her handmaid had done. Leah seems to think the same; she too had her handmaid sleep with her husband, and she sees her own next pregnancy as being because of this: "Leah said, God has given me my hire, because I gave my handmaid to my husband. She named him Issachar" (:18).

Gen 30:4 *She gave him Bilhah her handmaid as wife, and Jacob went in to her*- The woman slept with was considered a "wife", which was why Laban was at such pains to get Jacob to sleep with Leah at the wedding ceremony. if Jacob had remained with Leah as the Divine provision, he would not have slipped into polygamy let alone marrying two sisters; nor would he know slip further into the immorality of having children outside marriage. Once he had agreed to this with Rachel, he was going to have to with Leah.

Gen 30:*5 Bilhah conceived, and bore Jacob a son*- Conception is portrayed as being of God, and although all the circumstances surrounding this were unspiritual, clearly God worked through it in order to create the basis for His future people of Israel.

Bilhah and Zilpah had had children by Laban (Gen. 37:2). As with Leah and Rachel, a spaghetti junction, deeply dysfunctional situation involving four miserable women... was used to found Israel. Jacob must have hated Laban because of the deceptions, and to sleep with women whom Laban had also slept with and had children by... would've been very humilitating for him.

Gen 30:*6 Rachel said, God has judged me, and has also heard my voice, and has given me a son. Therefore called she his name Dan*- Rachel felt that God hearing her voice was Him judging her. The prayer of the poor is judged by God in His response to them (Ps. 10:7,8). Coming boldly before the throne of grace in prayer is again judgment seat language (Heb. 4:15). Our attitude to God in prayer now will be our attitude to Him at the judgment; we are 'bold / confident' before Him now, and we can be 'bold' then (1 Jn. 2:28). Before the throne of grace we find grace to help (Heb. 4:16); whereas we will “find” [s.w.] mercy in the day of judgment (2 Tim.1:18). Each

time we receive grace to help before the throne, we are anticipating the judgment day scenario.

But did God really judge and justify Rachel through this? I'd say this was just her imagination. We note however that in :1,2 she had left God right out of the question, but now Rachel brings God into it, and even prayed for the child to be conceived. But her naming of it "Dan", Divine judgment, seems rather bitter. She may have meant that God was judging her sister somehow, as the next child refers also to her wrestling with her sister (:8); or liking to imagine that God judged her faithful to Him just because she had suggested her husband sleep with another woman.

Gen 30:7 *Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid, conceived again, and bore Jacob a second son*- As Leah had apparently stopped having children, maybe because Jacob stopped sleeping with her, Rachel was apparently set on getting an equal or greater number of children. And so the use of Bilhah was not just a one off situation but was intended to be ongoing. The race for numbers is reflected in Leah then getting Jacob to sleep with her maid, and naming the first child "A troop comes!" (:11).

Gen 30:8 *Rachel said, With mighty wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed. She named him Naphtali*- Translated literally, 'Naphtali' means 'my wrestling / struggle'. Again, it was all about Rachel and her feelings. Translated into German, this would be *Mein Kampf*, the title Hitler chose for his autobiographical ranting that led to the destruction of multi millions of lives worldwide in World War 2. Such intense self obsession drags everyone else into it, and we see this with Rachel. See on :13.

Another take on this is to see 'Naphtali' as Naphtalijah, the wrestling of Yah. "Mighty" is literally *elohim*, and the parallel with the 'Yah' form is another nail in the coffin of the hypothesis that there were different source documents for Genesis, one using Yahweh and the other *elohim*. The name suggests that her struggles with her sister were her struggles with God; and the whole idea is lived out in Jacob's wrestling with an Angel, which was effectively his wrestling with Isaac, Laban and Esau. We sense that the women named their sons in reflection of their obsession with the male baby race, as they desperately vied to be the one who produced the most boys. The names reflect how *they* wished to see things, rather than how they were in reality. For Rachel hardly "prevailed" just because her maid had another son. Leah had more male sons at this point and 'won' the race to get the most. It's an example of where people drag "God" into their interpersonal struggles; her struggle with her sister became a struggle with God. She may not have "prevailed" as she meant, in a human sense. But the similarities with Jacob's wrestling with God continue when we realize that "prevailed" is the same word used of how Jacob did "prevail" over "God" in the form of the Angel he wrestled with (Gen. 32:25,28). He started off trying to force his way upon God, but because he repented, he did in another sense prevail over the Divine judgment which was what Jacob deserved; Jacob prevailed over God in that he asked for grace and was granted it, and in this he becomes our example (Hos. 12:4 s.w.). Rachel's struggle with God perhaps went according to the same pattern.

Gen 30:9 *When Leah saw that she had finished bearing, she took Zilpah, her handmaid, and gave her to Jacob as a wife*- This is recorded from the viewpoint of Leah (see on Gen. 29:35); she actually did bear more children. But the Bible at times records things from the viewpoint of the subjects of the narrative, without correcting their limited perspectives. Which is why we have the language of demon possession

in the New Testament. Leah didn't actually stop bearing at this point, so we see again her obsession with producing male offspring for Jacob- an obsession, dysfunctional as it was, which was used by God in His bigger purpose of founding His Israel from Jacob's many sons, all born to used, manipulated and miserable women who all had an obsessive interest in producing male children for him.

Gen 30:10 *Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, bore Jacob a son*- As noted on :12, she gave Zilpah to Jacob "as a wife", but the inspired record still calls her "Leah's handmaid". For that is who she was, and Jacob's behaviour with these women was not really moral.

Gen 30:11 *Leah said, How fortunate! She named him Gad*- Or, "a troop cometh!" (AV), which is how Jacob understood the name in Gen. 49:19. As noted on :7, the race for numbers is reflected in Leah getting Jacob to sleep with her maid, and naming the first child "A troop comes!". The names of the sons who were to be the basis of the people of God, Israel, were anything but spiritual. And yet God works through such unspirituality to form His people, as He does to this day. Indeed "Gad" was a local deity (as in Is. 65:11); even Leah, the more apparently spiritual, was caught up with paganism at this time. Perhaps Jacob alludes to this in his final comment upon Gad; that he would be overcome by a troop rather than leading a troop, although he would overcome at the last (Gen. 49:19).

Gen 30:12 *Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, bore Jacob a second son*- Although Leah gave Zilpah to Jacob "as a wife" (:9), the Divine commentary is that she remained Leah's handmaid. God worked through a situation which was hardly moral, just as He does today.

Gen 30:13 *Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me happy. She named him Asher*-

Asher meams 'my happiness'; as with Isaac, the name reflects the mother's feelings at the time. It is all about her at that moment and not anything further. The personhood for the child appears irrelevant; the child served a function for the parent, and the name reflects that. All the sons of Jacob have names which reflect this feature. No future hope was expressed for the child, but rather for the mother. Thus Joseph means adding, because Rachel hoped that now she had had one son, she would have another. Likewise Zebulun, now will my husband dwell with me; Gad, a troop of more children will come from me. There is no spiritual dimension in these names. Thus we read of Dan and not Daniel. God's Name doesn't feature in the names of the sons. But from all this came the Israel of God.

The Lord's mother constantly quoted and alluded to Old Testament scripture. All this reflects the level of spiritual ambition to which Mary attained. Her self-perception went beyond that of Leah to whose words she alludes ("all women call me fortunate / blessed", Gen. 30:13 LXX). Elisabeth had said the same: "Blessed are you among women" (Lk. 1:42). But Mary perceives that all generations, not just all contemporary women, would call her blessed. So when Mary spoke of all generations calling her blessed, her mind was here in Gen. 30:13: "the daughters [i.e. future generations of them] shall call me blessed" , and yet at the same time on Zilpah the servant maid [cp. Mary the handmaiden] bearing Asher [happy]. These women were seen by Mary as representatives of her. And yet Leah was mistaken in thinking that all would call her "blessed" because her servant girl had got pregnant again, and she now had the lead in

numbers of children compared to her sister. The one who would be called "blessed" by all was not her, but Mary; the real seed was the Lord Jesus, not these sons who were being born as part of a race for superiority between two bitter sisters in a polygamous marriage.

Gen 30:14 *Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother, Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Please give me some of your son's mandrakes*-

Rachel wanted the mandrakes so that Jacob would sleep with her. But initially as soon as his seven years service for Rachel had finished, he asked Laban to give her to him so that he might sleep with her. Clearly things had changed. Jacob was being brought down, so that he might arise as the true Israel of God.

The evidence seems to be that until he left home, Jacob was influenced by the idolatrous thinking of the surrounding world. For the next 20 years, he more tacitly went along with these things being practiced in his family. The mandrakes used by Leah were not just aphrodisiacs, but were believed to have the magical ability to induce fertility. This pagan nonsense was believed by Leah and Reuben, and tacitly gone along with by Jacob- although God worked through these wrong ideas, apparently uncorrected, in order to bring about His purpose. And yet from these mixed up women God built the house of Israel.

The love apples were understood to induce a man to sleep with a woman. This would suggest that Jacob had stopped sleeping with his wives, perhaps in response to their endless desire to keep trying to get pregnant in their race for numbers of children, when both had fertility problems and both had already produced children for Jacob, even if fictively in Rachel's case. This again shows how low Jacob was brought; he had signed away 14 years of his life due to his obsession with Rachel, impatiently asking Laban to give him Rachel so that he might sleep with her (Gen. 29:21). But now he didn't sleep with her. Because Rachel wants the mandrakes so that Jacob would sleep with her. He is pictured as a man returning tired from work in the field, wanting to eat and as it were watch telly and go to bed early as he had another early start.

We note it was Reuben who brought the mandrakes, and it was also Reuben who slept with Rachel's maid Zilpah (Gen. 35:22). Perhaps this was done at Rachel's bidding, in order to notch up another pregnancy; perhaps Reuben had fallen out with his mother Leah and was as it were on Rachel's side at the time. This is where jealousy and lack of spirituality lead- to a downward spiral of behaviour which affects more and more people.

Gen 30:15 *She said to her, Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes, also?*- One is hard pushed to find women-only scenes in contemporary literature written during Biblical times. The women are presented in terms of the men with whom they inter-relate. Yet Elizabeth and Mary are recorded as having a conversation with no male present (Lk. 1:39-45); and there are other such passages in Scripture (Gen. 19:32,34; 30:14,15; Ex. 2:1-10; Jud. 5:28-30; Ruth 1:6-2:2; 3:16-18; 4:14-17; 2 Kings 5:2,3). The narrative of the women at the tomb and the resurrection is another example (Lk. 23:55-24:4). In all these passages, the reader is invited to share the woman's perspective.

It could be that the "She said to her" is Rachel talking, not Leah (although the AV translates otherwise), complaining that Reuben had actually stolen her son's mandrakes and taken away her husband. In this case, Rachel was also not being slept with at this time, hence she too wanted the mandrakes. She taunts Leah that Jacob is "my husband" whom Leah has "taken away"; perhaps Jacob came to love Leah more,

because she had produced more children for him than Rachel. At least, Rachel perceived it that way. I have argued throughout Gen. 29 that God intended Jacob to marry Leah and return to the promised land; his obsession with Rachel made his path home so much harder. If indeed he did become more attached to Leah, then this would really demonstrate that all too late, he was accepting God's rightness in the matter.

If the speaker is Leah, then the complaint that Rachel had 'taken away' her husband is harder to understand. Maybe she legalistically held to the idea that as she was the firstborn, and married Jacob a week before Rachel did, therefore she was the legitimate husband. This is the kind of contorted reasoning that arises out of family jealousy and stress. It was no secret that Jacob loved Rachel and had agreed to marry her, but Laban and Leah had played a cruel deception on Jacob, with Leah clearly wanting Jacob and also in love with him. So Leah can hardly complain that Jacob loved Rachel more than her.

Rachel said, Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes- This could be mocking, as if to say "Jacob really loves me, not you; he'll only sleep with you for the mandrakes, not because he loves you". And so we have yet another insight into the endless feuding between the two, with every word and action being twisted and used as a source of conflict. The Hebrew can also be translated, as GNB: "Rachel said, "If you will give me your son's mandrakes, you can sleep with Jacob tonight"". This would indicate that Rachel placed huge faith in the power of the coveted mandrakes to make Jacob sleep with her; clearly his love for her had abated, a far cry from serving seven years to have sex with her, as Gen. 29:21 implies.

Gen 30:16 *Jacob came from the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, You must come in to me; for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes. He lay with her that night*- The record brings out the bizarre nature of what she did. Jacob did not then dwell with her (:20). He was on his way to Rachel's tent, but she says that because she has mandrakes, he must come to her tent. But the idea of mandrakes was that they were supposed to attract a man to a woman. But she reasons as if mere possession of them was enough to demand he come and sleep with her. The language of "hire" is used in :18, where Leah bitterly suggests she feels like a prostitute, hired by God to have sons. And here she implies she is treating Jacob as a male prostitute. The language is very low, and reflects how Leah felt; she was so addicted to having sex with Jacob because she so wanted to get pregnant by him, and so she came to feel like a whore. This was how far love went right out of the whole situation, because Jacob didn't follow God's direction- which was to marry Leah and return to the promised land. The scene is so reminiscent of Jacob's father Isaac walking in the field, apparently one evening, and meeting Rebekah, in a love marriage that only Heaven could have arranged. The same Hebrew words are used in Gen. 24:65. But this meeting with Leah was for Jacob similar but tragically different; tragic, for a man so clearly dominated by a desire to replicate his parents' relationship.

Gen 30:17 *God listened to Leah, and she conceived, and bore Jacob a fifth son*- Maybe Leah prayed to God and He heard, and her attempt to use the mandrakes was just a surface level thing, and the essence was her prayer. Or it could be that God looked with pity at the whole situation with the mandrakes, and 'heard' the whole situation as if it were Leah's prayer to Him. Because God responds to our spirit, our overall situation, sometimes He does things which seem to be an answer of prayers which were not properly believed in by the person who prayed. Examples include: Gen. 30:16,17; Ex. 14:10,11 cp. Neh. 9:9; Ps. 31:22; Lk. 1:13. Presumably the Father

reads circumstances as prayers, even though the believer's faith in their actual verbalized request may be weak.

Leah got pregnant because she prayed (:17). Not because of the mandrakes. We see here clearly how their human efforts to become fruitful were misplaced, but God still gave the fruitfulness. And it will be the same with the fertility of the animals. God often does give blessing even when it is wrong ly sought. Because He is more subtle than to simply reward righteousness and punish or refuse badly motivated desires. But later reflection leads us to marvel at His grace. Just as Abraham and Isaac must have later done after they received material blessing right after their unfaithfulness.

Gen 30:18 *Leah said, God has given me my hire, because I gave my handmaid to my husband. She named him Issachar*- Although she apparently prayed and God heard her (:17), Leah's attitude is so wrong. She considers that God has rewarded her for allowing her maid to sleep with her husband, when this was immoral. The idea of being given her "hire" is however decidedly cynical; she feels as a prostitute, paid by God, who later gives her a dowry (:20). Yet despite this unspirituality, God listened to her and gave her conception (:17). This is His grace, focusing upon the positive, and patiently bearing with our anger and immaturity. God saw through all this (the bitterness of post natal depression?), through her recourse to using mandrakes to induce fertility... and God discerned the real faith in her. And this God is our God, who likewise bears with our Christian hypocrisy.

Isaachar means something like 'So these are my wages'. Her husband Jacob had been paid her and her sister as his wages. And so she sarcastically quips that she too was a worker for wages, and her kids were her wages. This reflects how deep in her psyche was the fact that she had been paid as a wage. Again we see no spirituality, just an obsession with producing children for her own psychological and personal needs. But from all this unspirituality came the people and Israel of God.

We note that the women named the children themselves, which was unusual at the time; and the names reflected their struggles and feelings. One gets the impression that Jacob was a distant father and wife, at least at this stage, finding the domestic scene unbearable and staying out at night with the flocks (Gen. 31:40). See on :3 for how Leah wrongly believed Isaachar's conception was due to some ritual performed using her handmaid.

Gen 30:19 *Leah conceived again, and bore a sixth son to Jacob*- Notice "son". We read only of their male children, apart from Dinah, which is just the female form of "Dan". But surely there were daughters born as well, but the women didn't count them in the race to produce as many sons as possible for Jacob and thereby to acquire the ascendancy in domestic life.

Gen 30:20 *Leah said, God has endowed me with a good dowry*- We note the metaphor becomes somewhat more respectful than when she spoke earlier of God giving her her "hire" as if she was a prostitute used by God (:18). But she still mixes her metaphors, suggesting that the gift of sons from God was in fact a dowry paid, and a high price too.

Now my husband will live with me, because I have borne him six sons. She named him Zebulun- "Now will my husband live with me" surely implies that Jacob and Leah had effectively split up. He wasn't sleeping with her, hence the use of aphrodisiacs on him. And yet including Dinah, Leah managed to produce at least seven children in 7 to 14 years. This is why her fruitfulness became proverbial in later Israel. It would have been evidence enough that Leah had been the wife intended for

Jacob and not Rachel; it was his insistence on forcing that through which led to so much grief.

Jacob was under the one man: one woman ideal of Genesis; and yet he evidently didn't take this too seriously. His mad infatuation with Rachel meant that he thought nothing of polygamy. The idea of accepting one's married circumstances for the sake of principle was obviously foreign to our Jacob. Many aspects of the Mosaic Law were already in place before it was pronounced to Moses; the prohibition on marrying a second wife who was the sister of the first wife could well have been known among God's people in Jacob's time, seeing that it was a precept based on the principles of Eden (Lev. 18:17,18). "It is wickedness" was God's comment to Moses, and there is no reason to think that His essential moral judgment on this kind of thing has ever changed much. Yet Jacob thought nothing of breaching this command, and committing this "wickedness". Leah's reaction to Jacob's evident favouritism for Rachel was to become obsessed with having children. When she failed to conceive, she panicked that she was barren, and therefore asked Jacob to have intercourse with her servant Zilpah in order to produce children. During the early years of her marriage, she produced 6 sons and 1 daughter. This indicated not only an incredible fertility, but also a high womanly status in those times, seeing that she produced so many more sons than daughters. The fact none of her children died in babyhood was also remarkable for the times. Her fertility became proverbial in later Israel (Ruth 4:11). And yet despite this evident fecundity, whenever she thought she had failed to conceive, she asked Jacob to have intercourse with Zilpah. Despite knowing her fertility, Jacob did so. It seems he sacrificed basic principles in order to placate a neurotic wife who, it would seem, he didn't care too much for anyway, seeing he made it plain he had never wanted to marry her in the first place (Gen. 29:25,31). The whole sense that we get is that his relationship with Zilpah was unnecessary, and he was far too casual in his attitude to it. “Now will my husband dwell with me” (Gen. 30:20) surely implies that Jacob and Leah had effectively split up. The evidence that Leah bore seven children in seven years is evident from the chronology of Jacob's life, reflecting as it does the traumatic Jacob, Rachel, Leah relationship.

Gen 30:21 *Afterwards, she bore a daughter, and named her Dinah*- As noted on :19, their obsession was with bearing sons in order to acquire dominance in the family. Even "Dinah" is just the female form of her son Dan. She probably bore other daughters, but only Dinah is mentioned because of her later significance in the narrative. 'Dinah' is the female form of 'Dan', and again we see how the sisters were competing and wrestling with each other. It was as if Leah thought she could as it were get equal with Rachel over the birth of Dan by having a female 'Dan'.

Gen 30:22 *God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her, and opened her womb*- In :1,2, Rachel is presented as not having God on her horizon at all. But the misery of the whole situation maybe led her to pray to her husband's God. Or it could be that she didn't specifically pray, but rather God took pity upon her, reading the whole sad situation as prayer, and responded to her. Psychologically, it appears sometimes true that when a barren woman adopts a child, she then becomes fertile. But the stress here is that the pregnancy was from God, no matter what psychological processes were at work. And yet again we find the language of the day being used- her "womb" was opened, when it was her tubes not her womb that was opened. Just as the language of demons is used in the New Testament, so here the limited scientific perspective of the

time is reflected in the narrative; because God is concerned with relationship and communication with people, rather than purist truth for the sake of it.

Gen 30:23 *She conceived, bore a son, and said, God has taken away my reproach*- As noted on :22, Rachel was brought through her domestic misery, in her case being the loser in the race to produce sons, to turn to God. Initially she lacked this dimension (see on :1,2). Her comment here is tacit recognition that her idea of getting Jacob to sleep with her maid did not in fact resolve her misery, it didn't take away her reproach. The idea of "reproach" occurs nearly 100 times in the Old Testament, mainly reflecting a fear of reproach or shame. It was and is so important in Middle Eastern society.

Gen 30:24 *She named him Joseph, saying, May Yahweh add another son to me*- Rachel's use of the Yahweh Name, when initially she didn't have God on her horizons much at all (see on :1,2), is all reflective of how through the endless Divine patience, Rachel herself grew in spirituality. Even though she was so attached to her father's idols that she stole them when she finally left home. Yet "Joseph" can also mean 'one who takes away', and this would have been in reference to how she felt now her reproach at being barren was taken away (:23).

Gen 30:25 *It happened, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, Send me away, that I may go to my own place, and to my country*- Jacob seems to have seen Rachel giving birth as the sign that he could now return home in peace. But this was a self-assigned signal. I explained throughout Gen. 29 that he ought to have married Leah alone, and returned with her to his country. It is commendable that after 20 or 40 years, Jacob still sees the *eretz* as "my place... my country". His heart was in the land of promise. However, "my place", Jacob's particular *maqom*, often used of a sanctuary or altar, may have in his own mind referred to Bethel, where he intended to build a house or sanctuary for God if indeed he returned to his father's house in peace. *Maqom* is used three times in Gen. 28:11 alone, and often throughout the record of Bethel in Gen. 28.

We note that it is twice recorded that Isaac "sent away" Jacob (s.w. Gen. 28:5,6). Now, Jacob wants to be "sent away" by Laban. We get the impression of a man who needed direction; which might explain why he remained to long with Laban. He ought to have returned to the *eretz* in faith in the promise that God would bring him back there; and yet he was perhaps lacking in initiative, perhaps the result of "living in tents" with his parents and being dominated by his mother.

When Jacob asks Laban to allow him to leave, he uses very similar words to those used by Eliezer when he asked Laban's family to let Rebekah leave to go marry Isaac:

Eliezer in Gen. 24	Jacob in Gen. 30
"Send me back" (*shallehuni*) 24:54	"Send me away" (*shalleheni*) 30:25
"Let me go (*shallehuni*) that I may go (*w'eleka*) to my master" 24:56	"that I may go (*w'eleka*)... let me go (*w'eleka*)" 30:26
Laban's blessing of Rebekah 24:60	Laban's blessing of his grandchildren and daughters 31:55

The servant "went his way (*wayyelak*)" 24:61	"Jacob went on his way" (32:1)

Intentional or not, the inspired record strives to bring out the similarities. The lesson is that culturally, Jacob was very much his mother's son- just as those raised Christian today may be culturally Christian, and yet not truly accept their parents' God as theirs until they pass through the valley of the shadows, the school of hard knocks. See on Gen. 28:7.

Gen 30:26 *Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service with which I have served you*- See on Gen. 25:31. The suggestion could be that Laban effectively kept Jacob's wives and children within his encampment, refusing to honour the agreement regarding serving for them. It could be that Laban had further manipulated Jacob by demanding he serve also for the children. It was a way of keeping a person in endless servitude; and yet Jacob had been promised that the elder would serve him, the younger. His extensive experience of servitude was surely to help him fuller appreciate what this promise meant. And Laban's continual deceit of him regarding what was rightfully his... taught him what he had done to Esau.

Genesis was written by Moses primarily for the wilderness generation. So much in the story of Jacob would have demonstrated the wisdom of the various laws that generation were given- to release servants after the seventh year (Ex. 21:2), and especially the command not to marry two sisters (Lev 18:18) nor for a polygamist to have a "hated" [loved less?] wife (Dt. 21:17).

Gen 30:27 *Laban said to him, If now I have found favour in your eyes, stay here, for I have divined that Yahweh has blessed me for your sake*- We see here the mixture of paganism and spirituality which was apparent amongst all of them. Laban "divined", by paganism, that there was the blessing of Yahweh in all this. Anyone who used enchantment [s.w. "divined"] was to be killed under the Mosaic law (Lev. 19:26; Dt. 18:10), and it's hard to think that God's basic morality was radically different before the law was codified by Moses.

We have here a primary fulfilment of the promise that Abraham's seed would be a blessing to the nations; for Laban was blessed because of his association with the seed. Laban is presented as a "foreigner" in relation to Jacob; see on Gen. 31:15). And the covenant promises we likewise have received have their primary fulfilments in this life, as well as the promise of eternal inheritance in the future Kingdom of God on earth. And yet the grace of it all is that at the time, Jacob was largely still in unbelief. He had been promised that he and his seed would be a blessing to those of north, south, east and west; and straight after that promise he continues his journey *to the east* and is a blessing to those there (Gen. 28:13-15; 29:1). See on :39.

Gen 30:28 *He said, Appoint me your wages, and I will give it*- We recall how initially, it was Jacob who offered the terms of wages to be given. Clearly Jacob is now in the ascendancy, with Laban desperate for him to stay. Jacob reasons in the typical Eastern way: 'I intend to do this, but if you pay me that, then I will not do so, at least not straight away'. Perhaps Jacob took some time to think about the possibilities, coming up with the mad idea of increasing his wealth by pagan practices if he could obtain large numbers of spotted animals.

Gen 30:29 *He said to him, You know how I have served you, and how your livestock*

have fared with me- The repeated idea that "You know I have served you" (:26) may be referencing some claim by Laban that Jacob had actually not finished his service and owed him more time.

Gen 30:30 *For it was little which you had before I came, and it has increased to a multitude*- The allusion is to the promises to Abraham about multiplication and blessing, and that there would be blessing for those who blessed his seed. Laban had hardly blessed Jacob, and yet Jacob perceives now that the fulfilment of those promises is by grace; for even Laban had picked up some of the promised blessing. "Before I came" is Heb. "at my footsteps" which reflects again how Jacob feels now in the ascendency over Laban, and is sensing that the elder (Laban) is serving the younger (Jacob) by Divine blessing, according to the promises to Abraham.

Yahweh has blessed you wherever I turned. Now when will I provide for my own house also?- Jacob saw God as the one who gave physical blessing; he saw the promises of Divine blessing as primarily about material blessing. He missed their basic import, which was of forgiveness and the Kingdom (Acts 3:26,27). However it is also true that God did bless Laban materially because of Jacob. This was very much part of the promise that Abraham's seed would be blessed and be a blessing to others. But Jacob didn't himself accept Yahweh as his God at this point. We see again how the covenant promises to Abraham had initial fulfilments even when the people were not committed to the covenant. Just as the preconditions of leaving land and family, in order to receive another land and family, were not obeyed by Abraham and Isaac- and yet they still received the blessings promised. It's rather like how the Lord shared His table with sinners, in order to lead them to repentance. The goodness of God leads us to repentance, as Paul says. God therefore doesn't simply reward righteousness with blessing, and disobedience with cursing. He is more subtle than that. Because He wants to elicit our obedience. And He does that by blessing us even when we are disobedient- so that the thoughtful soul will *later* perceive and marvel at His grace, and respond. It is so that God is outside of our kind of time, but beyond that, we see here how grace operates. And we too are to relate to others beyond an immediate response to their acceptance or rejection of our message and love for them.

Jacob thought that God had blessed Laban in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises, simply because Laban's flocks had greatly increased; he saw the "blessing" as physical prosperity. He was sharing the over-physical view of the promises which his father Isaac held, who mentioned the promised blessing as essentially concerning material blessings in this life (Gen. 28:3,4). As with David and Solomon, the weakness of the parents was repeated in the child. This perception of the promises as only for his personal, physical benefit was clearly evidenced in the way in which he was so bent on obtaining the birthright from Esau.

"Now when will I provide for my own house also?" Jacob slyly asked Laban, and on this pretext spent then next six years using some pagan myth about cattle breeding to take Laban's cattle from him and amass them for himself. What he came to think of as "his flock" (Gen. 31:4) was a reflection of his mad materialism; he used all his (considerable) human strength to achieve it, and then turned round and said he had only been serving Laban with it (Gen. 31:6). Yet these very words are alluded to in 1 Tim. 5:8 as an example for faithful men to copy; indeed, Paul says, if you don't do as Jacob did, you're worse than a pagan! We see here the great focus of God upon what

is positive in a person, just as elements of Sarah's bitter and sceptical words are quoted in the New Testament with approval. And yet the Spirit through Paul also recognized the weak side of Jacob; "evil men... deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13) is a sure reference to Jacob.

Gen 30:31 *He said, What shall I give you? Jacob said, You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed your flock and keep it*- Jacob asks not for wages, but for Laban's spotted cattle. Perhaps Jacob was beginning to think more of his grandfather Abraham, for "You shall not give me anything [because God has blessed me]" was the spirit of Abraham after his victory near Damascus (Gen. 14:23). He may well also have been sardonically alluding to Laban's words that he 'could not give' Jacob his younger daughter Rachel despite his having served for her (Gen. 29:26).

Gen 30:32 *I will pass through all your flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted one, and every black one among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats*- Stipulating the terms of his own contract recalls how Jacob did likewise when offering to work seven years to marry Rachel. The similarity is such that it would seem Jacob is here trying to get equal with Laban for the deception done to him. He is seeking to deceive Laban, as Laban deceived him. But he later wouldn't wish Esau to so take revenge for the deception he had performed, and would've remembered this with shame. Jacob believed that through some pagan ritual, he could increase the numbers of the spotted animals; and perhaps he also had some idea to get them to breed unspotted offspring if they conceived in front of white rods. This has no truth to it and yet God worked through it. We must look for the positive in others, and like the Lord in His attitude to demons, bear with them and recognize faith when we see it. God worked through the pagan superstitions of Jacob regarding the speckled animals, and through the wrong beliefs of Rachel and Leah regarding their children… in order to *build* the house of Israel. He didn't cut off His dealings with men at the first sign of wrong understanding or weak faith or mixed motives.

This will be my hire- Leah has just used this word in claiming that one of her pregnancies was her "hire" from God (:18 s.w.). All of them had the idea that good and wise behaviour led to directly related reward or "hire". Such justification by works was and is a way of feeling good about ourselves. Jacob was yet to learn the reality of grace; that it's not about measure for measure. The *wages* of sin are contrasted with the *free gift* or grace of God in Rom. 6:23 and elsewhere.

Gen 30:33 *So my righteousness will answer for me hereafter, when you come concerning my hire that is before you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and black among the sheep, that might be with me, will be counted stolen*- See on Gen. 25:31. This attitude that *he* could bring about the fulfillment of God's promises through his own efforts was the outcome of Jacob's self-righteousness; see on :32. This is clearly shown when he says that his righteousness had caused his cattle to increase, although he later came to see that this increase of cattle was due to his receipt of the promised Divine blessing (Gen. 32:10). The RSV renders "righteousness" as "honesty"; Jacob had been far from honest in his life, and although he was intimating to Laban that he was going to gain from this because of his honesty / righteousness, Jacob does come over as very hypocritical and self-righteous. Jacob's plan was to use a pagan myth to multiply his initial flock of speckled and spotted goats and black sheep. "Black sheep" had the same connotations in those days as the term has even today; the flock of Jacob / Israel were black sheep,

and yet God blessed and multiplied them and they became the foundation of His people.

Gen 30:34 *Laban said, Behold, let it be according to your word*- The idea could be as the AV implies, 'You must be joking, I wish it might be so advantageous for me!'. Jacob was aiming to multiply his numbers of black sheep, which were despised by other shepherds and surrounding society, to such a degree that he would redefine and change the negative perception of black sheep and spotty goats. And he succeeded; as in a wider sense the Father did likewise through His work with black sheep and spotty animals.

Gen 30:35 *That day, he removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons*- It's hard to know whether this refers to Laban or Jacob. If to Laban, then he was removing even the spotted animals so that Jacob would have even fewer of them to start off with, hence Jacob accuses Laban of deceit in this matter (Gen. 31:7). Yet despite this, from the tiniest group of black sheep and spotty goats... God's purpose of blessing worked out, just as it does today, despite all Jacob's misunderstandings and wrong attitudes.

Gen 30:36 *He set three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks*- The last phrase shows that despite Laban removing even the spotted animals, Jacob acted with integrity in still feeding Laban's flocks. Although he had not been honest in the past, Jacob was learning integrity.

Gen 30:37 *Jacob took to himself rods of fresh poplar, almond, plane tree, peeled white streaks in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods*- Jacob's superstitious use of mandrakes and poplar rods was used by God to fulfill the physical aspect of the promised blessing; he used "white" rods to take power from Laban, the "white" one ["poplar" and "Laban" are related words in Hebrew], and to give him white animals- and God worked through it. Poplar had pagan associations (s.w. Hos. 4:13); Jacob was acting according to paganic beliefs and yet claiming it would be Yahweh's blessing of him. He later came to see how wrong he was, and that the increase had not been due to the paganism but alone due to Yahweh's actual blessing (Gen. 32:10). "Almond" is *luz*, the name of the place where God had first appeared to him and promised him blessing (Gen. 28:19); again we see a hopeless mix of paganism and tokenism along with his awareness of Yahweh's promises, wishing to make those promises come true through his paganic rituals. The streaks in the rods were supposed to encourage the streaked animals to bear prolific numbers and quality of streaked offspring if they looked at them whilst mating. This has no truth in reality, although similar myths about looking at certain colours or images during intercourse are around to this day in some parts of the world.

The whiteness of the rods appears to be thought to serve the same function as the mandrakes; a kind of animal aphrodisiac. And the point is that all these human attempts to fulfil the promise of fertility are inappropriate. Indeed the record almost pokes fun at them, not least in Jacob returning from work to be told he must sleep with a woman because her son had gathered mandrakes. The account of Jacob and his wives is clearly parallel with that of Jacob and his flocks. That is the key to understanding the otherwise enigmatic and difficult story of Jacob's breeding experiments. This becomes even clearer if we understand the rods as being inserted

into the female animals so that they "conceived / became heated upon the rods" (Heb.). Jacob returns from a day doing this kind of thing with animals to have his wives trying to get pregnant by him through mandrakes.

The connection between rods and a phallic symbol is clear in Hos. 4:10–12: "Truly, they shall eat, but not be sated; they shall fornicate, but not be satisfied, because they have forsaken obeying Yahweh; fornication, wine, and new wine take the mind of my people: it consults its rod, its phallus directs them". This is confirmed if indeed the 'poplar rods' are *styrax officinalis* (Arabic *lubnay*), which are called in this way from the secretion of a milk-like gum. All this was pagan idolatry, and Jacob uses these things.

Gen 30:38 *He set the rods which he had peeled opposite the flocks in the gutters in the watering-troughs where the flocks came to drink. They conceived when they came to drink*- The idea was as in some primitive cultures today, that by looking at something at the time of intercourse, the offspring will become like it. He wanted his spotted animals to produce more spotted offspring; and then through the procedure of :40-42 to produce white offspring (although :33 might preclude that view), and so he made them conceive whilst looking at white peeled poplar rods, which would've been "streaked" in the sense that there was some white and some dark showing on the rods.

Gen 30:39 *The flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks produced streaked, speckled, and spotted*- See on :38; on :37 I suggested that they conceived *upon* the rods. The flocks conceiving in front of the rods / poles surely has reference to the concept of the pagan *asherah* poles, before which worshippers had sex. Jacob was clearly influenced by this wrong idea- and yet God patiently worked with him through it. Jacob appears to have had the idea that what a female thinks about or has before her eyes at the time of labour or conception, will affect the child. And so he peeled stripes off the rods so they appeared 'ringstraked', or striped- in the belief that if the female cattle gave birth or conceived looking at them, then the offspring would be striped too, like the striped rods. However, the connection with the asherah poles suggests that Jacob's beliefs were associated with pagan fertility myths, rather than faith in Yahweh the God of his fathers. Mic. 1:5 explicitly links Jacob's sin with idolatry. Jacob's superstitious ideas about the cattle mating were used by God to teach Jacob that He would bless him physically, as a prelude to the more important spiritual blessings which Jacob was later to value. There is no biological truth at all in what he did. Jacob wasn't specifically corrected for his paganism; later he must have realized the depth of God's grace in still working through him at this time, still giving him blessing. God blessed the whole thing so that it worked, apparently confirming Jacob in it by a vision (Gen. 31:10-12). God will go along with things which are poorly motivated and even incorrect- but in order to finally teach that it was all nonsense, and His gift of grace shines through it all. We have been introduced to this whole mixture of paganism and Yahweh's involvement in :27, where Laban's pagan 'divination' was used by Yahweh. And now we are reading of how Jacob's pagan ideas were likewise used by Yahweh, to bless him.

Gen 30:40 *Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the streaked and all the black in the flock of Laban: and he put his own droves apart, and didn't put them into Laban's flock*- Although initially Laban had separated many of the spotted and speckled and put them in his own flocks, Jacob still had the job of looking after them. Perhaps the idea is that Jacob made his black sheep look at the

white sheep in Laban's flock, which he had at his disposal as he cared for them. His theory was that the offspring of black sheep whilst mating would be speckled if they conceived whilst looking at white sheep. This has no truth to it, but God used it to provide Jacob with great fertility and blessing of speckled animal offspring. We recall that "Rachel" means "ewe lamb", so perhaps the idea was that he was using the Rachel situation, under God's hand, to still produce blessing.

Gen 30:41 *It happened, whenever the stronger of the flock conceived, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the flock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods*- The "stronger" may refer to the flocks who were more strongly in heat, and the "feeble" those who were less in heat. The peeled rods would have secreted gum and resin which were thought to be aphrodisiacs. The situation here is introduced by Leah using mandrakes to get Jacob to sleep with her and to induce her fertility; the mandrakes didn't give fertility, God alone did. And yet God worked through this bunk science and quasi-faith to give blessing. And again here. The "stronger" or more virile animals were Jacob's because they had been supposedly influenced by the aphrodisiacs from the rods; but as we learn in Gen. 31:10-12, the blessing was from God and not from that.

Gen 30:42 *But when the flock were feeble, he didn't put them in. So the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's*- The idea is not the "the feeble cattle..." were not put in. Rather, those who had less virility at the time because they had not been put into intense heat by the supposed aphrodisiac effect of the rods. As noted on :40, although initially Laban had separated many of the spotted and speckled and put them in his own flocks, Jacob still had the job of looking after them. He did them no harm and didn't steal them. He simply didn't operate his pagan trick on them; and his cattle brought forth stronger animals than those of Laban, for whom he didn't place his striped rods in their troughs. And so *relatively speaking*, Jacob's flocks were stronger than Laban's.

The blessing was due to God not the rods (Gen. 31:10-12). But the flocks would have been stressed by the separation made by Laban (:40). The differing behaviours of pure white and spotted animals *when the group is under stress* has been studied, and it has been found that the spotted will become dominant and more virile, and the unspotted less so. This on a human level may have been behind the blessing experienced. An academic article in the *Russian Journal of Genetics: Applied Research, 2011* confirms this, and actually quotes this passage in Genesis 30 as confirmation for what was observed by academics at the University of Novosibirsk, Russia: "Stress can induce piebaldness in progeny. We are able to test this statement not only experimentally, but in natural conditions. Animals with white spots are always present in the water vole population that we have been studying for many years. We regularly assessed the level of stress in this population. Indeed, the assumption that in years with higher stress more white spotted animals would be born was confirmed. Then we found that the spotted animals are more resistant to stress and outperform unspotted animals in reproduction in stressful years" (Mikhail Anatolievich Potapov, 'Evolutionary ecology of animal fertility: Five decades of studies of reproduction as a link between generations' in Russian Journal of Genetics: Applied Research · July 2011).

Gen 30:43 *The man increased exceedingly, and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkey*- This indicated to him that the promise to him

at Bethel was coming true (Gen. 28:14). "The man" hints that Jacob was very human in all this. He used his newfound wealth from the spotted animals, and his redefinition of the value of black sheep, to buy servants, camels and donkeys. We recall how both Abraham and Isaac are recorded as being materially blessed straight after they had lied about their wives. Likewise, the use of paganism, folklore and bunk science to increase his wealth was not exactly spiritual; but God worked through it to bring about the primary fulfilment of the promises to him. Just as He so graciously works with us.

GENESIS CHAPTER 31

Gen 31:1 *He heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's. From that which was our father's, has he gotten all this wealth*- This recalls how Esau spoke in his heart, that he would murder Jacob; and those words were heard. Attitudes were heard as words, as they are today. Laban had doubtless misrepresented the agreement about the spotted and speckled, as noted on :8. They likely believed his story, and of course noted that the Jacob who had been a poor shepherd for 14 years had now suddenly got wealthy. The sudden wealth did of course look suspicious. The tension served to help their sisters, Rachel and Leah, to have to make a decision between Jacob and their fathers' family; and they came down on the right side.

Gen 31:2 *Jacob saw the expression on Laban's face, and, behold, it was not toward him as before*- Laban had abused Jacob for 14 years. But the sudden increase in Jacob's wealth had altered the balance of power; and no longer was Jacob legally bound to serve Laban. Laban would have sensed that he the elder was coming to serve the younger. The changed relationship became a push factor, encouraging Jacob to do what he should have done earlier- to make returning to the *eretz* a priority.

Gen 31:3 *Yahweh said to Jacob, Return to the land of your fathers, and to your relatives, and I will be with you*- The plan had originally been that Jacob would remain with Laban until Rebekah his mother sent him a message to return home. That message apparently never came, and it seems Rebekah was dead. God now replaces Rebekah for Jacob. I've noted several times that he seemed psychologically dominated by her, the stay at home mamma's boy who ended up trapped in a complex situation far from home, obsessively in love with a woman who restimulated his feelings toward his mother; and for whom he spent 14 years in servitude. And now God replaces Rebekah; *He* specifically calls Jacob homeward, and not Rebekah. This was all part of His program to draw Jacob into a direct personal relationship with Himself, rather than Jacob passively going alone with the religion of mum and dad.

Here we have God telling Jacob whilst he lived with Laban to return to the land and people of his fathers- Canaan. This is the very opposite of Abraham's reasoning in Gen.

24:6- that the land of his fathers was Mesopotamia. The real land of his fathers was not there in Mesopotomia, but Canaan. Yet Abraham had not perceived that, for he reasons exactly the other way around. This is yet another hint at incomplete faith in Abraham, and his desire to *not* totally separate from his land and family as required.

Gen 31:4 *Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock*- Seeing they had young children to care for and bring with them, this was a major invitation. It seems from :17 that they left from "the field" without returning home. The need to all be together "in the field" was fabricated so that they could make the escape without Laban and his sons forcing them to remain.

Gen 31:5 *And said to them, I see the expression on your father's face, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me*- We note "my father"- not '*my* God'. Although Yahweh was still not fully Jacob's God, Jacob puts before his wives a clear choice- the god of their father, or the one true God of *his* father. There is something almost childishly proud about the way Jacob sets off *his* father against the deceitful father of his wives (:5-7). Laban mocks this almost immature homesickness in Gen. 31:30. "Has been with me" could refer to an Angelic visitation, but it is more likely referring to the promise of Gen. 28 at Bethel, that "I will be with you". Jacob was starting to see that that promise of 20 (or 40) years ago had indeed been fulfilled; and he had vouched that if it were, then Yahweh would be his God. He still struggles with fulfilling that, as he talks about Yahweh as the God of his father, rather than his own God.

Gen 31:6 *You know that I have served your father with all of my strength*- The suggestion could be that he had served Laban with all his strength, when the implication of the first commandment was that a man should serve God with all his strength (Mk. 12:30). Now Jacob wanted to serve God and not Laban; his heavenly Father rather than "your father". The scene would have been programmatic for the wilderness generation who first heard the Genesis history; they had been called to no longer serve Pharaoh, but to escape and travel through the desert to the promised land of Canaan and serve Yahweh instead of Pharaoh. There was a period of great physical blessing upon their offspring, just as there had been upon Jacob's cattle; see on :7,21,28.

Gen 31:7 *Your father has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, but God didn't allow him to hurt me*- The situation is similar to how God "didn't allow" the Abimelechs to take Sarah or Rebekah and sleep with them. Jacob was coming to see that there was this same unmerited, gracious activity on his behalf by the Spirit. Jacob had of course deceived his own father. He was being helped to realize how Isaac had felt; to the end he might repent the more deeply and learn the lessons. We go through similar prodding from the Lord who works also in our lives.

I suggested on :6 that Jacob's escape from Laban has similarities with Israel's exodus from Egypt and Pharaoh. As Laban "deceived" Jacob, so the same word is used of how Pharaoh dealt "deceitfully" with Israel (Ex. 8:29). See on :21.

LXX "ten lambs" could suggest 'ten lambing seasons'. Each season, Jacob offered Laban a different deal as to which types of animals he could keep; and each time, those types multiplied.

Gen 31:8 *If he said this, 'The speckled will be your wages', then all the flock bore speckled. If he said this, 'The streaked will be your wages', then all the flock bore streaked*- Laban was obviously aghast at how Jacob's flocks were growing so rapidly, and tried to amend the original agreement so that some of the increased numbers would be his. He is portrayed as an avaricious liar and deceiver; although Jacob had been little better. The difference between Jacob and Laban was simply God's grace, and Jacob's eventual openness to this.

Gen 31:9 *Thus God has taken away your father's livestock, and given them to me*- Yet Jacob was soon going to be telling Esau that he wanted him to 'take away' all his material blessings; see on Gen. 33:11. Jacob didn't steal Laban's animals, but his own flock did grow from the stock of black and spotted animals which Laban originally agreed to give to Jacob. Their increase was as it were taken away from Laban and given to Jacob. But Jacob insists this was done by God, and perhaps this is an admission that the paganism and folklore bunk science he had used was not the real cause of the great increase. He now justifies what he did as obedience to an Angelic dream (:10,11), although the dream is ill defined and unspecific about how the breeding was to be done.

Gen 31:10 *It happened during mating season that I lifted up my eyes, and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which leaped on the flock were streaked, speckled, and grizzled*- The explanation suggests that the wives were ignorant as to how Jacob had acquired such huge fecundity amongst his flocks. Or perhaps he is telling them to the effect: 'We thought it was all due to those pagan rituals and folklore we believed; but let me tell you, it wasn't that at all. It was from God'. There was nothing told Jacob about using the rods, bunk science or other pagan devices which he did. That was his interpretation of the dream.

Gen 31:11 *The angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob', and I said, 'Here I am'*- These were the very words of response to Angelic visitation made by Abraham and Isaac. Jacob is being led into situations which they were in, and he responds as they do. His knowledge of how they responded was therefore significant; and whilst Biblical

knowledge of itself will not save anyone, the more we are aware of Biblical history, the quicker we will perceive when we are in essentially similar situations and will respond correctly.

Gen 31:12 *He said, 'Now lift up your eyes, and behold, all the male goats which leap on the flock are streaked, speckled, and grizzled, for I have seen all that Laban does to you*- "Lift up your eyes, and behold…" is a promise couched in the language with which God invited Abraham to lift up his eyes and behold the land which He would give him (Gen. 13:14,15). Even whilst Jacob was trying to fulfill God's promises for Him, still half worshipping idols, God gently went along with him to teach him firstly that He *would* keep promises, and then to show Jacob the more spiritual essence of it all. The idea was that God had seen Jacob's affliction, and His response was to give Jacob huge numbers of spotty animals. But Jacob worked this out in practice through his usage of the pagan rods and other devices; but all the same, God worked through it. I see this as the first hint at Jacob''s conversion, which will become more developed over the next two chapters. He is accepting the teaching that despite all his human efforts to be fruitful, it is God who has given him blessing.

Gen 31:13 *I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you vowed a vow to me. Now arise, get out from this land, and return to the land of your birth'*- The memory of 20 or 40 years ago would have been dim for Jacob, so maybe he needed reminding. It was presumably an Angel who appeared to him at Bethel, so the Angel he now sees is saying that He is the same Angel as in the earlier vision. As noted before, Jacob originally planned to only return to the *eretz* when he received a message from his mother; but she was probably dead, and so the Angel is effectively telling him that He is now replacing Rebekah. Jacob is to grow up and relate with God as a man, directly, and not through fulfilling parental expectation. Jacob is saying that the call to return to the *eretz* came from God at the same time as the vision of amassing wealth from spotted and black animals. It could therefore have been six years before this time of final exodus. But Jacob is only now telling his wives about the vision. We sense a distance between him and both of them, and a lack of spiritual connection between them. Yet out of this dysfunctional and unspiritual background, the Father formed His special people.

So although Jacob may have forgotten his vow, God was needling him to return from Mesopotamia to Canaan- so that God could fulfil the promise and keep covenant with Jacob. Just as Abraham had been 'encouraged' to make the same journey. In Jacob's case, God worked through the totally dysfunctional situation with Laban as the push factor to make Jacob obedient and return to Canaan; just as with Abraham, it was his father Terah who wanted to emigrate from Ur and took Abraham with him. Man is not alone before the call to obedience; God nudges and coaxes us towards it. Jacob left

Mesopotamia for Canaan because he feared Laban ["Because I was afraid...", :31]; not because of faith and perception that Canaan was the land of the covenant. Jacob's wives were likewise prepared by their father's materialism and abuse- they had to leave, as they saw it, in order to assure their inheritance and old age provision.

Gen 31:14 *Rachel and Leah answered him, Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?*- There was no statement here of love for Jacob nor Yahweh. Rather they considered that being Jacob's wives cut them out of any possible inheritance in their father's family, and so they may as well throw in their lot with Jacob. The decision making process as revealed here seems very mercenary. The idea is as GNB "There is nothing left for us to inherit from our father"- because he had spent it on himself (:15). This could mean that he had spent their dowry on himself- perhaps implying that any benefit arising through Jacob's 14 years of service to Laban should have gone to them. And there is material in the Nuzi documents which suggests this was how dowry was reckoned in those times. Hence they consider that whatever Jacob had taken from Laban (:16) was not in fact theft, but a taking of what was rightfully theirs. Or it could be that Laban had declared that he was leaving his estate to the sons he had had by Bilhah and Zilpah. We can then see again the spaggheti junction syndrome- the sons Jacob had had by those same women received nothing. There would have been huge conflict between the sons. Jacob's family was riven by conflict and dysfunction- but out of it came the Israel of God. Yahweh showed for all time how He works through human dysfunction.

Gen 31:15 *Aren't we accounted by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also quite devoured our money*- We learn from this that Laban counted Jacob a "foreigner". This means that the blessing he felt from Jacob was an example of the Abrahamic blessing starting to come upon 'foreigners' (see on Gen. 30:27). It seems that as Laban ten times changed the "wages" of Jacob (:7), so he had also added to the terms of marriage. It was not only seven years service for each daughter, but also "money", or (Heb.), "silver". And he had spent that money, in ways the daughters seem not to approve of, because it has left them with nothing to inherit anyway (:14). Devouring an inheritance is the language of the prodigal son; and yet that same parable presents Jacob as the prodigal. But the language is in places also appropriate to Laban, showing that in essence these two deceitful and materialistic men were little different. The saving difference was simply God's grace and Jacob's openness to it.

"Sold" is 'deceived' or 'tricked'. The sisters had been deceived by their father, both at the wedding night and in subsequent issues. The whole Jacob family had been both deceivers and deceived. Jacob 'deceives' Laban (:20). "Money" is a term used in the Nuzi tablets about a dowry. Laban had presumably demanded even more dowry than

the 14 years of service- and had been given it, and blown it. The idea of a dowry payment in Mesopotamia was so that the father had resources to care for his daughter if for any reason she returned to live with him. Or the dowry was kept by the wives, worn as gold around their heads, in case they were divorced or widowed and needed to care for themselves later in life. Remember that divorce was very easy for men at that time, and was often practiced for petty reasons. Rachel and Leah consider that they have no assured future with their father, because he had spent their dowry money. He treated them "as foreigners"- perhaps meaning that he treated them as foreigners treated their daughters, just spending the dowry money, rather than following the local custom of keeping it in case the father had to care for his daughters again. Their decision to remain with Jacob is therefore presented as being not out of love, but from fear for their future without him. Just as Leah so wanted to have male children so that Jacob wouldn't divorce her. So out of this loveless family, God formed the Israel of God.

Gen 31:16 *For all the riches which God has taken away from our father, that is ours and our children's. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do*- They seem to reason that their father has spent all his wealth, so they have no inheritance from him anyway (:14); therefore it's as well that God had taken some of their father's wealth and given it to Jacob. And they feel justified in taking it because they consider it to be their inheritance anyway. However, they were repeating a misunderstanding common amongst Laban's children (see on :1). Jacob hadn't stolen or taken away anything from Laban. They are saying how it appeared. He had originally had a prime flock of unspotted animals, which Jacob would look after in return for Laban's spotted animals becoming his. But God had hugely blessed those spotted animals and the herds of them had multiplied. It was only an incorrect appearance that God had taken Laban's wealth and given it to Jacob. But as with the language of demons, the Bible often records things from the perspective of the characters, without clarifying that their viewpoint is actually false or only partially correct.

Gen 31:17 *Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives on the camels*- Travel by camel would have recalled the account of Rebekah, Jacob's mother, travelling from the same area to the *eretz* on camel. Now finally Jacob was doing what God had intended he do when he first met Leah; marry her and return to the land of promise. The motivation of Rebekah was spiritual, it seems; whereas Rachel and Leah returned because they effectively had no other option, and faced poverty if they remained behind (see on :14,15). Jacob clearly would have had daughters too, although we only read of Dinah. But the focus is upon the sons; because this is to be taken as the account of when "Israel" as a nation, "the fathers", first entered the land of promise. And it was in a state of unspirituality.

We note that Jacob put his sons and then his wives on the camels, whereas when Esau moved, it is mentioned that he took his wives first and then his sons (Gen. 36:6 "Esau took his wives and his sons"). It could be argued that Jacob didn't really love his four wives apart from Rachel. His focus was upon the sons they had produced. Whereas Esau focuses firstly upon his wives- perhaps another of several indications that on a secular level, Esau was a far nicer guy than Jacob. But Jacob the twister was the one God worked with, as Jacob had that basic faith which Esau apparently didn't. On its own, this may appear to be over interpretation; but it must be put together with many other instances of Esau appearing a 'nicer guy' than Jacob in secular terms. More forgiving, more honest etc.

Gen 31:18 *And he took away all his livestock, and all his possessions which he had gathered, including the livestock which he had gained in Paddan Aram, to go to Isaac his father, to the land of Canaan*- The AV better reflects the manic 'getting': "all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten". After 14 years of servitude as a labourer, his plan with the rods had led to huge and sudden increase of wealth. This would have surely reminded him of the Divine promise at Bethel to bless him and be with him, and return him to his land. His plan to return "to Isaac" suggests Rebekah was dead; her ruse to get blessing for her favourite son led to her never seeing him again in this life.

An example of following the negative spiritual traits of our forbears is seen in Jacob's penchant for materialism. This was a weakness of the whole Abraham family; a specific word is used about how they “gathered" material wealth. Abraham did it (Gen. 12:5), and so now did Jacob. The list of what they "gathered" is almost identical (Gen. 24:35 cp. Gen. 30:43). Faithless fear (cp. Dt. 20:8; Mt. 25;25; Rev. 21:8) was another characteristic; in Abraham (Gen. 15:1; 20:11); Isaac (Gen. 26:7,24; 31:42,53); and followed by Jacob (Gen. 28:17; 31:31; 32:7,11; 41:3).

Gen 31:19 *Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep: and Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father’s*- He used them for divination (Gen. 30:27), so maybe she thought Laban would use them to divine where Jacob and his family had fled to, or would use the teraphim to curse them. Such images were also thought to be the guardians of the family property and the source of blessing, "teraphim" coming from the root *taarap* to be prosperous. Rachel had just lamented that she was written out of the inheritance, as it were, such as it now was. So it wasn't simply that it was her idolatry which led to her stealing them; she was angry with her father and was bitter about the issue of the inheritance (see on :14,15). This was used providentially by God to ensure she would wish to emigrate with Jacob to the land of promise. They were also thought to be the source of fertility; Rachel should have learnt that they actually had no power in this at all, but such power was only of God. It was not until Gen. 35:2 that Jacob ordered these

images to be discarded and buried beneath a tree; they were likely valuable, as such teraphim were typically covered in gold and precious stones. He sacrificed family wealth to ensure that idolatry was ended amongst his children and wives, and that they recognized that blessing was solely from Yahweh; a principle which remains relevant to this day.

The escape was planned for when Laban would be out in the field. Rachel presumably knew that her going out to meet Jacob in the fields was a signal to escape; so she stole the teraphim before leaving. Or perhaps she was the guardian of them anyway and carried them in her personal stuff; for they may have been quite small household gods. Her lack of spirituality is here clearly displayed; and yet Jacob had spent 14 years working for this woman. Jacob had recently protested to Laban that he would not steal a thing from him (Gen. 30:33); and now his favourite wife steals her father's images. The same word for "stole" is now used in :20,26,27 for how Jacob "stole away" (AV) from Laban, as if to suggest that he was just as deceitful as was Rachel.

Gen 31:20 *Jacob deceived Laban the Syrian, in that he didn't tell him that he was running away*- Laban is called "the Syrian"; although he was a member of the Abraham family, he is spoken of now as a Gentile. And yet his "blessing" on account of Jacob was therefore the primary fulfilment of the Abrahamic blessing, that the nations would be blessed through his seed. Jacob's behaviour at this point is presented as 'deceit' although it was perfectly understandable- in order to continue the idea that both Jacob and Laban were equally deceitful. It was just that Jacob accepted God's grace.

Gen 31:21 *So he fled with all that he had. He rose up, passed over the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead*- "The river" refers to the Euphrates, the boundary of the *eretz*. Jacob is presented as now returning to the promised land. But the "river" also refers to the Nile, and is perhaps used to portray the similarities with Israel's exodus from bondage in Egypt, and then passing through the water of the Red Sea; see on :6,7,22.

Gen 31:22 *Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled*- This continues the connection with Pharaoh, who was "told... that the people fled" and then pursued them over the water (Ex. 14:5,8). The parallels were of great relevance to the initial audience of Genesis- Israel in the wilderness, who had likewise fled their abusers and been pursued. And they too were saved by grace; for Ez. 20 says that they took the idols of Egypt with them after spoiling the Egyptians, just as Jacob was accused of spoiling Laban and taking his idols with him. See on :6,7,21.

Gen 31:23 *He took his relatives with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey. He overtook him in the mountain of Gilead*- See on :22; this continues the parallel with the exodus from Egypt, with Pharaoh (cp. Laban) being informed the Israelites had fled (Ex. 14:5) and taking his chosen people with him to purse and overtake the fleeing Israelites (Ex. 14:9); see on :6,7,21,22. The distance is about 500 km. from Haran to the Gilead mountains. We wonder why it took Laban so long to catch up with Jacob, who was moving slowly because of the huge herds he was driving, some of whom were pregnant (Gen. 33:13). Surely the delay was providentially overruled so that Jacob had time to cross the Euphrates into the promised land, and the meeting between them with the conclusion that Jacob and family could never return past that point was made once they were firmly in the *eretz*.

Gen 31:24 *God came to Laban the Syrian, in a dream of the night, and said to him, Take heed to yourself that you don't speak to Jacob either good or bad*- If this is the correct translation, then we reflect that there are times when God leaves us with a kind of neutral situation- in order to elicit our own self-examination and choice of the right path ourselves without it being forced upon us by Him. But the LXX reads: "Take heed to thyself that thou speak not at any time to Jacob evil things", and the literal Hebrew: "From good to bad". This makes better sense of Laban's words in :29; and in :42, Jacob understands this visitation of Laban as a "rebuke". This can only mean that Laban intended to murder Jacob, but was "rebuked" from that plan by God. Jacob would've recalled how Esau had likewise wanted to pursue and murder him, and he had been saved by grace. Again, circumstances repeat within our lives, as a loving Father teaches us the extent of His grace.

Gen 31:25 *Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain, and Laban with his relatives encamped in the mountain of Gilead*- The impression is given of two camps, Jacob's and Laban's. This forms the basis of "Mahanaim", the place of the two camps (Gen. 32:2). But those two camps then were Angels on one camp and Jacob in the other. And he was saved from the camp of Angels coming in judgment by his pleading with the Angel he wrestled with. We are therefore to conclude that Laban indeed was coming to destroy Jacob, as noted on :24. But Jacob had been saved by the Angel who came and warned Laban not to; the same Angel Jacob wrestled with. The Angel foresaw that Jacob would at a point then future wrestle with him in prayer and prevail; and so the answer to that prayer was granted ahead of time, in saving Jacob from Laban and his camp. Laban in this sense had God behind him, as noted on :29.

Gen 31:26 *Laban said to Jacob, What have you done, that you have deceived me, and carried away my daughters like captives of the sword?*- Jacob was indeed a deceiver, of

Esau and Isaac; but this was a relatively false accusation. And yet through the process of false accusation we often find that our real and actual sins are elicited. Laban perhaps genuinely considered that his daughters were still his; he had lied so often about the conditions upon which Jacob obtained them that he perhaps came to actually believe his own lie, just as the sons of Jacob did regarding the supposed death of Joseph. And this is the problem with lying; unless repented of, the lie becomes our perceived truth.

Gen 31:27 *Why did you flee secretly, and deceive me, and didn't tell me, that I might have sent you away with mirth and with songs, with tambourine and with harp*- The only other party Laban had arranged for Jacob, when he married Leah, had been riddled with deceit. Laban is presented as clearly being deceitful.

Gen 31:28 *And didn't allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now have you done foolishly*- The charge of doing foolishly has a moral dimension, as if to say 'You sinned' (1 Sam. 13:13). This was a false accusation when taken specifically; and yet Jacob was indeed a sinner. And so we have what I myself have experienced, and likely many others too- a totally false and unreasonable accusation elicits within us an awareness of wherein we have actually sinned; see on :31. Laban's desire to kiss his sons and daughters could refer to his grandchildren; but it could also mean that some of his sons, the brothers of Rachel and Leah, had gone over to Jacob's side (cp. :1), just as some of the Egyptians joined with the Israelites in fleeing Egypt (see on :6,7).

Gen 31:29 *It is in the power of my hand to hurt you*- "Power" translates *el*, "God"; Keil translates "there is to God my hand". He felt he had Divine right to hurt Jacob, as noted on :25, but God had also warned him not do. Laban was wrong as to why he thought Jacob could be "hurt"; Jacob had done nothing wrong to him, but we are aware from Jacob's earlier life that he had much in it that deserved Divine judgment.

But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Take heed to yourself that you don't speak to Jacob either good or bad'- See on :24. That Jacob worshipped the God of his father rather than his own God was well known. "*Your* (plural) father" (cp. AV "thee" in the previous and following verses) may suggest that Jacob was confident enough of his father's God to have introduced it to his family, although he himself still had not reached the point where he had made this God completely his own.

Gen 31:30 *Now you want to be gone, because you greatly longed for your father's house, but why have you stolen my gods?*- The implication is that Jacob was a homesick boy, pining for his mum and dad. Whilst this was provocative, I have repeatedly noted that Jacob was indeed psychologically dominated by his parents to an unhealthy extent.

Gen 31:31 *Jacob answered Laban, Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Lest you should take your daughters from me by force'*- "Because I was afraid" is the language of a guilty Adam in Eden. As noted on :28, a false and unreasonable accusation can elicit in us an awareness of wherein we have actually sinned. And this seems to have happened to Jacob. Jacob wisely ignores the provocation noted on :30, and focuses on the essential accusation; a good pattern for our dealing with such difficult situations. The reason Jacob gives here is absolutely true; and total honesty was not his strong point. Just as his sons were led by Joseph's interrogations to total honesty, so Jacob was led here. And we too are led to this point by the Divine hand in human life.

Gen 31:32 *Anyone you find your gods with shall not live. Before our relatives, discern what is yours with me, and take it. For Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen them*- We note the contrast between "your gods" and "the God of your father" (:29). Jacob loved Rachel and obviously assumed she had a higher level of ethics and spirituality than she actually did, imputing righteousness to the one he loved. Jacob would later reflect how the life of his beloved and yet spiritually weak Rachel had been saved at this point by absolute grace. We see again how God uses Jacob's over confident self righteousness and Rachel's human weakness and even sin- for Rachel was surely wrong to have stolen the idols- in order to finally awe us with His grace and bring us to repentance and devotion to Him alone.

Jacob's cursing of whoever had taken the idols actually came true. For Rachel died soon afterwards. Hence Jacob later reflects that Rachel died by or because of him. This is one of many Biblical warnings that what we say, especially in wishing evil, has a way of coming true. We think of David's cursing of Saul and Absalom in his Psalms, and how bitterly he wept when his cursings came true. Again we see the importance of life and living, and the significance of words, even if said in anger.

Gen 31:33 *Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two female servants; but he didn't find them. He went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent*- The Divine cameraman is zooming in, so we can visualize the movement at close range, as Laban moves from tent to tent, with us knowing that the idols are in the last tent, building up a sense of suspense, realizing that Rachel's life depends upon this... and he doesn't find them.

Gen 31:34 *Now Rachel had taken the teraphim, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. Laban felt about all the tent, but didn't find them*- The Mosaic laws about uncleanness from contact with menstruating women were surely known in essence at this time. The holy was not to be mixed with the unclean. For a menstruating woman to

squat upon an idol, the supposedly holy, would've been anathema and deeply obnoxious; and the power of the idol would surely be seen as having been compromised. Rachel was driven to do this in desperation to save her own life; and God in His amazing economy worked in this way, so that Rachel had to desecrate her own beloved idols in order to save her life.

It has been suggested that Rachel stole the teraphim because they were the equivalent of the title to inheritance. Even if this is the case, she thereby betrays the same kind of obsessive materialism as her father Laban. And moreover, a lack of faith in the promises to Abraham- which were all about receiving the ultimate inheritance at a future point. Perhaps she was concerned that Laban's earlier sons by his handmaids would inherit Laban's wealth- whereas she obsessively wanted the inheritance to pass to her son. She considered herself the senior wife and that therefore her son should inherit most. Whereas Leah was technically the first wife of Jacob, at least by one week; and had born Jacob more sons, including his firstborn. "But I am the favoured wife", her argument may have run, "And so the inheritance should pass to my son". In the Emar wills from this period, uncovered in the same area in the late 20th century, there appears the case of a father bequeathing his property to his daughter "if she invoke my gods". Some of the wills on the Nuzi tablets use the same phrase. Perhaps Rachel had done this, and thought that possession of those gods would bring her inheritance from her father. She thereby appears insecure in her relationship with Jacob, just as Leah did [judging from how she named her sons]. But from all this dysfunction, God built the house of Israel. Whatever reconstruction we make, Rachel appears totally unspiritual by her actions.

When Laban sets out to attack Jacob, it was clearly in his power to kill him. But the incident of him accusing Jacob of stealing his idols, him publicly searching the whole camp, feeling absolutely everything, and not finding them, probably led to a loss of face which meant he couldn't do what he planned to Jacob. Jacob then bursts out in proud, arrogant denunciation of Laban- not realizing that his beloved, idolatrous Rachel couldn't bear to be without those idols, and had stolen them. Despite Rachel's deceit and idolatry, and Jacob's arrogance, God worked through all this to save them. The way God works with us in our weakness, leading us on, hoping we will later reflect back and marvel at His grace and patience... all this God works oftentimes with man. Not only should we be deeply humbled as a result of our self-examination. We ought to reflect this kind of patience and going along with weakness in the hope of later change in our attitude to our brethren.

Gen 31:35 *She said to her father, Don't let my lord be angry that I can't rise up before you; for I'm having my period. He searched, but didn't find the teraphim*- They may well have been under some precedent of the laws about touching menstruating women which were later codified in Lev. 15:22; and Laban surely assumed that his daughter would not sit upon a holy idol whilst menstruating. The theme of deceit continues;

Rachel lies to her father, deceiving him as Jacob had done to his father. The idea is that the chosen family were not more righteous than the surrounding unbelievers; they were chosen and transformed through grace alone.

The Hebrew is literally "let it not become hot in my lord's eyes" or "let not my lord's eyes burn". The reference is almost certainly to the popular idea of the 'evil eye', something we often find alluded to in the Hebrew Old Testament. We note that Laban claimed the power to do Jacob 'evil', although Jacob's God had warned him not to use it. Rachel believed in the 'evil eye' just as many mistakenly believe in the existence of demons and a 'Satan' figure today; rather than accepting that Yahweh really is God almighty and all power is with Him alone. Jacob apparently also used the 'evil eye'; for the same phrase is used in Gen. 30:2 of how "Jacob's face glowed against Rachel". If nothing else, we see a family angry with each other; Jacob against his wife Rachel, and Rachel's father Laban against her. This is all part of the same nexus of belief which led Rachel to steal the teraphim; we know the family were idolators because after the incident with Dinah and Shechem, Jacob appeals to the family to quit idolatry and they bury their idols. Later Scripture features frequent appeals to "Jacob" / Israel to abandon their idolatry- after the pattern of their father Jacob. But at this point, he was an idolater, who only wanted Yahweh as his God if Yahweh returned him safely to his father's house. Which at this point was yet distant with many obstacles in the path. Condemnation of using the 'evil eye' is common: “Those who hate pinch with their eye in vain” (Ps. 35:19); “a wicked man... pinches with his eyes" (Prov. 6:12,13); “what do your eyes wink at?” (Job 15:12). Prov. 28:22 likewise: “he who has the evil eye hastens after riches”. Zech. 3:9 features a stone with seven eyes which Yahweh presents to Joshua, as if assuring him that all the supposed power of the 'evil eye' was nothing compared to Yahweh's power. If Yahweh turns His eyes upon a man for evil, then this shall happen; it is *His* 'evil eye' which was to be feared, not that of pagan superstition (Am. 9:4; Lev. 20:5 "I will set My eye against that man"; Jer. 24:6; Ps. 34:17).

Jacob has told his wives that their father's face is not toward him as before (Gen. 31:5); he feared the 'evil eye' from Laban. But Rachel defeats it through her lie. The overall impression, as with God's usage of the myths about conception in Gen. 30, is that wrong ideas and beliefs are worked with by God- to bring the thoughtful to realize that He is really all powerful.

Gen 31:36 *Jacob was angry, and argued with Laban. Jacob answered Laban, What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me?*- Jacob was indeed innocent and his flight from Laban was not morally wrong. But he was a big time sinner apart from that. The trouble with being falsely accused is that it can make us very self-righteous, failing to accept that we may not have sinned in *that* matter, but we have indeed failed in others. Jacob would later have realized God's grace to him when he

learnt that Rachel had in fact stolen the idols. And he would have repeated back to himself his question: "What is my sin…?". No sin against Laban, indeed; but the question would have elicited self-examination.

Gen 31:37 *Now that you have felt around in all my stuff, what have you found of all your household stuff? Set it here before my relatives and your relatives, that they may judge between us two*- Laban and his relatives had travelled 500 km. at high speed. This was a real showdown, as their haste and anger would have been fuelled by the thought that Jacob had stolen their teraphim. The situation had been reflected upon by Jacob's son Joseph, when he later sets up his brothers in a similar situation- accusing them of things [stealing the cup, lying to him about their family] of which they were guilty and yet thought they were innocent, in order to elicit in them repentance. Because Joseph would've perceived that this incident had led his father Jacob to repentance; indeed, Jacob may have told his sons as much in reciting the family history to them.

Gen 31:38 *These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not cast their young, and I haven't eaten the rams of your flocks*- The chronological problem is well addressed by H.P. Mansfield:

"Jacob was ninety-seven years of age when he fled from Laban. If he were with his father-in-law only twenty years, the events of his life are compressed in too narrow a compass to be practical, and introduce contradictions.

Consider the following: At the end of two years' famine (Gen. 45:6) Joseph would have been between 39-40 (Gen. 41:46), and Jacob was 130 (Gen. 47:9). Joseph was thus born when Jacob was 90-91, and this is dated just prior to the six years that he served Laban for his cattle (Gen. 30:25). If, to that point of time, he had been only fourteen years with Laban, it would mean that he fled from Esau to seek a wife when he was about 77! Assuming that he first worked seven years for Leah, his first son would not be born before he was 85; and if Joseph were born when he was 90, he had eleven sons and at least one daughter in five years! In that case, also, he had children and grandchildren to the number of sixty-six in the short space of forty-five years. At that rate, Judah, the fourth son could not have been born before he was 88, and would have been about 42 when the events of Genesis 38 took place, or 48, if Jacob married Leah before the completion of the seven years that he worked for Laban to obtain her.

Esau visited Ishmael and married his daughter after Jacob left for Haran at the age of 77, though Ishmael died when Jacob was 63 (Gen. 25:17). Isaac married at 40 (Gen. 25:20). Jacob was born twenty years later (Gen. 25:26). Ishmael, thirteen years older than Isaac died at 137 (Gen. 25:17). These problems are solved if we can add a further twenty years

to Jacob's sojourn with Laban, making his age 57 when he fled from Esau, though still 97 when he left Laban. This would allow for forty years with Laban, the period of probation or trial. And that forty years seem to be provided for in Jacob's conversation with Laban. He makes reference to two periods of "twenty years" each (cp. vv. 38,41). The first twenty years, he was with Laban as a friend: "I have been with thee." The second twenty years, he was there as a covenant servant: "I have been twenty years in thy house; I served thee..." The first fourteen years he served Laban for his two daughters; the following twenty years, he was with Laban in his capacity as shepherd; the final six years, he served him for his cattle. The first fourteen years, and the last six years, represented twenty years of servitude; the intervening twenty years he was employed as a shepherd, during which Laban's flocks remarkably increased.

The Hebrew provides some warrant for this interpretation which also disposes of the difficulties mentioned above. The Hebrew *zeh* (rendered this: v. 38, and thus v. 41) when used in conjunction one with the other is often used by way of distinction as in Ex. 14:20, there rendered one and other; Ecc. 6:5-8: "this and that"; Job 21:23-25: "one and another". And so here. Jacob could have meant "this twenty years have I been with thee" and "that twenty years I have been in thy house." The first twenty years he served Laban as a friend. At some personal loss, but in gratitude to his father-in-law, he cared for his flocks (Vv. 38-40), the other twenty years he profited from his labour: first in the acquisition of his wives; and then from Laban's herds. The Hebrew *zeh li esrim* signifies "this for myself (*li*) twenty years..." In other words, during one twenty years he showed a profit; whilst during the other twenty years he showed a loss. In all, he was in Haran forty years: fourteen for his wives; twenty as a friend and son-in-law; six for the cattle. In all, forty years, a period of probation".

Gen 31:39 *That which was torn of animals, I didn't bring to you. I bore its loss. Of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night*- See on Gen. 33:10. Jacob was afflicted with legalism, and struggled all his life to understand and accept grace. Here we see Jacob at his most self congratulatory and meretricious; although his anger and self-justification is understandable, seeing how Laban had abused and manipulated him through legalistic methods. But again, both Laban and Jacob are presented as legalists as well as both being deceivers. The legalistic attitude of Jacob and his family is brought out by the behaviour of his wives as well as himself when they are caught up with by Laban as recorded here in Gen. 31. The society in which they lived had codified legal practices, as has been established by archaeological research into contemporary towns in the area. For example, part of the bride price had to be kept by the wife personally; and thus Rachel and Leah accuse their father of taking away from them that which was rightfully theirs. Likewise, according to the Nuzi documents, daughters and sons-in-law had legal title to part of the father's estate, and this was

proven by their possession of the household idols. Hence Jacob and his wives stole those idols. E.A. Speiser quotes par. 266 of the Code of Hammurabi, which states: "If there occurs in the fold an act of god, or a lion takes a life, the shepherd [cp. Jacob] shall clear himself before the deity; the owner of the fold [cp. Laban] must then accept the loss incurred" (E.A. Speiser, *Genesis* [The Anchor Bible] (New York: Doubleday, 1964) p. 247). It was surely with allusion to this that Jacob complained that he as the shepherd had had to bear the loss of Laban's lost cattle.

Earlier in his life, Jacob had learned to "bear the loss" of that which was "torn in pieces of beasts"; and the same terms are used in Gen. 31:39 and Gen. 37:33, when again Jacob has to 'bear the loss' of [apparently] having his beloved son torn in pieces of wild beasts [s.w.]. As so often in our lives, one experience is used to prepare us for a similar one, but to a much greater extent. In this case, not bearing the loss of an animal, but of a beloved son.

Gen 31:40 *This was my situation: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from my eyes*- Jacob appears to have distanced himself from the domestic nightmare caused by his various relationships; see on Gen. 30:18. Through those years of insomnia and slave labour, Jacob must have struggled to believe the promises of blessing made at Bethel, and the idea that he the younger would have the elder and more powerful serving him. We too may pass through whole periods of life where the promised blessings seem mythical. But those valleys are needed in order to appreciate the wonder of the blessings, and also to drive us all, as happened with Jacob, to perceive that the essence of "blessing" is not material prosperity in this life, but rather the blessing of forgiveness and fellowship with God (Acts 3:25,26).

Gen 31:41 *These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times*- See on :38. Spare a thought for Jacob at this time. During those years he would have gone through all the shame of an intelligent man who is desperately poor, and knows himself to be hopelessly in love (at 77). And when he finally gets the object of his lust, still having to work for her, it really doesn't turn out as he thinks. Bitterness between his wives escalates to the point where he has to have sexual relations with their handmaids; who were, remember, Laban's ex women. He had to go in to the women of a man he must have hated, picking up his throw offs. And then his wages were changed ten times, the conditions of service were ridiculous. To escape from his domestic pain he must have gone out and talked to those sheep, consumed at night by the cold and by the heat in the day time (:40). This was all a far, far cry from the cozy life with mum and dad and granddad, thinking that he'd go off and pick up a lovely wife just as Isaac obtained Rebekah.

Speaking in the context of Israel's punishment for idolatry (remember, in God's eyes Israel = Jacob), we are told, apparently out of context, that Jacob served for a wife

(singular), and for a wife he kept sheep (Hos. 12:12). Yet this is in the context of Hos. 12:2, which says that God would punish Israel for their idolatry, according to their ways. And the terrible 14 years of keeping the sheep which their forefather Jacob went through was a type of their punishment for idolatry. As Jacob *served* for Rachel, so Israel served idols and would have to *serve* those idolatrous nations as an appropriate punishment. Keeping sheep in Gentile lands is the basis of the prodigal parable; the young man who left home, tricked his father, sidled past his hostile elder brother with what he was sure was his inheritance by rights, squandered it, kept sheep, and came back a new man. Clearly the Lord had his mind on Jacob, although that parable is full of reference to prophetic descriptions of the nation of Israel, too. Hos. 12:4-6,12,13 seem to say that Jacob's humiliation at the hands of Laban is a type of the future suffering of Jacob, before their final homecoming

Gen 31:42 *Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham*- Again, not *my* God. And he saw God as the supplier of physical blessing; he understood the promise to Abraham that "I will be with you" as referring to blessing of cattle more than anything more spiritual. See on Gen. 25:31. Abraham was promised that his seed would have Yahweh as their personal God, and would eternally inherit the land. But Jacob, like us, was slow to perceive this. In a sense, the promises that the seed *would* inherit the land, and that God *would be* their God were fulfilled straight after God said them. He became Isaac's God (Gen. 31:42,53 refer to this), the God of Abraham's son. Time and again God reminds Israel that He *is* their God. And that land in a sense *was* given to the Jewish fathers (Gen. 15:18; Dt. 28:63; 30:5 NIV; Josh. 1:2-9; 21:43; 1 Kings 4:20,21).

And the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty. God has seen my affliction and the labour of my hands- See on Ex. 23:27. An element of fear is not wrong in itself. Israel in the wilderness had the pillar of fire to remind them of God's close presence, and to thereby motivate them not to sin: "His fear (will) be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Ex. 20:20). Notice how Isaac's guardian angel is described as "the fear" in Gen. 31:42,53 cp. 48:15,16. But "the fear of Isaac" would've been alluding to how after Jacob deceived Isaac, he trembled greatly at the realization that he had tried to force a stop to the fulfilment of God's promises about Jacob. And this image remained with Jacob, and he now clings on to belief that those promises shall be fulfilled; just as he admits that God "had been with me", alluding to the promises to Jacob at Bethel, that God would be with him.

God seeing affliction and noticing hard labour alludes to how God saw the similar sufferings of His people in Egypt (Ex. 3:7; 4:31; Dt. 26:7 s.w.); see on :6,7. But the very same Hebrew phrase "God has seen my affliction" is used by Leah when she gives birth to her first son (Gen. 29:32). As happens in families, the same turns of phrase were used, especially about God. In the hard servile years, Jacob would have remembered

his wife's words and come to believe that God was likewise seeing his affliction at Laban's hands.

And rebuked you last night- Laban's intention was to murder Jacob, but by grace, he was restrained. The "rebuke" was therefore to stop him killing Jacob. The same word has just been translated "judge" in :37.

Gen 31:43 *Laban answered Jacob, The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine: and what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their children whom they have borne?*- These accusations were false and so easy to answer. Unless he was claiming that Jacob was somehow his adopted son, or that some agreement meant that Jacob had resigned his claims upon his wives and children. For sure Laban had acted even more deceitfully than is recorded, and is presented as a scheming materialist who still never quite made it in life. But Laban had travelled 500 km. with his relatives and now had to travel them back home. Jacob was sensitive to the need to save Laban from a loss of face, so that peace might ensue. And we too are unwise to 'take up' every issue of false accusation and unreasonable treatment. We have to allow a saving of face and be pragmatic, with peace for God's true seed as the desired final outcome. The accusation of theft of the teraphim had been dropped; but Jacob isn't recorded as questioning these wider accusations of theft.

Gen 31:44 *Now come, let us make a covenant, you and I; and let it be for a witness between me and you*- This was a way of saving face and Jacob accepted it. Notice the connection between covenant and witness. It is axiomatic that those who are in the new covenant must be witnesses to it; such witness is not therefore optional, but part and parcel of covenant relationship. God witnesses His covenant to us (2 Kings 17:15), and we too witness to the covenant; both in witness to the world, and in witness to Him through the breaking of bread service, in our day. The equivalent of that in Jacob's time was to eat a sacrifice as a meal together.

Gen 31:45 *Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar*- This was to recall the pillar he had erected that night at Bethel, where God had promised him that he would be with him and make him return from Paddan Aram to the *eretz*.

Gen 31:46 *Jacob said to his relatives, Gather stones. They took stones, and made a heap. They ate there by the heap*- The "relatives" may refer to Laban's relatives who had accompanied him on the pursuit; for they were Jacob's relatives by marriage. The record notes that there was this family connection. Sacrificial meals were understood as confirming a covenant, and this is what the breaking of bread meeting is all about; a confirmation of the new covenant with us.

Gen 31:47 *Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed*- Despite 40 years living with non-Hebrew speakers, Jacob didn't forget his native tongue. His heart was in the land of promise, the Kingdom, for all his weakness. And Jacob insists that the circular heap of witness stones ("Galeed") be named in Hebrew, perhaps because he wanted his future seed never to return to the land of the east, never to leave the promised land as he had done.

Gen 31:48 *Laban said, This heap is witness between me and you this day. Therefore it was named Galeed*- Inanimate things are often spoken of in the Old Testament as being somehow alive; or non-human things spoken of in human terms, e.g. forests clapping their hands. The Bible doesn't footnote these things; just as the usage of the language of demons isn't specifically explained in the New Testament, and yet it is not to be taken as literally true.

Gen 31:49 *And Mizpah, for he said, Yahweh watch between me and you, when we are absent one from another*- Again we see Laban using the Yahweh Name; as noted on :53, he wrongly mixed pagan and Divine things, although Jacob and his wives did the same. To harp on about 'God sees even when men don't' (:50) was of course hypocritical for Laban; but Jacob had likewise failed to perceive this.

Gen 31:50 *If you afflict my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, no man is with us; behold, God is witness between me and you*- Perhaps Laban did have some reason for thinking that Jacob might harm his daughters; because it does seem that Jacob's relationship with them was strained as I have pointed out throughout these notes. And we recall his great anger with Rachel at Gen. 30:2. Laban appears to mean what he says here and to believe it; that God sees even when no other witness is present. And the nature of his argument seems to presuppose that just one all-seeing God is in view, which was certainly not what the surrounding culture believed. We dare to hope that through all his weakness, Laban may have turned to the one true God at the end of his life.

Gen 31:51 *Laban said to Jacob, See this heap, and see the pillar, which I have set between me and you*- It was Jacob who set up the pillar, and so we can interpret this as meaning that Laban was setting the significance of these things as being that they marked the boundary between the two families (:52).

Gen 31:52 *May this heap be a witness, and the pillar be a witness, that I will not pass*

over this heap to you, and that you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm- Laban proposed this condition; but God used it to ensure that Jacob and his family would never be tempted to leave the land of promise back towards the East. For they all promised, including Laban's daughters, never to return. And the heap of stones was near the river Euphrates, the border of the land of promise; see on :21. Again we see God as it were needling Jacob towards Canaan, the land and things of the Kingdom. For due to this initiative of Laban, Jacob now cannot return to Mesopotamia. He can only go onwards towards the things of the Kingdom, to Canaan. As we eat the symbols of the covenant at the communion service (:54), we can likewise perceive that God is locking us up into a one way direction towards His Kingdom, making the way of return to the world harder and harder.

Gen 31:53 *The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us*- Here we see the classic mixing of true and false worship. The god of Nahor was an idol (Josh. 24:2); the God of Abraham was Yahweh, whose Name Laban knew. But Laban mixes the two together, and the grammar for "judge between" is plural, as if both 'gods' would judge. Perhaps here Laban means to imply that his god was the god of Nahor, and Jacob's was the God of Abraham.

Then Jacob swore by the fear of his father, Isaac- Jacob unashamedly swore "by the fear of his father Isaac"; the picture of his father trembling in fear of God when he realized his superficiality stayed with Jacob (Gen. 27:33). It seems he spoke publicly of God as the God of his father, for this is the term Laban used to him (Gen. 31:29). The influence of his father and grandfather lasted a lifetime; even in old age, he feared to go down to Egypt because of the precedents set by the bad experience of Isaac and Abraham there; it seems that he delayed to obey Joseph's invitation to visit Egypt because of this, and was possibly rebuked by Yahweh for this: "Jacob, Jacob (such repetition is often a rebuke), Fear not to go down into Egypt" (Gen. 46:3). Likewise Christians can live out parental expectation without much personal faith.

The structure and balance of the statement seems to be emphasizing that Laban swore by his fathers' gods, because he knew no better, and Jacob did likewise. A Baptist is a Baptist because his father is, and at the beginning of spiritual life, a Christian can be one for no better reason than his parents are. Jacob was still at this stage in middle age. And so many of us must pass through that inevitable growth curve of Jacob. That Abraham did finally break with his family is hinted at by the way that Laban speaks of "the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor- may they judge between us (Gen. 31:53 Heb.). Laban recognized that Nahor and Abraham worshipped different gods- whereas we know that initially, they worshipped the same gods.

Gen 31:54 *Jacob offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his relatives to eat bread. They ate bread, and stayed all night in the mountain*- Eating bread was a sign of covenant fellowship. Jacob did this with a self-confessed unbeliever in the true God (see on :53); just as the memorial meal of the new covenant can be used in various ways, and there is no guilt by association through sharing it even with an unbeliever. The calling of "his relatives" may refer to Jacob inviting Laban's family to eat bread as a sign of their agreement to the covenant; they were his relatives by marriage. So the story with Laban ends with a reminder of their unity; see on :55.

Gen 31:55 *Early in the morning, Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them. Laban departed and returned to his place*- This is Laban at his best, and the curtain closes on Laban with us feeling somewhat sorry for him, as he knows he will never see his family again, and we note his fondness for his daughters who were clearly agree with him and saw no point in living further with him (see on :14,15). We note that some of his sons [or grandsons?] were with Jacob now. We get the impression of a humbled Laban returning those 500 km. to Haran, and although he clearly at that time believed in other gods, we are left with the hope that he converted to the one true God with all his heart and repented, or at least regretted, his behaviour with Jacob.

GENESIS CHAPTER 32

Gen 32:1 *Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him*- Jacob had promised the Angel that if he was kept on his way, then Yahweh would be his God. Hence the connection between the Angels and Jacob going on his way. The meeting of Jacob by Angels looked forward to the meeting with Esau; the angels could have rightfully slain Jacob as could have both Laban and Esau, but they did not, because God influenced them by grace not to. These Angels were representative of the forces of Esau who were coming to likewise 'meet' Jacob, and so his reconciliation by grace with the Angels was prophetic of his reconciliation with Esau.

Jacob had promised at Bethel, at least 20 years ago [possibly 40, depending how you read the chronology] that Yahweh would be his God *if* Yahweh brought him back to his father's house. And Yahweh wanted that... even though I suggested on Gen. 31:13 that Jacob may have forgotten that vow ["I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you vowed a vow to me"]. And even though the whole tenor of Jacob's vow was sceptical and not exactly generous towards Yahweh, offering to give Him just a tenth of all he had if Yahweh came through for him. And so the Angels as it were come forth to meet Jacob, who now stands near the Euphrates, the border of the promised land, to welcome him home. As the Angels meet Jacob now, so they had done at Bethel (Gen. 28:12 s.w.); as Jacob was "on his way" (Gen. 32:1 s.w. Gen. 28:20). Jacob names the

places with words which have very similar meanings, Bethel and Penuel. Clearly this meeting with Angels was to help Jacob see that in order to return "home" to the land of promise and the covenant, he had to engage with God, through the Angels, and not just keep ignoring Him. Perhaps this explains the otherwise strange way that Hos. 12:3,4 appears to call Penuel "Bethel": "he struggled with the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication to him. He found him at Bethel, and there He spoke with us". The apparently obvious error is in order to make a point- that the wrestling with Angels was effectively at Bethel, because the Penuel incident was so similar to that at Bethel.

Rabbinic Judaism understands that the one met is greater than those who go forth to meet him, as the one carried is greater than the one who carries. And that is not without Biblical support. We see here the huge respect of God for a man who as yet had not returned to his God. Jacob's last experience with Angels was at Bethel, so this was to remind him of that experience. The Angels had appeared in their hosts to Jacob, as he fled from his brother. Now they appeared as he returns to meet his brother. The meeting with the Angel is clearly parallel with Jacob's meeting with Esau. Jacob perceives this when he says in Gen. 33:10: "I have seen your face, as one sees the face of God, and you were pleased with me". The simple take away is that our attitudes to our brother are of extreme interest to God. Hosts of Angels were involved with Jacob at the point of leaving his brother and reconciling with his brother. God saw Jacob's attitude to Esau as so absolutely significant. His struggle with his brother was his struggle with God. Hosea states this in so many words: “In the womb he grasped the heel of his brother, and in his manhood he struggled with God”.

Gen 32:2 *When he saw them, Jacob said, This is God’s army. He called the name of that place Mahanaim*- The idea of "camps" is developed throughout this section. Jacob and Laban had both camped in Mount Gilead, forming two camps. And the Angel had influenced Laban's camp not to harm Jacob, as explained on Gen. 31:25. But now Jacob perceives that the 'two camps' of Mahanaim had not so much been his and Laban's; but Laban's and this Angelic camp. And he is now to learn that likewise Esau's "camp" had an Angelic "camp" reflecting it in Heaven; and Jacob's camp was hopelessly set against the Angelic camp. See on :7.

Jacob actually saw the Angels. "This is God's host", he commented, with the implication that this sight further humbled him and led him towards the necessary contrition of mind for deliverance from Esau. If "the sign of the son of man" which appears over Israel and leads the tribes of Israel to mourn in repentance is a literal vision of the Angel-cherubim (Mt. 24:30), then this has a basis in Jacob seeing the Angelic vision in the time of his distress, the "time of Jacob's trouble".

Particularly in that watershed night of wrestling, Jacob was our example. The Lord taught that we must all first be reconciled with our brother before we meet with God (Mt.

5:24)- an obvious allusion to Jacob's reconciliation with Esau in his heart, and then meeting with God. We really must *all* go through that process, whether in one night or a longer period. The commentary on that night in Hos. 12 makes this point: "In his (spiritual) manhood (RVmg.) he had power with God... he wept, and made supplication unto him: he (God) found him (Jacob) in Bethel, *and there He spake with us*, even the (same) Lord God of Hosts [armies of Angels]... therefore turn *thou* to *thy* God" as Jacob made Yahweh *his* God and *turned* to Him (vv. 3-6). Jacob is our example. Jacob only truly turned to God that night of wrestling, at the age of 97, despite having been brought up in the ways of the true Gospel, and after having lived almost a century of half commitment to God. We can so easily slip into the same life of half-commitment and never, even for a century, turn to our God with all our heart. Ps. 34:3 promises that the Angel of the Lord will encamp / Mahanaim around *all* His servants, just as the Angel did at Mahanaim for Jacob. Jacob's struggle at [or with] Peniel strikes a chord with each of us. Frank Lake has pointed out that each person struggles to find peace in their relationships with others and also with their God- whether or not they are conscious of those struggles (Frank Lake, *Clinical Theology* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966)). Jacob's experience is clearly set up as representative of our own.

Gen 32:3 *Jacob sent messengers in front of him to Esau, his brother, to the land of Seir, the field of Edom*- "Messengers" translates the same word *malak* just used in :1. If the record intended us to make a distinction between human and divine messengers, surely another Hebrew word would have been used at this point; for there were other words which carry the idea of 'messenger' or 'sent ones' which could have been employed. I suggest therefore that Jacob meets the Angels and then sends some of them to Esau. This impression of apparent command over Angels then sets the context for him then wrestling with one of them; and Hos. 12:4 comments that Jacob "had power over the angel and prevailed".

Through the whole incident with the wrestling Angel, Jacob was led to understand something of the meaning of the Gen. 28 vision of a ladder with Angels (*mal'akim*) ascending *from* him to Heaven and returning to him. He sends messengers (*mal'akim*) to Esau (Gen. 32:3)- and they return to him as it were as a mighty host of an angry army. Hence he named the place Mahanaim, two camps / hosts- for he perceived that Esau's host was indeed the host of God in His Angels. And thus he comments that he saw the face of the Angel / God as if it were the face of Esau (Gen. 33:10). And so God can masterfully arrange incidents in our lives too, which are somehow the summation of all our previous encounters and interactions with people... to teach us His way. This is why there is sometimes a sense of *deja vu* in our lives.

Jacob evidently forgot or resigned the promise that the elder would serve the younger when he sent messengers to Esau, describing himself as Esau's servant, and Esau as his Lord; yet just a few hours later he was pleading in almost unparalleled intensity to

receive the promised blessings of forgiveness. Such oscillating faith and perception of the promises is tragically a characteristic of Israel after the Spirit too.

Gen 32:4 *He commanded them, saying, This is what you shall tell my lord, Esau: 'This is what your servant, Jacob, says. I have lived as a foreigner with Laban, and stayed until now*- Describing Esau as his lord and himself as Esau's servant is all a studied rejection of the blessing he had stolen, that he would be lord over his brothers and they would bow down to him (Gen. 27:29). The way Jacob bows to Esau and asks him to "take away" the blessing in Gen. 33:11 is all tantamount to saying that he was handing back the blessing of the firstborn, because he had experienced the Abrahamic blessing. Having the blessing of forgiveness and fellowship with God was all he needed.

Jacob's desperate humility before Esau is remarkable: "My lord Esau... I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight... peradventure he will accept of me" (Gen. 32:4,5,20 AV). This was a far cry from his nonchalance and cold shouldering of Esau at the time of the theft of the birthright. Likewise the present Jewish attitude towards the Arabs will dramatically change. Jacob sending droves of presents to appease Esau will connect with Israel's frequent appeasement of their aggressive Arab neighbours in the last days, on the road to their final repentance in the time of Jacob's trouble.

Jacob says that he had lived as a foreigner with Laban- for either 20 or 40 years. This is so much the language of the patriarchs, living as passers through and not permanent residents; and that is the spirit of all the true seed. But he says he "stayed until now" with Laban. The Hebrew implies procrastination, as if he had stayed longer than he should have done. Significantly, it is the same word used by Eliezer when he had gone to Laban seeking Rebekah as Isaac's wife; he refused to be 'delayed' by Laban (Gen. 24:56 AV "hinder me not"). Jacob is recognizing that he had remained longer than he should with Laban because initially he had been obsessed with Rachel and had not taken Leah and returned home sooner; and latterly, he had remained longer with Laban as he built up his fantastic wealth with the myth of the rods, which was really Divine blessing. He recognized he had not been as his mother and father in spiritual terms, he had delayed with Laban, whereas Rebekah had followed the Spirit and not allowed Laban to delay her.

"Lived as a foreigner" [AV "sojourned"] has a numerical value of 613, the number of commandments in the Law of Moses. Perhaps we are to deduce that it was through his exile in the East that he learned obedience to God's law.

Gen 32:5 *I have cattle, donkeys, flocks, male servants, and female servants. I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favour in your sight'*- This isn't Jacob boasting; he was hardly in the mood for that. Rather is he wishing to inform Esau that he has indeed

received Divine and human blessing, and wishes to share this with Esau. If indeed the messengers were Angels (see on :3), then Jacob was sending them, relying upon God, in order to find grace before Esau.

Gen 32:6 *The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to your brother Esau. Not only that, but he comes to meet you, and four hundred men with him*- As noted on :4, this is the going and returning of the Angels ["messengers"] upon Jacob which he had seen in the staircase vision of Gen. 28. I suggested on :3 that these messengers were in fact Angels, even if they appeared as men. This suggestion is confirmed by the way this verse seems to differentiate between the Angel-messengers 'coming to Esau' and also, separate to that, 'finding out' that he was coming to meet Jacob with 400 men with him. The Angels coming to meet Jacob in :1 were in a sense representative of Esau coming to meet Jacob. Just as Laban was out to kill Jacob but he was saved by Angelic grace, so Esau was out to kill him. Rebekah had been wrong in thinking that Esau would soon forget it all. Having 400 men with him was really evidence enough that he was out for conflict. The same figure of four hundred men refers to a battallion of soldiers (1 Sam. 22:2; 25:13; 30:10).

Gen 32:7 *Then Jacob was greatly afraid and was distressed*- Jacob has just been "afraid" of Laban (Gen. 31:31), just as he now was of Esau (:11 s.w.). Yet he had learnt that God's Angels had saved him from what he feared; for the Angel appeared to Laban and warned him not to do evil to Jacob. We pass through one experience or test in order to prepare us for the next one; and we see this so clearly in the parallels between the meeting with Laban and now that with Esau.

Jacob is clearly not believing the promise made at Bethel- that Yahweh would indeed bring him back to his father's house / family in peace, i.e. peace with Esau. His chronic fear reflects his lack of faith in the promises to Abraham and himself.

He divided the people who were with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, into two companies- Literally, two camps- Mahanaim. These two camps of Jacob are stressed (:8,10,21).

Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed- This is the basis of "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:7), the "time of trouble" from which Israel will be Angelically "delivered" (Dan. 12:1) after the pattern of Jacob. Yet this "time of trouble" is picked up by the Lord in Mt. 24:21 and applied to the time of great tribulation "such as was not" which will encompass all God's people, natural *and* spiritual. What this means is that the Jacob experience must be gone through by all of us, natural and spiritual Israel; and this will

entail a desperate praying to God and an earnest repentance, recognizing that we have lived out our parental expectations for too long; and above all, a realization that "this God is *our* God", a personalizing of God, a grasping of the wondrous reality of those things which we have previously seen as only so much correct theology and logical theory.

Gen 32:8 *And he said, If Esau comes to the one company, and strikes it, then the company which is left will escape*- "Company" is "camp"; Jacob should have perceived that there was a camp of Angels with him, that we was not alone, but his camp was but a reflection of the heavenly camp of Angels whom he had just "met" as a foretaste of how he would "meet" Esau's camp / company.

Gen 32:9 *Jacob said, God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, Yahweh, who said to me, 'Return to your country, and to your relatives, and I will do you good'*- He came to see that 'God' was Yahweh (cp. notes on Gen. 28:20); he saw that there was only one 'God', and that the vague sense of 'God' which he had was in fact 'Yahweh'. But still he speaks of this Yahweh God as someone else's God. And the promise made was that he would be kept, blessed, and brought to his father's house in peace. Yet he admits that he 'fears' this will not be the case, and he and his family will be 'struck' by Esau (:11). He was being led to realize that he couldn't just plead a part of the promise, and doubt that the rest would be fulfilled too, questioning whether in fact it was God's plan to "do [him] good" and not evil. We likewise have this tendency. And Moses' primary audience, Israel in the wilderness, were likewise challenged to believe that indeed it was God's purpose to do them good and not evil in their latter end (Dt. 8:16). The story of Jacob was to be their encouragement.

Jacob however is still manipulative. Yahweh had promised that "I will be with you", but Jacob turns this into claiming God had promised "to do you good" (Gen. 28:15; 31:13; 32:9). He wanted God to come through for him in material, visible terms. God's promise of His abiding presence was not enough for Jacob.

Gen 32:10 *I am not worthy*- This is new language for Jacob, and we see that indeed as Dt. 8:16 teaches, he had to be humbled before being done good and not evil in his latter end. The same word for "worthy" is used by David when likewise faced with God's covenant promises (2 Sam. 7:19). David was humbled when he received the promises, just as we should be by realizing that we really are in covenant relationship with God. "Who am I...?" was his response (2 Sam. 7:18). Like Jacob, he felt himself unworthy of all the "mercy and truth" shown him in the promises. And we too should be humbled by these promises; for we are in the same new covenant. The word is also used of how Jacob was the "younger" son (Gen. 27:15,42). He surely alludes to that; he had so struggled to rise above being the younger son, but he now finally realizes that he is who

he is before God. And once he realized that, the promise could come true- that the elder would serve the younger. And the little one, Jacob the small / not worthy / younger, would become a great multitude finally (Is. 60:22 s.w.).

Of the least of all- The LXX here is alluded to by Paul when he confesses that he is less than the least of all (Eph. 3:8). Jacob's path is indeed that of us all.

The loving kindnesses, and of all the truth, which You have shown to Your servant; for with just my staff I passed over this Jordan- Strong comments that the word for "staff" here suggests a magical, pagan stick associated with fertility, coming from a root meaning 'to germinate'. Jacob and idolatry go together. The same word occurs when we read that Jacob put the animals before the "rods"; it seems this is an intensive plural for 'the great rod', i.e. his staff. Yet, fascinatingly enough, at the very point when Jacob leaves home to start his wilderness journey with only (in his eyes) his pagan staff to bring him good luck, God as it were takes a snapshot of him, and asks Israel to leave Egypt with a staff in their hands- a strange request, surely, unless it was intended to drive their minds back to Jacob, asking them to emulate his example. Again we see the relevance of the Genesis narrative to its primary audience, Israel in the wilderness.

Jacob saw material prosperity as an indicator of the fulfillment of the promises to him. Because he *was* physically blessed in his life, he came to feel that the promises had been fulfilled, and therefore he almost lost sight of the future aspect of our relationship with God. There are powerful lessons for us here. He saw the promises ("mercies... truth") as having been fulfilled to him already, and therefore he needed the night of wrestling to bring him to the realization that the blessing of *forgiveness* (Mic. 7:20), with its eternal, future implications, was what the promises are really all about. But now perhaps he was realizing this- that he had indeed been materially blessed, but what he needed far more than that was forgiveness for his sin against his brother Esau, both by Esau and God, and peace thereby with God and man. This dimension of the promises suddenly came into focus for him. We likewise can dwell too much upon the material aspect of the promises- resurrection of the body to receive eternal life in future. What we need even more essentially is the blessing of forgiveness and reconcilliation with God and man which will enable that to be so.

And now I have become two companies- Before the wrestling began, Jacob evidently felt that basically, the promises to him had been fulfilled in the material prosperity which he had; for "kindness and truth" is a common idiom for the promises.

Gen 32:11 *Please deliver me from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he come and strike me, and the mothers with the children*- Because Jacob saw, for much of his life, that the fulfillment of God's promises depended on his effort,

he so often doubted them; because, of course, men can never make enough effort. And as noted on :10, he had seen the promises as too much about material blessing rather than the blessing of forgiveness and reconcilliation with God and man which is the more essential part of them. Thus he asks God to deliver him from Esau, because if Esau killed him, the covenant would not be fulfilled. "I fear him, lest he come and strike *me* (first!) and the mothers with the children". The AV and Hebrew have "mother" singular- as if he was still fixated upon Rachel and her son, and those born to her maid. Whether he died or not that night would not have nullified God's promise that his seed would become a multitude (:12) and that God would return him to his father's home in peace and blessing (Gen. 28:20). Until now, Jacob had seen the promises as offering him personal, temporal blessing, rather than having a firm faith in their future and spiritual implications. His wrestling with the Angel was a cameo of this whole attitude; he thought that the promised blessing of God could be achieved through *his* wrestling and struggling. This is why, in the course of that night, he stopped wrestling with the Angel and clung on to him with tears, begging that through pure grace he might receive the spiritual blessing of forgiveness (Hos. 12:2-4).

He effectively hands back the birthright to Esau after the night of wrestling, when he says "Take [away] my blessing..." because he had experienced God's grace. The blessing of the firstborn involved the other brothers bowing down to the firstborn (Gen. 27:29), so Jacob's protracted and emphasized bowing to Esau (Gen. 33:3,6,7) was likewise a way of resigning from the birthright which he had been born trying to grab hold of, and the desire for which had obviously filled his mind. We too are led to resign all our material, secular aspirations and dreams for the sake of God's grace. And in Jacob's case, he was born with the desire for the firstborn status, with his little hand desperately trying to grab his brother's heel to stop his brother being the firstborn. But encounter with God's grace [as happened to Jacob in Gen. 32] is enough to reorient a man away from even his natural, born-with passions and obsessions towards [in this case] materialism and jealousy. In Jacob's case his very name, 'heel catcher', reflected this obsession which was so strong it had become his self-definition; until he encountered God's grace. The blessing of the firstborn as given by Isaac involved the firstborn being "Lord" over his brothers; but Jacob repeatedly calls Esau his "Lord" in Gen. 32,33. Jacob's gifts to his brothers are described with a standard Hebrew word for "gift" [*minha*]; but in Gen. 33:11 Jacob then starts to consciously refer to them as *berakah*, the word for "blessing". And he urges Esau to take [s.w. 'take away'] his "blessing". I discussed on Gen. 25:23 how the blessing of the firstborn never came true- perhaps because Jacob's resignation of the firstborn blessings in Gen. 32,33 was accepted by God.

There can be no doubt that the wrestling experience of our lives will result in our rejection of materialism, and wholehearted devotion to the more spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Jacob began that night by pleading: "*Deliver* me from

Esau", and he concludes by marveling that his life is "preserved (s.w. "deliver") from *God's* wrath (Gen. 32:30). The camp of Esau coming to meet him was the camp of Angels he had met and in a way become superior to as noted on :1,3,4. His concern with immediate physical problems became dwarfed by his awareness of his need for reconciliation with *God*. In essence, this is Paul's teaching concerning peace in the NT; if we have peace with *God,* the wonder of this will result in us having peace in any situation. This is easy to write, so easy. And yet it is still true. If we see the seriousness of sin, and the wonder of being in free fellowship with the Father and Son, we will have peace. The wholehearted repentance and clinging on to God of Jacob that night is used in Hosea 12 as an appeal to all Israel to repent as our father Jacob did, and rise to his level of maturity.

If Jacob's prayer had not been heard, Esau would have smitten "the mother with the children". This will be done by the latter day Esau to those Jews who do not match Jacob's intensity of prayer and repentance (Zech. 14:2), as it happened at the time of the Babylonian invasion which prefigured the Arab attack of the last days (Lam. 5:11).

Gen 32:12 *You said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which can't be numbered because there are so many*'- The promise to make Abraham's seed as the sand of the sea, he saw as implying that his children would not be physically harmed; yet the New Testament teaches that this promise fundamentally refers to Messiah, and those of all nations who would become "in him". At the end of his life, it seems that Jacob learnt this. We note that Jacob doesn't plead so much the promises made to him of personal preservation (Gen. 28:20), but those to Abraham (Gen. 22:17). He had spiritually grown to the point that he no longer viewed Abraham's God as somehow different to his God; he now believes that this God is his God, and the promises made to his ancestor are indeed to him personally, and have real implication for him in his personal crises. This growth is to be our pattern, as we move on from Sunday School Christianity, the faith of our fathers or of those who first taught us the Gospel, to the awesome personal reality- that this is all deeply true for little me.

The latter day "time of Jacob's trouble" is based upon Jacob's meeting with Esau at Jabbok. Jacob's reliance on his own strength and subsequent semi-faith in God's word of promise typifies the Jews of today; his time of trouble truly humbled him, and his wrestling in prayer brought out the great faith which he was potentially capable of, as the last days will do for the Jews. Jacob's prayer is peculiarly apt to a repentant Jewry: "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac (going back to their roots), the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country (since 1948)... I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy

servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan (cp. the Atlantic, Mediterranean; the airways of Eastern Europe; through the immigrant ports of Haifa, Tel Aviv...); and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother (cp. the Arabs), from the hand of Esau: for I fear him... and Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea" (32:9-12 AV). The reference to the Jewish fathers will be the result of listening to the Elijah ministry, which will turn "the heart of the children to their fathers" (Mal. 4:6). And this message of 'back to the promises, the Hope of Israel' is exactly the message we can take to the Jews in our communities today. My dream is that world-wide, we will make this witness.

Gen 32:13 *He lodged there that night, and took from that which he had with him, a present for Esau, his brother*- Jacob is an example of the hurrying man beset with unvoiced inner conflicts trying to buy off his guilt. Struggling with an awful conscience, he sent huge gifts ahead of him to try to appease his offended brother Esau. But he wasn't thereby freed from his bad conscience. He had to wrestle it out with God, with an Angel who at times appeared in the form of both Jacob's father and brother, and come to know his own desperation and God's utter grace and love towards him.

"Present" translates a word more commonly used for sacrifice or offering; if simply a "present" was in view, a different word would be used. Jacob came to see his meeting with Esau as his meeting with God; he met the Angels as if he met Esau (:1), and he makes the connection specific in Gen. 33:10. The presents to Esau were therefore his equivalent of a sacrifice to God, by which he sought reconciliation. He would be taught that the sacrifice was in a sense necessary- for it indeed pacified Esau; but essentially it was his clinging to the Angel in tears begging for grace which was the essential thing.

Gen 32:14 *Two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams*- All told, Jacob gave Esau 550 animals. His wealth in terms of herds was therefore immense; and he had acquired this by the relatively sudden Divine blessing upon his herds in the final part of his life with Laban.

Gen 32:15 *Thirty milk camels and their colts, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals*- Just one camel was considered very valuable; to give 30 plus their colts was a huge gift or sacrifice. I noted on :13 that "present" is better translated "sacrifice". As we learn from Noah's ark, there was a concept of clean and unclean animals, and yet unclean animals such as camels are here effectively offered as sacrifice; and were accepted, as the impure likewise was.

Gen 32:16 *He delivered them into the hands of his servants, every herd by itself, and*

said to his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space between herd and herd- There were five different groups of animals: goats, sheep, camels, cows and donkeys. And then there was Leah and her children, and finally, as the seventh group, Jacob and Rachel. This would connect with Jacob bowing seven times to Esau (Gen. 33:3). "Before me" is literally 'before my face'; and the idea of faces / presence occurs often here in this incident. Jacob had feared the face of Laban and been preserved (Gen. 31:2,5). Now he was preparing for his face to come before the face of Esau, and again with Angelically provided Divine grace, he would see his face and be saved. All this leads up to the significance of the wrestling incident, where for an extended period, Jacob looks at close quarters into the face of an Angel as they wrestle, and due to Jacob's desperate tears of repentance he is preserved to see the face of Esau and finally that of God, by grace. So he comes to marvel that he has seen God face to face and was preserved (Gen. 32:30); and he saw in the Angel's face that of Esau (Gen. 33:10).

Gen 32:17 *He commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau, my brother, meets you, and asks you, saying, 'Whose are you? Where are you going? Whose are these before you?'*- The question 'Who are you?' was exactly that which Isaac had asked Jacob, and he had lied (Gen. 27:18 s.w.). It was the question Jacob had asked the shepherds when he first came to Mesopotamia. Now all the wrestlings of his life, against Isaac, Laban and Esau, were coming together. They same questions were being asked, to take him back to previous failures.

Gen 32:18 *Then you shall say, 'They are your servant, Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord, Esau. Behold, he also is behind us'*- Jacob was of course aware that "the elder shall serve the younger". But he wanted to give away the blessing of the firstborn to Esau (see on Gen. 33:11). He felt quite unworthy of the blessing that the elder should serve the younger and is as it were resigning it. Or it could be that he was driven to realize a future dimension to the fulfilment of the promises. In this life just as he was not to literally inherit the *eretz* for ever, so too, he would not be served by the elder. As Abraham bought land- his own eternal inheritance- in which to bury Sarah, so Jacob may have humbled himself as the younger before the elder, when he knew that in the scheme of eternal realities the opposite would be the case.

Gen 32:19 *He commanded also the second, and the third, and all that followed the herds, saying, This is how you shall speak to Esau, when you find him*- I suggested on :16 that there were in fact five droves of animals sent. Jacob had rightly guessed the psychology of his brother. The droves of 'presents' or offerings did indeed appease Esau and turn away his wrath. But as Esau had come to slay him, so had the Angel who was to wrestle with him. And Moses' own account of how an Angel sought to slay him for his

unfaithfulness to the covenant is surely based upon this. Moses recognized that the path of all the true seed, including himself, was to be based upon Jacob's.

Gen 32:20 *You shall say, 'Not only that, but behold, your servant, Jacob, is behind us'. For, he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face. Perhaps he will accept me*- The appeasing of Esau by sacrifice ["presents"] is not to be taken as meaning that God too was somehow appeased by sacrifice. For God is not an angry deity. Rather, God's anger turned away by Jacob's appeal to His grace with tears, and deep repentance. As noted on :16, Jacob's seeing of Esau's face represented how he saw the Angel's face and was preserved. In the end, the plan to appease Esau using presents / sacrifice wasn't used.

The approach of Esau in angry judgment reflected God's attitude to Jacob (Gen. 33:10). Jacob realized that he must "appease" (Heb. *kaphar*, normally translated 'to make atonement') Esau with gifts of animals. This is surely a confession of sin on his part. But when he offers them to Esau, Esau kindly responds that he "has all". But all the same Jacob wants to make the sacrifice, to give up the material things... and in all this, too, we see an accurate reflection of God's position with Jacob (and indeed all of us).

The Hebrew here is significant: "He said that I may cover his face with the gift to go toward his face; and after I will appear to his face, perhaps he will uplift his face". He had "set his face" to make the journey (Gen. 31:21), and now he realizes that he must meet the face of Esau. We note that Jacob is concerned about the face of Esau; and now he will wrestle with the very face of God. And afterwards reflect that in the Angel's face he saw the face of Esau. His attitude to his brother's face was his attitude to the face of God. And the wrestling match brings him right up against that face. Jacob tried to "appease" Esau with material things, in his own strength; but later he reflects that he was seeking "to find favour / grace in the eyes of my lord" (Gen. 33:8). And so it was with God; he realized that God cannot be appeased, He is not an offended deity who is appeased by sacrifice [the word used for the "presents" Jacob sent Esau is that for sacrifice]; rather must He be appealed to for His pure grace.

Gen 32:21 *So the present passed over before him, and he himself lodged that night in the camp*- "The present" uses the Hebrew term usually and many times translated "offering"; and acceptable offerings come up before the face of Yahweh. That is stressed many times; and the offering here comes before the face; "before *him*" is added by the translators as the phrase as it stands seems strange. But so many times these words offering and "before [the face]" are used together about sacrifice coming acceptably before Yahweh. So there is the hint that this present / sacrifice, although it largely included unclean animals, was acceptable with God.

Gen 32:22 *He rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two handmaids, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford of the Jabbok*- Jacob passed over the ford; but then we find him alone, wrestling with the Angel all night; and then in :31 he passes over the ford again. So I suggest his fear was at such a pitch that he left his family and crossed back over the ford, alone. And it was at that point, so alone and so fearful, that he met God.

'Jabbok' and 'Jacob' are related; the idea is that now Jacob was crossing over from his old name and being obsessed with material blessing and catching his brother's heel; and becoming Israel, the struggler with God. The idea of 'crossing' is emphasized four times in the Hebrew of :22,23; and 'Hebrew' means 'one who crosses over'. And yet in his final blessing of his sons, and demoting Reuben from being firstborn, Jacob shows that he still retained the elements of the old Jacob, and his conversion here was a peak of spirituality and perception that tailed off, as so often happens in human spiritual experience. There are clear similarities with how Jacob had fled from Laban and passed over a river, being again "two camps", and again being saved by God's grace articulated through Angels. Here again Jacob passes over a river. The primary audience of Genesis were Israel in the wilderness, who likewise "rose up in the night" with all they had, and passed over the Red Sea to salvation and the *eretz*. Constantly, Moses was seeking to encourage them from the historical precedents found in the story of the Abraham family. We note that the "two wives" are differentiated from the "two handmaids", even though the wives both gave their maids to Jacob 'to be his wife'. The inspired commentary clearly doesn't accept that, and thereby raises questions over the legitimacy and spirituality of what Jacob [and Abraham] did in this regard.

I noted earlier on Gen. 31:2,35 that Jacob believed in the 'evil eye' and in the standard mythology of his time; he had not yet made Yahweh his God. Which ought to have precluded all such beliefs. And so it cannot be ignored that the folklore of the time believed there were 'river demons' which must sometimes be overcome before crossing a river. Jacob wrestles with the Angel on the banks or on the pebbly shore of the Jabbok, before he himself passes over it. He was being taught that the real demon he had to wrestle with was himself, and his attitudes to his father and brother. And there are in fact no river demons to wrestle with- only God.

Gen 32:23 *He took them, and sent them over the stream, and sent over that which he had*- The language of taking and sending over is exactly that used of how he had crossed the Euphrates before meeting Laban (Gen. 31:21). Truly circumstances repeat; one situation is to strengthen us for the next. "That which he had" meant that Jacob was now stripped of everything. He wasn't even with Rachel; he had sent her over the Jabbok, and was totally alone. We wonder whether he was hatching some desperate plan to try

to return alone toward Haran, or at least to cross the Euphrates back into the land of the east. He was in a similar situation to when 20 or 40 years previously, he had been left alone at Bethel and saw the staircase with Angels.

Gen 32:24 *Jacob was left alone, and wrestled with a man there until the breaking of the day*- Through this, Jacob learnt the real import of the promises. Like us and Elijah, he had to come to a point of being totally alone to perceive how they applied to himself personally (the same Hebrew phrase "left alone" is used in 1 Kings 18:22; 19:10,14). The tension of ideas is between being "left alone", and yet having "a man" with him- clearly an Angel, representing God's presence when a man is truly stripped of all else, just as Jacob had been earlier at Bethel. All Jacob's scaffolding was removed, to leave him "alone" with God, and yet not alone because God was with him. This is the path of all who comprise the Israel of God. Perhaps it was in retrospect that he named the place Mahanaim, the two camps, Jacob's camp and that of his guardian Angels. Jacob came to realize that all his life, he had been wrestling with God, his Angel, and he now came to beg his God for the blessing of forgiveness, implying he had repented. The Hebrew for "wrestle" can mean both to wrestle and also simply to cling on to. It seems he started wrestling, and ended up clinging on to the Angel, desperately begging for salvation and forgiveness. His great physical strength (remember how he alone moved the huge stone from the well, Gen. 29:2) was redirected into a spiritual clinging on to the promises of forgiveness and salvation. And this will be our pattern of growth too. It seems Jacob was familiar with the idea of wrestling with God as being related to prayer. Rachel speaks of how "with wrestlings of God have I wrestled... and I have prevailed" in obtaining a child (Gen. 30:8; AV "great" = Heb. 'elohim'). We know from Hos. 12 that Jacob became aware that he was wrestling with an Angel, not just a man. At first, he thought this was a random stranger. But the random stranger in his life was in fact God. He began wrestling, then the Angel touched his thigh, and then he realized... and clung to the Angel in prayer with tears, begging for mercy, as Hosea describes. And received the Angelic blessing. And so it was a case of the magnificent defeat; the wrestling turned into a desperate clinging to the Angel, refusing to let go until he was blessed / forgiven; even though the promises to Abraham were all about blessing. His wrestling is therefore to be understood as prayer and pleading, although doubtless it started as a physical struggle with an unknown stranger, who he later recognized as an Angel, and then perceived as God Himself. The Angel came to Jacob with the desire to kill him, as Esau (whom the Angel represented) approached him in the same spirit. It was by Jacob's desperate clinging on to God, his pleading, his intense prayer (Hos. 12:4) that he changed God's intention, after the pattern of Moses in later years. The sentence of death we received in Adam perhaps doesn't mean as much to us as it should. Our reversal of it will involve quite some struggle.

Jacob wrestled / struggled in prayer with the Angel. Consider the Biblical emphasis on the idea of struggle, quite apart from the fact that Jacob's night of wrestling is a cameo of the experience of all who would be counted among the Israel of God. Job felt that his prayers were a striving with God (Job 33:13). Christ's prayers in Gethsemane are described as a "striving" (Heb. 12:4); Paul asks the Romans to *strive* in prayer, so that he may be *delivered from unbelievers* (cp. Esau), and *return* to them with a *blessing* (Rom. 15:30). This is all allusion to Jacob. Likewise Epaphras 'strove' for the Colossians in his prayers (Col. 4:12 AVmg.). Our prayers are to give the Father no "rest" (Is. 62:7), no cessation from violent warfare (Strong).

The spiritual weakness of Jacob at the time of the wrestling incident can be inferred from the way Hosea speaks about Jacob in Hosea 12. Hosea paints Jacob as a hypocrite, one who prays to God and yet serves idols. Hosea is recognizing that the sins of the fathers tend to continue in subsequent generations; and yet those generations are still culpable for their sin [alcoholics who blame 'inherited genes' should bear this in mind]. But the point is, Hosea is reasoning upon the basis of the similarities between Jacob and the Israel of his day; and he's urging them not to be like Jacob, not to blame their weakness on the fact Jacob was their genetic ancestor; and perhaps urging them to go and make the conversion to true spirituality which Jacob eventually made.

Gen 32:25 *When he saw that he didn't prevail against him*- God had taught Jacob this idea through Rachel saying that she had wrestled with God's wrestling in order to have a child (Gen. 30:8). Jacob however did not prevail in prayer, and neither did God as it were prevail against or upon him. It was a perfectly equal balance of power [or so it seemed to Jacob]. But then the Angel with a touch demonstrated that this apparent balance of power between God and man was [and is] utterly illusory. Jacob was being made to realize that this was how he had perceived things; but God's grace makes all such balance of power theory irrelevant. Hos. 12:4-6 presents the wrestling as Jacob begging the Angel for grace, and prevailing over God, as it were, by receiving this. So I suggest that the hours of wrestling to a perfectly balanced stalemate was not the time Hos. 12 refers to. Rather it was once Jacob had got to this point of apparent balance of power with God, that the Angel touches his thigh. And then after that, knowing he was utterly beaten, Jacob begs for grace and mercy and will not let the Angel go, looking right into his face, and it is in this sense that he 'prevails' as Hosea says.

Hosea comments that Jacob had power with God and prevailed. But the folklore of the time was full of stories of mighty men who wrestled with the gods- and always lost. But here, with Yahweh the only true God, God allows Himself to be defeated; or, holds Himself back from conquering and humiliating man. And in fact, allows man to win; in that man's collapse and clinging to God for His grace is in fact the magnificent defeat. Until both sides collapse into each other's arms in love and mutual respect. Hence the Hebrew words for "wrestle" and "embrace" are virtually identical. It is therefore hugely

significant that Esau embraces Jacob in Gen. 33:4. His embrace of Jacob reflected how the Angel ended up embracing Jacob, as Jacob clung to him begging for mercy. Esau's embrace of Jacob reflects how after Jacob's repentance, the Angel embraced him. Indeed, all God's wrestling with Jacob was really an embrace of him, all done in love.

This is what it is, to be Israel. When a man starts to wrestle with another, the other has to wrestle against the body that begins wrestling against his. And this is how wrestling becomes such an appropriate image. Man wrestles with God in resisting His ways; and so God ends up wrestling with man. And He never prevails against man by some overpowering use of force or strength; indeed, He allows His Israel to win, although thereby He also wins; and He shows at the end how with just one touch, all our muscular strength is revealed as nothing. The wrestling was at night, recalling how it was in the darkness of the womb that he had grasped at Esau's feel; and how he had used the darkness of his father's blindness to deceive him and grasp the blessing of the firstborn. He now realizes that the only blessing he desperately wants is that of God's mercy and forgivenss ["I will not let you go until you bless me", :26].

He touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled- "Wrestled" translates a Hebrew word which is a form of that for 'Jacob'. Jacob's wrestling, trying by sleight of hand to win in his own strength, was what Jacob was all about. He 'Jacobed' against God. To touch the thigh is an image used elsewhere in the Jacob story, where the same Hebrew word for "thigh" is used: When Abraham makes his servant touch his thigh to promise to not marry Isaac to a Canaanite (Gen. 24:2); and about Jacob asking Joseph to promise not to bury him in Egypt (Gen. 47:29). So to touch the thigh is to promise. God through the Angel was reaffirming the promises to Jacob- even whilst he was pitting all his strength against God. And that touch of the thigh disabled Jacob, making him give up all reliance upon human strength. Our response to being sworn to by God has to be the same. We limp the rest of our lives, clinging on to His grace. We would have expected God to wait until Jacob realized he was fighting God, beg for forgiveness- and only then reconfirm the covenant with him. But God's grace is such that whilst Jacob was pitting all his strength against God, God reconfirms the covenant. Grace takes the initiative. We have the same experience. Jacob was born the seed of Abraham, but we likewise are the seed of Abraham, in the same covenant, through baptism. Jacob had [rather manipulatively] pleaded the promise to Abraham that his seed would be "as the sand of the sea", reasoning as if that promise was also made to himself. When that had not yet been promised to Jacob personally. So Jacob was slowly moving towards accepting he was the seed of Abraham; and God moved towards him in leaps and bounds. He does the same with us.

The sign of circumcision was given as the confirmation that the promise regarding a son would be fulfilled. Abraham had to figuratively cut off part of his vital organ in order to be

assured that *God* would provide a son for him. Accepting God's promises means that we too must give up our human strength and attempts to fulfil them. Likewise when Jacob was given the repeated covenant acceptance, he was wounded in his "thigh" and thereafter walked with a limp. "It is not impossible that the damage to the "thigh" means Jacob was assaulted in his vital organs. Thus, the "limp" refers to the mark left on his very manhood and future". So the touching of the thigh may have removed his virility; whatever, it was a touch at a very deeply internal point. God likewise touches us deep within, to convict us of our weakness. And we walk through the rest of life limping, just as we have a choice to fall upon the stone of Christ and be broken, or have that stone fall upon us and grind us to powder.

It has been observed: "Three biblical scholars, S. Gervitz, L. Eslinger, and S. H. Smith, also argue that
Jacob's injury occurs to his genitals.The *kap yareh*, they point out, refers either to the "hand of the thigh"—the penis, or to the "hollow, pouch-like" scrotum. Citing J. Skinner, L. Eslinger suggests that when Genesis says that Jacob's hip was put out (32:25), what it means is that "Jacob had a hernia at the place of the scrotum's attachment to the body in the course of the struggle." This interpretation of Jacob's injury as sexual has far-reaching implications…". Possibly we could argue that his wasted years with Laban were a result of his sexual list for Rachel, and now this was revealed to him- by one gentle touch of the Angel.

Gen 32:26 *The man said, Let me go, for the day breaks*- We enquire why the Angel was so urgent that Jacob stop wrestling before daybreak. It could be that the idea was that Jacob was to be slain by the Angel unless he learnt his lesson before daybreak. But it was clear Jacob wasn't going to do so. But the Angel wanted to bless him; hence he urges him to give up his wrestling with God before daybreak. Rather like Gen. 19:22,23 could imply that the Angel could do nothing to destroy Sodom until Lot was in Zoar at day break. So we see again how God urges Jacob to meet the preconditions for salvation, despite Jacob struggling against submitting to them. Just as Abraham was dragged kicking and screaming, as it were, from Ur to Canaan. We see here the essence of Yahweh, the God who so desperately wants to save, and who was to be so exactly manifested in His Son Yahshua, 'Yah saves'.

Jacob said, I won't let You go, unless You bless me- Notice the chronology of events and the explanation give on :25. They wrestle but neither wins. They are apparently at perfect balance between Divine strength and Jacob's. Then the Angel touches Jacob, and after that Jacob knows he is humanly beaten. But he clings on to the Angel begging for mercy and in this way 'had power with God' as Hosea 12 says; he in that sense "had power over the Angel" and prevailed, refusing to let the otherwise victorious Angel go, unless he blesses him with forgiveness. There is a strong link between blessing and forgiveness;

we think of Pharaoh asking to be blessed (Ex. 12:32), and David speaking of the blessedness of forgiveness (Rom. 4:6). Acts 3:25,26 makes explicit that the Abrahamic blessing was essentially of forgiveness. Having been made powerless and beaten, Jacob clung on to the Angel [this is one possible understanding of the Hebrew translated 'wrestle']. And it was this which paradoxically gave Jacob the upper hand.

Gen 32:27 *He said to him, What is your name? He said, Jacob*- There is reason to think that the Angel also reminded Jacob of his father Isaac; for it was Isaac who had asked Jacob 'Who are you?', and he had lied in saying 'I am Esau'. His father had loved him less than Esau; and he had struggled with his father because of this. The way Jacob begs the Angel to bless him recalls how he so earnestly wanted to obtain his father's blessing. Jacob's pleading for blessing with the Angel would have reminded him of Esau's desperate pleading for the blessing from Isaac.. But the struggle with his father, as with his brother, was all now revealed as essentially a struggle with God. All these things were restimulated in Jacob's mind by the wrestling. The Angel asks him what his name is, in exactly the same way as Isaac had asked him 20 or 40 years before. At that time he had lied. But now he truthfully answers the Angel: "Jacob", the deceiver. And then he begs for the blessing of forgiveness. He had struggled with men, with Isaac and Isaac's influence of Jacob's spirituality, with his brother Esau, with Laban, and with himself. And the Angel said that in all these struggles with men, Jacob had ultimately won in that he had confessed he was a deceiver, a sinner.

Gen 32:28 *He said, Your name will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have fought with God and with men, and have prevailed*- As explained on :25-27, after reaching a stalemate where Jacob did not prevail against God, the Angel touched his thigh and he became powerless. But he desperately clung to the Angel, peering into his face, and begged for the true Abrahamic blessing of forgiveness and fellowship with God. And this was granted. So the paradox was that by not prevailing in his own strength, he did prevail. This is why he was renamed "Israel". "Israel" effectively means something like 'God rules' (Gen. 32:22-28) (James Muilenburg, *The Way Of Israel* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) p. 45); His people of the new Israel are those over whom He rules. We therefore are under His Kingdom now, if we accept Christ as King over our lives. The name was a testament to the fact that in a way, God had prevailed; in another sense, Jacob had prevailed. We see here the endless mutuality between God and man, once we surrender. He wins, and we win. "With God and with men" confirms the idea often presented in this section, that the Angel represented men like Isaac, Laban and Esau with whom Jacob had wrestled.

But the meaning of 'Israel' is hard to define; just as the true nature of God's people, His "Israel", is hard to define. It can mean 'God struggles' just as much as it means 'struggler with God'. It can also imply 'let *El* rule / prevail / win'. Israel are those who let Him rule

and have His way in their lives. It perfectly reflects the mutuality of man's relationship with God. Our struggle with Him means that He inevitably, axiomatically struggles with us. "Israel" is the epitomy of the whole Divine-human encounter. "Israel" likewise can mean 'God struggles' as well as 'God rules', i.e. wins the struggle. God wrestles with us because we wrestle with Him. But because He struggles / wrestles, He must win / rule. For God shall not be ever defeated. And His 'winning' means our salvation and blessing, as happened with Jacob. This incident gave birth to the whole name 'Israel'; it is therefore programmatic of every man's walk with God. And so Hosea says, commenting on this incident, that there God spoke with us; or as the Hebrew means, “There He keeps on speaking with us". This is what it is, to be Israel. And I suggest that "Israel", with all it implies, is the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham to make his name great. Great in significance, freighted with God's grace and human struggle against it. The question is whether man, as Jacob, wants to become Israel, or remain fearful Jacob in the darkness, trying to manage life in our own strength.

Gen 32:29 *Jacob asked him, Please tell me Your name. He said, Why is it that you ask what My name is? He blessed him there*- The Hebrew idea of a name is connected with the idea of who a person essentially is. In Biblical Hebrew, one would enquire after a person's literal name by asking "Who (*mi*) are you?"- not, as was asked of Jacob, "What (*mah*) is your name?" (Gen. 32:28). This question to Jacob was therefore a request for him to ask himself who he really was. God's Name in this sense is to become part of ours- hence after God's declaration of His Name to Moses, the Israelites started to insert parts of the Yah / Jah name into their own. Jacob's request to know [effectively] God's Name is not answered with a specific word or lexical item. His natural quesion would have been "Will you please not harm me?". Instead he asks for the Name of his opponent. He guesses it's an Angel. It is God. And he asks for the Name, because he senses that he needs the grace which he guesses is in that Name. It is answered by giving Jacob a blessing by grace, and that blessing is of forgiveness. Jacob of course would have perceived that "This is Yahweh"; but Yahweh is not so much a word [and all who are obsessed with the Name *per se* are missing this], but an intention, the Divine intention to bless by grace. That is His Name, His "I will". And it came to full term in Yahoshua, 'Yah saves'. Jacob's statement 'I am Jacob', 'the twister', is effectively a statement of repentance. He twice lied to his father, "I am Esau". Now he is honest about who he really is. God's response is to bless, to forgive, and to assure Jacob that this is effectively His eternal Name. And "Jacob have I loved...". In fact all obsession with pinning God down to a lexical item like Jehovah or Yahweh is utterly misplaced.

Manoah had to learn the same in Jud. 13:17-19: "And Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, “What is your name, so that, when your words come true, we may honor you?” And the angel of the LORD said to him, “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?”". The Name is to be experienced, not mouthed off as a word, as a mere lexical item. "Why do you ask my Name?", as here with Jacob, is a rhetorical question.

'Why do you ask it? Because you want to just think that relationship with Me is a question of knowing a word. But it's more wonderful than that. Experience My grace and blessing, and then you will know My Name'. Likewise when Moses asked to be given the name of God in order to tell Israel who had met with him, he was told a seven fold series of "I will..." statements. God is who He is to us in our experience of His salvation."I am who I am" *to you*, in experience. The obsession with pronouncing the Name, as seen in the "Jehovah's Witnesses" and other groups, is thus presented as primitive and totally misplaced.

Jacob knew the Yahweh Name, he knew the name El Shaddai (Ex. 6:3); surely he was asking for a deeper exposition of the Name. He realized his need to draw closer to God. But the Angel grants him the blessing of forgiveness, and says that Jacob doesn't need such an exposition, because he now knows the character of God: he has received such grace and forgiveness and future assurance. This is the Name / character of God revealed. Thus Jacob realized that he knew the theory of God, but not the practice. Latter day Jacob, natural and spiritual, are little better. In so many ways, so often, we know but don't believe; and it has been commonly observed that the problem with us is that we are right in doctrine but very weak in practice. This shouldn't surprise us. It was exactly the characteristic of our father Jacob. But the God of Bethel is our God too, and will bring us through to a deeper maturity. That night, Jacob reached "manhood", spiritual maturity (Hos. 12:3 RV).

Gen 32:30 *Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, he said, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved*- Jacob's comment at the end of the wrestling experience was that "my life is preserved"; and that Hebrew phrase is so often used by David (Ps. 7:2; 22:20; 25:20; 33:19; 56:13; 86:13; 97:10; 120:2). Likewise Jacob commented that the experience had shown him that God had been gracious unto him (Gen. 33:11); and *that* Hebrew phrase too is a catch phrase of David's (Ps. 4:1; 6:2; 9:13; 25:16; 26:11; 27:11; 30:8; 31:9 and many others). We too can make Jacob our hero, as David did.

It could be that 'seeing face to face' is being used in the same way as in 2 Kings 14:8, where armies 'see each other face to face', i.e. in confrontation. He is marvelling that he has had confrontation with God, both that night and throughout his earlier life- but has been preserved by grace.

Jacob will tell Esau, “I see your face as seeing the face of God” (Gen. 33:10). Clearly He saw what happened at Peniel, 'the face of God', as having been a foretaste of meeting Esau- and being saved from rightful death by grace. The Angels went out to meet him (:1) just as Esau came out to meet him. His meeting with God [in the Angel] was his meeting

with his brother. Again he was shown that wrestling with our brother, even in our own mind, is actually wrestling God. We have here an Old Testament form of the explicit New Testament teaching, that our attitude to our brother is our attitude to God. The blessing of Num. 6:24-26 associates God's face with blessing and peace. And Jacob saw that face. We can infer from this that Esau was totally forgiving towards Jacob, because Esau's faith reflected that of God. We note that in wrestling, Jacob would have looked right into the face of the Angel, from very close quarters. This is how close we can get to God in our struggles. It is not possible for man to see God's face (Ex. 33:20). The idea is that Jacob has done the impossible. Without realizing it at the time; just as at Bethel he felt that "The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not" (Gen. 28:16). The experience of grace and blessing is the experience of that which is impossible by any other means. The Hebrew for "preserved" is that used in :11, where Jacob prays to be preserved from Esau. The wrestling with the Angel and obtaining blessing and victory through surrender... was understood as prophetic of Jacob's preservation from Esau, and final victory over him.

Gen 32:31 *The sun rose on him as he passed over Peniel, and he limped because of his thigh*- Paul may well allude to Jacob in speaking of how his "thorn in the flesh" humbled him. The same word for "limped" is used of how latter day repentant Israel will also limp, and yet likewise be saved by grace from their neighbouring enemies, whose ancestors were Laban and Esau (Mic. 4:6,7; Zeph. 3:19). Again we have a case of 'Bible television', of the text enabling us to envisage the situation, and focusing in upon an individual; and here the spotlight is upon Jacob limping, silhouetted against the dawn of a new day and worldview for him.

Yahweh had earlier promised Jacob, quite simply: "I will do you good", and had undertaken to return Jacob. But this involved His meeting with Jacob and wrestling with him, and wounding him so that he limped the rest of his life. All this was the path needed [because of Jacob's being 'Jacob'], in order to ultimately 'do him good'. And as Hosea notes, "There He spake with *us*" each one. We limp into God's Kingdom. All the calls and claims to triumphalism, to healing and blessing *now*, are rather missing the whole point.

Gen 32:32 *Therefore the children of Israel don't eat the sinew of the hip, which is on the hollow of the thigh, to this day, because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip*- This refers to the nerve tendon which extends from the thigh down the leg to the ankle. But I suggested above that the wound to the thigh may have been an equivalent to circumcision, and could refer to damage to Jacob's reproductive organ. The Hebrew for "thigh" is used in this way both specifically (Gen. 24:2; 47:29) and more figuratively when it is the same word often translated "loins" in the context of begettal of a child. As with us, it was the touch of Jacob at his most sensitive which humbled him,

and made him give up his attempts to justify himself in his own strength. This is why we often fail, or made to realize our weakness, at what we may think of as our strongest point. The careful driver runs a red light, the capable craftsman makes a foolish mistake.

GENESIS CHAPTER 33

Gen 33:1 *Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau was coming, and with him four hundred men. He divided the children between Leah, Rachel, and the two handmaids*- We should read this as reminding us that Jacob had already divided up his family. For he had sent them over the Jabbok whilst he wrestled alone with the Angel. Jacob had already been informed by the "messengers", who I suggested were Angels, that Esau was coming with 400 men. We imagine Jacob counting them and accepting that the Angel messenger had told the truth; although he perhaps hoped they had got it wrong. I suggested on Gen. 32 that "four hundred men" is a term elsewhere used about a military brigade. The fact Esau keeps coming with this large group of soldiers suggests that Jacob's attempts at appeasement by "presents" [the same Hebrew word for "sacrifice"] had been unsuccesful. All he could do was cast himself upon Esau's grace. And so it had been in his wrestling with the Angel, just one of the army of [400?] Angels who had come to meet him. His attempts to appease God by sacrifice were no good; and he had thrown himself upon God's grace, and succeeded. It all looked ahead to how reconcilliation with God was to be by grace and not sacrifice.

Gen 33:2 *He put the handmaids and their children in front, Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph at the rear*- We see here his favouritism; not only of Rachel and Joseph, but his consideration that the sons of the maids were somehow second class children. We again see how his wives' attempt to give him their maids 'as his wife' was mistaken and didn't work out happily in the end.

Gen 33:3 *He himself passed over in front of them*- Before wrestling the Angel, he had been behind them, having sent them in front of him; and I suggested his plan had been to try to return alone to Haran. But after his experience of grace with the Angel, he believed that if he had seen God's face, peering right into it close up as he [as it were] wrestled with God, and had been accepted by grace... so it was going to be with Esau. And so he changes plan, and instead of putting himself last, passes in front of them all. This explains the force of "he himself".

And bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother- Jacob's new appreciation of the blessing of forgiveness is reflected by the way in which he

effectively tells Esau that he is handing back to him the birthright, the physical blessings. The way he bows down seven times to Esau is rejecting the blessing he had obtained by deceit from Isaac: "Be master over your brethren, and let your mother's sons bow down to you" (Gen. 27:29). His experience of the blessing of God's grace was sufficient for him, and he rejected all else. I noted on Gen. 32:16 that the seven bows were intended to be preceded by the six droves of gifts; but now, apparently, Jacob forgets that plan and himself goes to Esau. "Present" is the word more usually translated sacrifice or offering. So Jacob as it were makes the sacrifice but realizes that grace removes its power, and goes himself to the front. Jacob casting himself upon grace is every man. The image of a man falling seven times to the earth, and then arising in spiritual triumph, is used about every believer in Prov. 24:16.

Gen 33:4 *Esau ran to meet him, embraced him, fell on his neck, kissed him, and they wept*- Jacob's meeting with the Angels (Gen. 21:1) and then with the Angel was all predictive of his meeting with Esau. He feared God's judgment, as he feared Esau. But in a beautiful way, his fears are met. God runs to meet the sinner, meeting us in Christ, by grace; and Esau Jacob's rightful enemy meets him in tears, probably much to the shock of the 400 men with Esau. The primary audience of Genesis was Israel in the wilderness, who likewise were called to go and meet God and yet feared to do so because of their conscience of their sins and idolatry (Ex. 19:17 s.w.). The same word for "meet" is used of how Edom, which is Esau, came out to "meet" Israel with the sword (Num. 20:18,20), as did other formidable enemies of Israel as they travelled through the wilderness (Dt. 1:44; 2:32; 3:1). The encouragement was that what seemed impossible odds would somehow be overcome.

The Lord Jesus reflected the Father’s positive spirit in the way He framed the parable of the prodigal son to feature the Heavenly Father as running out to meet the returning son, falling on his neck and kissing him…in *exactly* the language of Gen. 33:4 about Esau doing this to Jacob. The connection can’t be denied; but what was the Lord’s point? Surely He was willing to see something positive in the otherwise fleshly Esau at that time, He as it were took a snapshot of Esau at that moment…and applied it to God Himself, in His extravagant grace towards an unworthy Jacob. This was how positive minded the Lord was in His reading of even the darkest characters.

At the end of Jacob's life, Joseph also falls on his neck and weeps for him, just as the Father does to the repentant prodigal (Gen. 46:29). Jacob's neck had once been covered with animal skin in the deceit of his father Isaac (Gen. 27:16), and Esau too wept on that same neck, the neck which had been used to deceive and rob Esau. And Joseph was to weep upon it too, after Jacob has again sent an ambassage ahead of him to Joseph as he did to Esau (see on Gen. 46:28). These otherwise strange connections with Jacob's neck would have served to show him that through his acceptance of the spiritual seniority of his great son Joseph, he had indeed been forgiven of all this miserable past.

The Hebrew word for 'wrestle' and for 'embrace' are the same. I discussed on Gen. 32:25 how Esau's embrace of Jacob reflects how after Jacob's repentance, the Angel embraced him. Indeed, all God's wrestling with Jacob was really an embrace of him, all done in love.

Hosea uses the wrestling incident as an appeal for Israel / Jacob to come to intimacy with God. The idea of the wrestling incident is that the Angel like Esau came out to destroy Jacob because of his deceit- which is a major complaint of God against Israel, and Hosea against Gomer. Jacob began life in the womb in a wrestle with Esau, and the Angel represents Esau. Hosea repeatedly warns that destruction is just around the corner for Israel. The Assyrians / Babylonians are about to pounce, like an eagle hovering above God's house. But Jacob wrestled with the Angel, and ended up getting a blessing, with his life preserved. And in the wrestling, both Jacob and the Angel changed or matured. And so it could have been between God and Israel. The tortured mind of God revealed in Hos. 11:8 was reflected in the Angel whilst wrestling with Jacob. Jacob is alluded to, as he was a deceiver like Gomer / Israel had been. Yet even he came to faith and covenant with God, as Gomer / Israel could do. And just as the wrestling produced literal intimacy between Jacob and the Angel, so intimacy between God and Israel, as between Hosea and Gomer, could be created. Jacob had been a wrestler from the start. The Hebrew word used for wrestling is *abaq*, related to the word *yabboq*, the Jabbok river which Jacob crossed to wrestle with the Angel. And these words likewise sound like 'Jacob', *Yaaqob*. The word for "heel" likewise is *aqeb*, and Jacob's first wrestling was with the heel of Esau. In Gen. 33:4, Jacob embraces Esau, and the word *habaq* is used. The wrestling [*abaq*] resulted in the intimacy of embrace, *habaq*. Just as it did with the Angel. Literally, the Angel *'yabboq*'ed Jacob, he Jacobed Jacob. And yet "he [Jacob]struggled with" contains the Hebrew letters for "Israel". Jacob 'Israeled' the Angel. This is what it is to be Israel, to struggle with God and attain His grace, as God 'Jacobed' Jacob. We have here a picture of the mutual intimacy achieved through the wrestling.

Gen 33:5 *He lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are these with you? He said, The children whom God has graciously given your servant*- As noted on :3, Jacob's original plan of sending droves of presents in front of him and then appearing last of all... had been changed by the wrestling experience. Knowing God's grace, Jacob had presented himself alone. But as the droves pulled up behind him, Esau naturally enquired about them.

Jacob called Esau his master by describing himself as Esau's servant, in evident rejection of the Divine promise they both knew: that Esau would serve Jacob (Gen. 25:23). And yet at this very point, Jacob speaks of "the children which God has graciously given your servant"; and this scene is cited in Is. 8:18 as a type of Christ and

his spiritual children of promise. In similar vein, Is. 49:21 uses this scene as a picture of the faithful remnant among Jacob in the last days. Jacob was reflecting his experience of grace; he realized that his many children were a gift of grace. All the human devices used to produce them- marrying two sisters, sleeping with their maids, mandrakes etc.- he now realized were not the real source of them. This blessing was solely and totally of God's gracious gift.

Gen 33:6 *Then the handmaids came near with their children, and they bowed themselves*- The original plan had been that they would all meet Esau alone, and then Jacob would come. The wives were after all Esau's relatives. But as explained on :3, Jacob's encounter with grace the previous night had led to a radical change of plan. He came to Esau first, and the wives and children afterwards. They too bowed down, as if recognizing that they were inferior to Esau and he was master of all their clan.

Gen 33:7 *Leah also and her children came near, and bowed themselves. After them, Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed themselves*- The Hebrew for "came near" is used insistently and multiple times in the record of Jacob's coming near to Isaac and deceiving Esau out of the blessing (Gen. 27:21,22,25,26,27). The whole incident is an undoing of the sin, an attempted repentance.

The other women go forward first, followed by their children. But Joseph went in front of Rachel. Perhaps even as a child, he felt himself to be the saviour of others. Or perhaps Rachel was so utterly self absorbed that she used her child as a human shield.

Gen 33:8 *Esau said, What do you mean by all this company which I met? Jacob said, To find grace in the sight of my lord*- "Present" is the Hebrew word usually translated sacrifice or offering. Esau, like God, was saying that such sacrifice was not needed for reconciliation. Grace is found in the face of God and man not by sacrifice, but by a broken and contrite spirit. David had to learn the same.

Jacob admits he had sent the presents in order to buy grace, but Esau makes it clear that such grace cannot be bought, and he is not interested in having them. Esau in this way exactly reflects God's position with Jacob. Esau may be asking a rhetorical question: 'Why are you trying to buy grace from me with these presents? You can't buy it. I'm giving it'. The meaning of the gifts, and their acceptance, is therefore that we give in response to what God has given us- and not in order to attain His gifts in the first place.

Gen 33:9 *Esau said, I have enough, my brother; let that which you have be yours*- God likewise is not in need of presents / sacrifice. "Enough" is the same Hebrew word translated "elder" in the controversial promise that the elder would serve the younger (Gen. 25:23). Esau may be saying that he considers himself hugely blessed, and doesn't therefore need any more confirmation that he was in fact the elder; he felt Isaac's

material blessing of the firstborn had come true for him in any case. Esau therefore also learnt something through this incident; he came against Jacob not to get the blessing, as he felt he already had received it; but for revenge. But he now realizes that having God's blessing means that revenge is not something that is necessary.

Esau's statement that he has everything may be a way of saying that he has anyway received the blessing of the firstborn and therefore all Jacob's machinations to get it had not achieved anything anyway. This would also be a tacit recognition that Isaac's much coveted words of blessing had not come true for Jacob anyway.

Gen 33:10 *Jacob said, Please no, if I have now found grace in your sight, then receive my present at my hand, because I have seen your face, as one sees the face of God*- Jacob is brought to understand that it was not his gifts that had earned him acceptance by God and Esau. It was of grace alone. But his response to that grace was to give perhaps all he had materially.

Jacob recognizes that the second stage of his wrestling with the Angel, when his natural strength had been neutralized and he was close up face to face with God begging for grace, had effectively been seeing the face of Esau. "Present" is the Hebrew usually translated offering or sacrifice. Jacob had at the last minute reversed his plan of sending presents / sacrifice ahead of him to appease Esau; see on :3. He realized that sacrifice of itself would not enable sinful man to meet the face of God nor his offended brother. Only a desperate, face to face appeal for grace could do that. But having learnt that, he all the same wants to give the present / sacrifice. And this should be our motivation too for any offering we bring. Of itself, it cannot reconcile us to God and man. We offer it in gratitude for grace. And this would have been so relevant to the primary audience of Genesis, Israel in the wilderness who were hearing commandments about sacrifice.

And you were pleased with me- "Pleased" in Hebrew carries the idea of satisfying debt, and is often used of how God "accepted" sacrifice. So the purposeful paradox of ideas is: 'Because you accepted me without sacrifice, you accepted by broken and contrite heart as sacrifice, then please in any case accept my material sacrifice'. And this was exactly what David was brought to understand when forgiven regarding Bathsheba and Uriah. The unexpected nature of Esau's forgiveness and acceptance is therefore felt by Jacob to be a reflection of God's forgiveness of him. His wrestling with the Angel reflected his wrestling with his father, and with his brother. All of that was wrestling with God. God's forgiveness, when properly perceived, has a similar unexpected quality to it, as explained well by C.S. Lewis in *Surprised by Joy*.

The Angel commented that Jacob had struggled with both God and men, and had

prevailed. Which men? Jacob recognized that the face of the Angel represented that of Esau, his brother with whom he had emotionally struggled all his life. The struggle in the womb had been lived out all their lives to this point. Perhaps the Angel's face appeared like that of Esau? Jacob saw the face of the Angel as it were the face of Esau- implying that the Angel he wrestled with was Esau's guardian Angel. He was being more obliquely shown the truth which New Testament passages like 1 Jn. 4:12,20,21 state plainly: that our relationship with our brother is our relationship with God. And Jacob was thus repenting of how badly he'd treated his brother.

The parable of the prodigal contains multiple allusions to the record of Jacob and Esau, their estrangement, and the anger of the older brother [Esau] against the younger brother. K.E. Bailey, *Jacob And The Prodigal* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003) lists 51 points of contact between the Jacob / Esau record and the prodigal parable. There is a younger and an elder son, who both break their relationships with their father, and have an argument over the inheritance issue. Jacob like the prodigal son insults his father in order to get his inheritance. As Jacob joined himself to Laban in the far country, leaving his older brother Esau living at home, so the prodigal glued himself to a Gentile and worked for him by minding his flocks, whilst his older brother remained at home with the father. The fear of the prodigal as he returned home matches that of Jacob as he finally prepares to meet the angry Esau. Jacob's unexpected meeting with the Angel and clinging to him physically is matched by the prodigal being embraced and hugged by his father. Notice how Gen. 33:10 records how Jacob felt he saw the face of Esau as the face of an Angel. By being given the ring, the prodigal "has in effect now supplanted his older brother" (A.J. Hultgren, *The Parables Of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) p. 79); just as Jacob did. As Esau was "in the field" (Gen. 27:5), so was the older brother.

What was the Lord Jesus getting at by framing His story in terms of Jacob and Esau? The Jews saw Jacob as an unblemished hero, and Esau / Edom as the epitome of wickedness and all that was anti-Jewish and anti-God. The Book of Jubilees has much to say about all this, as does the Genesis Rabbah (see e.g. Jacob Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary To The Book Of Genesis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985) Vol. 3 p. 176). The Lord is radically and bravely re-interpreting all this. Jacob is the younger son, who went seriously wrong during his time with Laban. We have shown elsewhere how weak Jacob was at that time. Jacob was saved by grace, the grace shown in the end by the Angel with whom he wrestled, and yet who finally blessed him. As Hos. 12:4 had made clear, Jacob weeping in the Angel's arms and receiving the blessing of gracious forgiveness is all God speaking to us. The older brother who refused to eat with his sinful brother clearly represented, in the context of the parable, the Jewish religious leaders. They were equated with Esau- the very epitome of all that was anti-Jewish. And in any case, according to the parable, the hero of the story is the younger son, Jacob, who is extremely abusive and unspiritual towards his loving father, and is saved by sheer

grace alone. This too was a radical challenge to the Jewish perception of their ancestral father Jacob.

The parable demonstrates that both the sons despised their father and their inheritance in the same way. They both wish him dead, treat him as if he isn't their father, abuse his gracious love, shame him to the world. Both finally come to their father from working in the fields. Jacob, the younger son, told Laban that "All these years I have served you... and you have not treated me justly" (Gen. 31:36-42). But these are exactly the words of the older son in the parable! The confusion is surely to demonstrate that both younger and elder son essentially held the same wrong attitudes. And the Father, clearly representing God, and God as He was manifested in Christ, sought so earnestly to reconcile both the younger and elder sons. The Lord Jesus so wished the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees to fellowship with the repenting sinners that He wept over Jerusalem; He didn't shrug them off as self-righteous bigots, as we tend to do with such people. He wept for them, as the Father so passionately pours out His love to them. And perhaps on another level we see in all this the desperate desire of the Father and Son for Jewish-Arab unity in Christ. For the promises to Ishmael show that although Messiah's line was to come through Isaac, God still has an especial interest in and love for all the children of Abraham- and that includes the Arabs. Only a joint recognition of the Father's grace will bring about Jewish-Arab unity. But in the end, it will happen- for there will be a highway from Assyria to Judah to Egypt in the Kingdom. The anger of the elder brother was because the younger son had been reconciled to the Father without compensating for what he had done wrong. It's the same anger at God's grace which is shown by the workers who objected to those who had worked less receiving the same pay. And it's the same anger which is shown every time a believer storms out of an ecclesia because some sinner has been accepted back...

Gen 33:11 *Please take away my blessing that I brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have all things. He urged him, and he took it*- Jacob now saw God as the one who graciously gave physical blessings, not simply to fulfil Divine predictions for the sake of it, but in order to pour out His grace. And that grace was not so much gifts of material things as the God who gives spiritual grace / mercy to undeserving sinners like himself. Thus a growing appreciation of grace was a facet of Jacob's perception of God and spiritual growth.

It's a shame that the English translations often conceal Jacob's rejection of the physical blessing here. The Hebrew for "Take" is 51 times translated "take away". The only ultimately important thing is grace and right standing with God; that now for Jacob was having "all things". The Hebrew words translated "take (away)" and "blessing" are exactly the same as in Gen. 27:35,36 AV: "(Jacob) came with subtlety, and hath *taken away* thy

blessing... Is not he rightly named Jacob? he *took away* my birthright, and now he hath *taken away* my *blessing*". Yet now Jacob is saying: 'I have experienced the true grace of God, I stand forgiven before Him, I see His face in His representative Angel, I therefore have all things, so I don't want that physical, material, temporal blessing I swindled you out of'. This is why Jacob pointedly calls Esau his “Lord” in the record. He was accepting Esau as the firstborn. And Paul, in his spiritual maturity, came to the same conclusion; he counted all the materialism of this world as dung, that he might win Christ and be found in him, clothed with his gracious righteousness. Because God had dealt graciously with him, he felt that he had “all things”. All he needed was God’s grace, and he had that. Rev. 21:7 appears to allude to Jacob by saying that he who overcomes [by wrestling?] shall inherit “all things”. We are all to pass through Jacob’s lesson; that material advantage is nothing, and God’s grace is everything. Truly could Jacob later say, after another gracious salvation, that there God had appeared to Him, had been revealed to him [RV] in the experience of grace (Gen. 35:7).

Jacob had made "supplication" to God (Hos. 12:4) as he wrestled the Angel; and at that very same time, God dealt "graciously" (the same word translated "supplication") with Jacob. At that time, God "recompensed" to Jacob according to his sins in that the Angel like Esau came forth to slay him; and Jacob responded by "turning" (same word translated "recompensed") to his God (Hos. 12:2,8). It's too bad our translations disguise these things. By the end of his life, this spirit of mutuality between him and God had become perfected. And so with us; we too can live our lives thinking that if we do this, that and the other, God will do this and that for us. The idea of a two-way relationship with Him, of His Spirit, with all that implies, dwelling in us, until our will is His will; all this takes time to develop.

Gen 33:12 *Esau said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before you*- This may simply be because Esau knew the route better than Jacob. But it may also reflect Esau's acceptance of the blessing that had been given back to him by Jacob; he was a man of this life, and he enjoyed that blessing of the firstborn, and made use of it by going in front of Jacob.

Gen 33:13 *Jacob said to him, My lord knows that the children are tender, and that the flocks and herds with me have their young, and if they overdrive them one day, all the flocks will die*- "My lord" reflects Jacob's genuine recognition that Esau in this life was to be as his master; the younger was to serve the elder. But Jacob's faith in the promises was undiminished; he now appreciated as never before their future dimension. This is a feature of our spiritual growth too. But Jacob's deceitfulness returns- he is making excuses here. He simply doesn't want to be with Esau. Esau's character comes out too, however; as a hunter, he had never had to bother with caring for animals and moving at their pace. He wanted to live life in the fast lane, and wouldn't move over to go at Jacob's

pace. If the children were indeed "tender" and unable to move quickly, we would have to assume Jacob was with Laban 20 years and not 40 years, as suggested on Gen. 28; otherwise they couldn't have been described in this way.

Gen 33:14 *Please let my lord pass over before his servant, and I will lead on gently, according to the pace of the livestock that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord to Seir*- As noted on :13, "Lord" [stated twice] and "servant" reflect Jacob's genuine resignation of his stolen birthright blessings, and his recognition that Esau in this life was to be as his master. Jacob's deceit still had not been completely cured; he gave the impression that he would come to Esau's encampment at Seir, but it seems he never did.

"Gently" or AV "softly" may also allude to Jacob's limp. It is s.w. 1 Kings 21:27 of Ahab walking softly in humbled repentance. Indeed Jacob at this point is every man after encounter with God. As Hezekiah resolved to walk softly and quietly the rest of his days [Is. 38:15 "He has both spoken unto me, and He Himself has done it. I will [now] go softly all my years with a broken soul"]. This must be our resolve. But all these men failed to keep their resolve. Even Jacob, at the very end of his life, returned to his obsession with material blessings and the angst over the firstborn. We too can come down very small at times, and walk softly / gently- but life with its petty schemes obtrudes upon that spirit, and we tend to return to the old ways of self assurance.

Gen 33:15 *Esau said, Let me now leave with you some of the folk who are with me. He said, Why? Let me find favour in the sight of my lord*- He could be saying 'Don't, please, force me to come live with you. If indeed I have found grace in your eyes, then please let me go my own way'. And that is indeed an aspect of grace; to let the beloved go their way and not have to live with us in every way. Jacob, on a human level, compares unfavourably to Esau. He was deceitful of Esau even after this watershed time. When Esau had the chance to take vengeance on Jacob, he wonderfully forgave him. He never lied to Jacob. Mal. 1:4 makes the point that Edom (Esau) was zealous to return and rebuild the ravaged land which God had once given him, whereas Israel wasn't. And yet despite this, God says He still chose to love Israel (Jacob) and hate Esau. His behaviour in this is an example of how He saves by pure grace and not works.

Gen 33:16 *So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir*- The differing destinations of Esau and Jacob are emphasized; Esau to "Seir", the place of wild goats, whilst Jacob went to the place of booths. The wandering, roaming nature of Esau is compared with the more stable lifestyle of Jacob, and in this sense the predictions of Isaac about the firstborn came strangely true, even though Jacob had handed that blessing back to Esau.

Gen 33:17 *Jacob travelled to Succoth, built himself a house, and made shelters for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth*- See on :16. The faithful seed were characterized by continual dwelling in tents and moving on. As noted on Gen. 26:22,23, whenever they tried to settle down, as Isaac had tried to at Rehoboth, they were moved on by the leading and work of the Spirit. So although Jacob was seeking for the stability of a house and permanent residence, he was to be moved on from that.

Gen 33:18 *Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan Aram; and encamped before the city*- As noted on :17, Jacob's attempt to settle permanently in Succoth was not to be. Even if we live in the same suburban house all our days, the way of Abraham's seed is to be moved on all their lives long. Jacob's 'coming in peace' is surely to connect with the promise at Bethel, which Jacob interpreted as meaning that Yahweh would bring him back to his father's house "in peace" (Gen. 28:21). And Jacob's bargain with God had been that in this case, Yahweh would be his God. "Paddan Aram" is maybe mentioned in order to positively strengthen the similarities with Rebekah coming from there to the land of promise to marry Isaac (Gen. 28:2). "Father's house" nearly always refers to a family, rather than a physical house. "Tents" is how a 'home' was referred to at the time, not "house". So Jacob had promised Yahweh that he would accept Him, if Yahweh returned Jacob to his father's family in peace. He said that having just stolen the birthright and firstborn blessing from Esau his brother, and having deceived his father Isaac. It would've seemed impossible to ever return to that family in peace, and probably Jacob made that wager with Yahweh in a sceptical spirit- as if 'You would never be able to achieve this!'. But he has met Esau and has been forgiven by him, and Esau has urged Jacob to come and live with him. And now he is back within the borders of the land of promise, Jacob does respond. He builds an altar, although not a "house" to God as promised, nor is there any record of him now paying tithes to Yahweh. But he calls the altar 'the God who is the strength of Israel'. He accepts his new name, and the now limping Jacob confesses that God is his strength. But God has to later reemind Jacob that he is indeed Israel; again, he slipped from that intensity.

Gen 33:19 *He bought the parcel of ground where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money*- The New Testament emphasizes the paradox: that the patriarchs bought land in the land which was their eternal inheritance. They couldn't bury their dead nor pitch their tent without having to realize that the land wasn't theirs. The same paradox was taught in Jacob having to call Esau his "lord", the younger serving the elder; but in faith that things would not eternally be that way. Joseph's bones were buried here later (Josh. 24:32), which suggests that Jacob bought it with a view of it becoming a burial place and Israelite

sanctuary. Yet Acts 7:16 says that Abraham bought this land as a burial place; perhaps the paradox deepens in that they were deceived out of their "own" land and had to pay for it twice, even though it was eternally theirs.

In the bigger picture, we wonder 'why things like the Dinah incident in Gen. 34 happen'. I have suggested on Gen. 34 that one dimension was in order to stop the Jacobites intermarrying and socializing with the Canaanites. But we also note that Jacob had bought [probably leased] some land near Shechem and therefore intended to settle down there (Gen. 33:19). But after this incident, Jacob obviously wanted to move on- and God confirmed this by telling him in Gen. 35 to go to Bethel, to fulfil his covenant with God to make Yahweh his God if he returned to Bethel. We too look back on our lives, and perceive that we were moved on, even when we wanted to stay. The record shows weakness all around- but God works through that weakness.

Gen 33:20 *He erected an altar there, and called it El Elohe Israel*- This seems to have been a flash of spiritual insight, a peak of faith which was not afterwards sustained; not only did Jacob accept the new name God had given him (although he needed reminding of this again in Gen. 35:9), he saw that 'God' was his God, the God behind the powerful ones (Angels) who looked after Jacob / Israel. He had come "in peace" (:18 cp. Gen. 28:21) and now wished to keep his bargain, to accept Yahweh as his God. But still he saw God as pre-eminently *physically* powerful, and manifested in many Angels. And still he had not fulfilled his promise to make *Yahweh* his God, for he doesn't use the term "Yahweh" here. Jacob hid behind the idea of God manifestation too long. This is not to say that there is no such thing; but we can take it to such a point where we lose sight of the glorious reality of the one true, real God, who is our God, and who is ultimately *there*, at the back of all the things and ways in which He may be manifested. Jacob saw God manifest in Angels to the point where he failed to see the God who was behind them. Building the altar 'El-elohe-Israel' was his first step towards rectifying this. As time went on, he saw God as one, not as multitudes of Angels, even though he knew from the vision of Bethel that they were all active for him; he saw the El behind the Elohe, and realized that this was Yahweh, his very own God.

Shechem was the spot where Abraham had built an altar upon entering Canaan, the promised land. Jacob progressively felt a sense of identity with Abraham and Isaac on a spiritual level.

GENESIS CHAPTER 34

Gen 34:1 *Dinah, the daughter of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land*- She went to see the girls, not the boys; but any movement toward the world exposes to further temptation. And that's just what happened here. The Jacob

family by reason of their life path would've been quite insular; being on the move all the time, they had no opportunity to build up friendships or relationships with others outside the group. And so we can understand the desire for a young person to go out to meet the locals. But females in those days never travelled alone, always there was a male relative present. But it seems Dinah almost escaped alone. We can assume she was a naive teenager.

It is the fashion these days to present Dinah as totally innocent. But Gen. 27:46 ff. has spoken negatively of "the daughters of the Canaanites" and "the women of the land"; they were seen as not suitable for God's people to marry into. In my judgment, Dinah was very young and acted in a teenage way; but her choice and action was unwise and not ideal. And yet the lesson is that we see how huge chains of events ensue from unwisdom and misjudgment, even if it is not sin *per se*. Which is how I read Dinah's sneaking off to hang out with the local girls. Mass genocide, women and children taken off by Jacob's sons, mass looting, the abuse of the covenant symbol of circumcision etc.

And Jacob surely is at fault because he allows his daughter to slip out of the encampment to the nearby city, without any chaperone. Perhaps because she was the daughter of Leah, the unloved wife, he paid little attention to her. Dinah "went out", using the same term used of how Leah "went out" to meet Jacob in the field. She was her mother's daughter- likewise treated as an incidental, unloved and uncared for. Jacob's 'silence' when he receives the news must be compared to his passionate outcry regarding the loss of his son Joseph. He presents as having no great passion for Leah's daughter. Everyone in the story of Genesis 34 is at fault in some way. There are no heroes here. We have at very least a reminder that God's Israel came, and comes, from very weak spiritual beginnings.

Gen 34:2 *Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her. He took her, lay with her, and humbled her*- "Humbled" is the same word translated "afflict"; and yet if he brutally raped her, his genuine love for her in :3 and :12 is hard to understand. So the idea may be that she was humbled by the experience. See on :3. The use of the word "humbled" rather than 'raped' suggests this was not rape. This was the result in the long term, yes. But there is no Hebrew word for "rape" so we are required to interpret this. We note that the word order is the other way around when Amnon shamed and then lay with Tamar. Here, the couple lie together, and then shame arises from that act. The word "forced" is not used here as it is in other rape scenes [e.g. "Forces and lies with her", Dt. 22:25]. Dinah's brothers of course wanted to take it as rape, but that doesn't mean it was; although they then went and carried off for themselves all the women of Shechem, effectively doing far worse than the supposed crime they were protesting. It was their shame rather than their sense of righteousness which motivated them. Jacob later curses their "anger" and "selfwill". They used the moral failure of

others to unleash their native anger in a totally immoral way. Just as many religious people today seem to allow the weakness of others to trigger an unleashing of their native anger. Shechem firstly "took her", and that may simply mean he took her into his home; the very same word is used in :9,16 of taking a woman in marriage. If forced kidnap were in view, a different word would have been used. This was not therefore street rape. Indeed to take someone into your home meant hospitality and acceptance. And yet *contra* the idea of teenage romance gone too far is the way that 'saw and took' is the language of sin throughout the Bible, beginning with Eve seeing and taking the fruit, the sons of God seeing and taking the daughters of men, and Achan seeing and taking the spoil of Jericho. Time and again in this chapter we will see the same- we are invited to consider the degree and nature of the sin or failure, but there is no doubt that there was moral failure in all the characters involved. But the way we are left to ponder the degree and nature of sin is intentional- for we look back on our own lives and ponder the same issues.

My suggestion is that this entire chapter is intentionally left open to interpretation. To what degree did Shechem's lust overcome his love? Dinah is presented as silent- we aren't told her feelings. We are left to imagine. Is her silence that of the raped woman? Or the silence of the lover who has lost her beloved at the hand of her own brothers? Shechem "took her, lay with her" can be simply read as saying that they had sex. Feminist 'translators' like to read this as "he seized her and lay with her by force". But the Hebrew words required for such a translation would have been different. And there is actually no word in Biblical Hebrew for "rape". Perhaps indeed he did rape her, although that rape is presented by the text as part of "love". My point is, we aren't told. As often in Biblical narrative, we are left to reconstruct so that we might enter more deeply into the situation. And that process may restimulate self examination, as we ponder the path of our own lives. Did we do this or that for God from pure motives? Were we in love or in lust when we married? Those questions are provoked by these narratives which invite us to reconstruct what might have been the feelings and situations. Or perhaps the silence concerning Dinah is to lead us to appreciate that she was the victim of Shechem's lust, Hamor's political machinations, her father's shame, her brothers' anger issues etc. And this is to provoke our sympathy for her and many similar women at the time. The very fact we hear no more of Dinah leads us naturally to enquire 'What happened to her? How did she feel?'. There are other gaps in the narrative which beg questions from us, which in turn lead us deeper into imagining the feelings and situations- which we ourselves have been in, in essence.

Gen 34:3 *His soul joined to Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young lady, and spoke kindly to the young lady*- The language of 'joining' or [AV] 'cleaving' is that of Gen. 2:24 about cleaving in marriage. His kind words and genuine love for her all suggest his desire to marry her was sincere. What was wrong was that he prematurely

slept with her. But the whole incident had a far grosser spin placed upon it by Jacob's sons. Shechem spoke kindly to her, Heb. 'to her heart', with comfort- presumably the comfort that he had not just used her, but would marry her and promised her a wonderful life. This is quite opposite to how her brothers interpreted the situation, falsely claiming Shechem had used her as a prostitute (:31). Shechem's behaviour was wrong, but Dinah's brothers imputed wickedness to him rather than righteousness. We note from the Biblical example of Amnon, as well as observation, that rapists typically hate their victims after the sex act- even murder them. But Shechem loves her and is desperate to marry her. And yet, he "saw... and took". He did wrong. But it was not rape. And there are degrees of sin, just as there are degress of righteousness. And there is wisdom and unwisdom, at times beyond the parameters of "sin" and morality generally.

Gen 34:4 *Shechem spoke to his father, Hamor, saying, Get me this young lady as a wife*- She was indeed young. If Joseph was only 17 when he was sold into Egypt about 11 years later, Dinah would have been around 16 at this time (cp. Gen. 30:21).

Gen 34:5 *Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah, his daughter. And his sons were with his livestock in the field. Jacob held his peace until they came*- Perhaps she had gone with other young folks, who returned to the encampment with the news. "Defiled" is a strictly ceremonial or moral word. The idea is not of rape; see on :2. The response and evil plan of the sons appears to have been done without Jacob's knowledge. He appears very passive; if he had acted more decisively at the time, perhaps events might have turned out differently. The entire story is full of weakness and failure on the part of absolutely all involved; and yet the end result of it was the casting away of idols from Jacob's family, as they threw themselves upon God's grace to preserve them.

We wonder what Jacob was thinking and planning as he "held his peace"; which is typical of how this record begs so many questions, to help us reconstruct the situation and to elicit our own self examination. What we do know is that Jacob later boasts about the conquest of Shechem: "Shechem... which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow" (Gen. 48:22). Shechem was a fertile area: " It is to you and not to your brothers that I am giving Shechem, that fertile region which I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow" (GNB). Jacob later condemns Simeon and Levi for their anger; but he also boasts that he took Shechem by violence. Even though later scripture comments that the land was not possessed by their own sword and bow but by God's grace (Ps. 44:3). So we can infer that Jacob's silence was spent scheming how he could manipulate the situation to his own benefit. His complaint is that Simeon and Levi went too far; but clearly Jacob also had his own agenda. Some manuscripts, followed by the AV, offer in :17: "But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone". "Our daughter" rather than "our

sister" would suggest that the brothers were speaking on behalf of Jacob at this point; he was clearly involved. He was the deceiver [of his father and brother] who had been deceived [by Laban]. But still Jacob had not learnt his lesson. He answers Shechem "deceitfully". But even so, Yahweh still miraculously protected Jacob from the consequences, and we marvel at that grace. He had far slipped from the attitude of Gen. 33, that having experienced God's grace was all he needed, and he didn't need any material blessings, and had given up trying to get it by his own strength.

Jacob gave Shechem to Joseph, but in fact Shechem was later given to Levi as one of the priestly cities- as if in the bigger picture, God did somehow work through what Levi did although it was so wrong. Jacob's intention was undone by God's later choice: " It is to you and not to your brothers that I am giving Shechem, that fertile region which I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow" (Gen. 48:22 GNB). And to ultimately give Shechem to the pillager and genocidal Levi, whilst accepting Levi's sin... is nothing but grace. This later connection between Shechem and the Levites is one of those things where we clearly sense 'something's going on', but to attach meaning to event is difficult.

Gen 34:6 *Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to talk with him*- We have the impression of Jacob living at the city limits, and the city clearly defined with a gate and houses within the walls. Hence Shechem 'goes out' to Jacob. There may be an intended similarity with how Lot pitched his tent just outside Sodom, and then moved in to the city (Gen. 13:12). Shechem was also an area of rich pastureland which would've been attractive to Jacob.

Gen 34:7 *The sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it. The men were grieved, and they were very angry, because he had done folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; a thing which ought not to be done*- There is reason to think that even at the end, Jacob was still in some ways weak. Thus despite his name having been changed from Jacob to Israel, the two terms are used by God in the record in juxtaposition (here and Gen. 35:22; 46:2, 5,8; 48:2) as if to reflect the way the full change of Jacob would only take place in the Kingdom, when each believer will receive his new name (Rev. 3:12).

The sons of Jacob are presented here as hypocritical; they despised the sign of the covenant, circumcision, and were ruthless and self-willed, murdering and pillaging. So their outrage was hardly because of their own morality. And as noted on :2 and :3, it was they who had decided that Shechem had raped their sister and treated her as a prostitute (:31). "Folly" is an extreme term, used of prostitutes and rapists (Dt. 22:21; Jud. 19:23,24). In reality he had not raped her, and she was at least partially responsible. But the problem with the usage of inflammatory language is that it creates images

which do not easily subside. This incident stands for all time as a warning to us all; a mistake is made, a sin is committed, as these youngsters Shechem and Dinah did; but others get involved, and for the sake of family pride, they exaggerate what happened into something quite different, and once that image is in their mind, they will kill and pillage for it. This sort of thing goes on in secular and religious life all the time.

Gen 34:8 *Hamor talked with them, saying, The soul of my son, Shechem, longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife*- Hamor avoids mentioning that Shechem has slept with her already. This was clearly intended to be a love marriage, it was not casual rape nor usage of a girl as a prostitute (:31). The sincerity of Shechem is consistently contrasted with the exaggeration and serious over reaction of Jacob's sons.

Gen 34:9 *Make marriages with us, give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves*- Jacob had other daughters apart from Dinah, mentioned also in Gen. 46:7. The sons of Jacob would have known the family stories of how Isaac and Jacob had both gone to such trouble not to marry local Canaanite women, and how these had been a grief of mind to Isaac an Rebekah when Esau married them. They ought to have immediately turned away from such a proposal, and simply ensured Dinah's safety and return to their camp.

Gen 34:10 *You shall dwell with us, and the land will be before you. Live and trade in it, and get possessions in it*- The land [*eretz*] had been promised to the sons of Jacob as an eternal inheritance; the men of Shechem suggested that an agreement with them would make the *eretz* before them. They speak not for the town of Shechem, but the entire *eretz*, as if an agreement with them would mean the rest of the Canaanite tribes would be acceptant of them. This reasoning was quite contrary to the Divine promise that by His grace He would give them the *eretz;* it was because of this that "the land [is] before you" (Dt. 1:21- the identical Hebrew is used). The whole behaviour of Jacob's sons reflects a lack of spiritual perception and appreciation of the promises. "Possessions" is literally 'things taken hold of' and is the same word used of how Jacob took hold of Esau's heel (Gen. 25:26). He ought to have learnt that he had given up grabbing hold, and would instead take hold of God's grace.

What was offered here by Hamor was hugely attractive, on a secular level. For there is no lack of secular evidence that "foreigners" had few rights; they couldn't buy land, not even to bury their dead. They had to keep moving, and their economic activities were limited. The fear of the locals was that the foreigners would take over their land. They themselves were against intermarriage. So the offer from Hamor could have put an end to the Abraham family being always on the move. Were it not for the bad temper and arrogant, hurt pride over reaction of Simeon and Levi- they may well have given in to the offer. And so God's Israel would have become disolved and assimilated into the

surrounding world. And if their genocide of Shechem had not happened, then Israel would have been likely to have assimilated into the Canaanite tribes- for as Dinah demonstrates, they clearly found them attractive. But after the genocide, there was a mutual fear and distance between Israel and all others. Again we see how God worked through the failure of His own children in order to preserve His people. God in this sense is never defeated by sin.

Gen 34:11 *Shechem said to her father and to her brothers, Let me find favour in your eyes, and whatever you will tell me I will give*- This is the language of someone desperately in love. Again we note the emphasis upon Shechem's integrity and that he most definitely did not treat her as a prostitute (:31). Their accusation was therefore their imagination, and their reaction was wrong.

We too can so easily impute sin to people on the basis they did something wrong, but we can exaggerate that. The brothers accuse the people of Shechem as treating their sister as a prostitute, when the sex act was only between Hamor's son and Dinah.

Gen 34:12 *Ask me a great amount for a dowry, and I will give whatever you ask of me, but give me the young lady as a wife*- AV "dowry and gift"; the dowry being to the parents, and the gift to the bride. He was obsessed with Dinah, the language is similar to Samson's about his first Philistine wife; but despite that, he was eager to do things in accordance with norms of societal behaviour, and his relationship with her was clearly not of a casual nature.

Jacob is offered huge gifts for Dinah. He earlier gave Esau huge gifts because he realised that having God's grace was everything and he didn't need gifts. But now he wants more than presents / gifts from Shechem. He wanted everything in Shechem. How far he had fallen from his humbled appreciation of grace which he had in Gen. 33. We too can have a momentary appreciation of grace and total trust in God's provision... but fall away from it. Likewise he later sends gifts to Pharaoh thinking this may appease him... instead if trusting in God's grace.

Gen 34:13 *The sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father with deceit, and spoke, because he had defiled Dinah their sister*- "Defiled" has a religious, moral connotation. They were justifying their anger and bloodlust by claiming they had to settle some gross religious blasphemy. But Shechem is portrayed as most definitely not having used Dinah, but rather wishing by all means to marry her in a responsible way. And so often we see this; quasi religious / spiritual reasoning is used to justify arrogance, pride and a desire to justify the outpouring of native anger. And so they acted true to the character of their father Jacob and grandfather Laban; they were deceitful. "Defiled" was their perception. I suggested above that Shechem didn't rape Dinah. It

was a case of teenagers going too far in first love. But we see here historically what we have surely all observed. That a hunch about a less than ideal momentary action is nursed into a conspiracy theory, which is repeated within the minds of a family, and then repeated between them, until it becomes truth and perceived reality. Just as later the brothers repeated the lie that Joseph had been killed, until even before Joseph in Egypt they really believed it. Here we see the importance of "speaking the truth in our hearts". Anything else will push and distort the envelope until it is perceived as truth, and judgment for the supposed sin becomes felt to be necessary. The woman spotted smoking a cigarette around the corner from the church hall… becomes a drug addict, an alcoholic, and finally a whore. In the eyes and perceptions of a group of hypocritical people with anger problems, all too eager to launch off into judgmentalism, to unleash their anger on what they perceive to be a legitimate cause.

Gen 34:14 *And said to them, We can't do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised; for that is a reproach to us*- Again, as noted on :13, they used quasi spiritual reasoning to justify their own wrong behaviour. They made out that uncircumcision was a shameful thing for them, pretending they were men of such high spiritual principle when they were nothing of the sort. The brothers present as having a simmering anger problem, that was allowed to come to the surface because of quasi religious concerns about holiness. The fact two teenagers slept with each other is of course not great, but is twisted by them into rape; and they justify their anger by saying that they cannot abide the thought of their sister marrying the uncircumcised. We see the same today; religious people just about managing to contain their simmering anger problem, but allowing it to come to full term on the excuse that God's principles have been breached by others.

Gen 34:15 *Only on this condition will we consent to you. If you will be as we are, that every male of you be circumcised*- Circumcision was the sign of the covenant; to even be willing to offer it to others shows a deep lack of appreciation of covenant relationship. All the way through, they are presented as being most unspiritual. "Every male of you…" is to be circumcised, so that they might live "among" the sons of Israel, is an allusion to Gen. 17:10: "All males among you [are to] be circumcised". But clearly the brothers had an agenda- to make all the males weak, and then massacre them. This twisting of scripture and abuse of the covenant is surely reprehensible and unconscionable.

Gen 34:16 *Then will we give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people*- As noted on :15, to even talk about being "one people" with those who were not the people of God is reflective of their lack of spirituality and appreciation of their relationship with God.

Gen 34:17 *But if you will not listen to us, to be circumcised, then we will take our sister, and we will be gone*- Jacob had only just purchased land at the city limits. So "we will be gone" was not going to be so easily executed. "We will take our sister" could suggest a threat of force. They do not ask for her to be delivered, but rather say they will take her.

Gen 34:18 *Their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son*- Not least, because it was an honourable way out of the situation caused by Shechem and Dinah's inappropriate and premature behaviour.

Gen 34:19 *The young man didn't wait to do this thing*- The Hebrew idea of waiting or delaying is nearly always used in a bad sense; not delaying is associated with right behaviour. Again, Shechem is portrayed as honourable. Perhaps the idea is that he was circumcised first, immediately.

Because he had delight in Jacob's daughter, and he was honoured above all the house of his father- This could also mean, as AV, that he was the most honourable. The others wanted to deceive the Israelites for material advantage, but Shechem is presented as being of integrity and sincerity despite his initial sin of passion in sleeping with Dinah.

Gen 34:20 *Hamor and Shechem, his son, came to the gate of their city, and talked with the men of their city, saying*- The emphasis seems to be upon them doing everything in a correct, transparent and appropriate manner- in direct contrast to the devious behaviour of Jacob's sons.

Gen 34:21 *These men are peaceful with us. Therefore let them live in the land and trade in it. For behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters*- The implication is that Jacob had bought some land on the city limits, but this was recent; they had not yet begun to trade with the locals and were without relevant permissions to do so. Moses alludes to their words by saying that the entire *eretz* was a "large" land, and because of the largeness of the inheritance, they would possess the land of the Hivites (Ex. 3:8). The primary audience of Genesis were intended to make this connection; the Hivites were reasoning as if it were all *their* land when in fact it was the eternal inheritance of the wayward but chosen-by-grace sons of Jacob.

Gen 34:22 *Only on this condition will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people, if every male among us is circumcised, as they are circumcised*- Marriage out of the Faith is associated with a chronic lack of appreciation of covenant

relationship. If Dinah had married Hamor, this would have been a covenant relationship which would have resulted in the people of God and the surrounding world becoming “one people” (:16,22). How can we marry out of the Faith and claim we are still God’s people, separated from the world and not "of it"? Living together ["live with us"] was going to result in the process of time with 'becoming one people', and this is so often how it goes when a believer marries an unbeliever.

Gen 34:23 *Won’t their livestock and their possessions and all their animals be ours? Only let us give our consent to them, and they will dwell with us*- Here we see a less honourable side of Hamor and Shechem; the Jacob family were perceived as wealthy, perhaps more wealthy than the whole of Shechem. However, Shechem is definitely presented as honourable, and as a young man we can assume that the idea of getting Jacob's wealth was perhaps more pushed by his father. Or perhaps they felt they had to offer some attractive side to the bargain, so that their people would agree; when Shechem himself simply wanted to marry the girl he had fallen in love with.

Gen 34:24 *All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor, and to Shechem his son; and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city*- The reference is not to those who *sat* in the gate, which would have referred to the leadership. Those who went out of the gate might therefore simply refer to "every male" who was old enough to travel independently, i.e. to leave the city.

Gen 34:25 *It happened on the third day, when they were sore, that two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword, came upon the unsuspecting city, and killed all the males*- This was a classic case of guilt by association. "All the males" were hardly guilty of what one had done. The awfulness of the crime was not simply that they over-reacted in hot blood, but that they planned this massacre over a period of days. Although Simeon and Levi did the killing, it is clear that the other brothers knew the plan; and surely Jacob did, and his silence is significant. The whole incident portrays all involved as weak; and yet out of it arises the mass repentance from idolatry of Gen. 35.

The mention of the third day connects with how the Hivites later deceived the Israelites; and that became apparent after three days (Josh. 9:16). And those Hivites showed themselves more faithful to God than the Israelites. We note the play on the word "take". Shechem "took" Dinah, but her brothers "take" their swords and then "take" Dinah (:26) and "take" the spoil of Shechem (:28). Their 'taking' is presented as disproportionate to Shechem's 'taking' of Dinah.

Gen 34:26 *They killed Hamor and Shechem, his son, with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went away*- The poor girl must have been so terribly traumatized and confused to see all this happening at the hands of her brothers.

Gen 34:27 *Jacob's sons came on the dead, and plundered the city, because they had defiled their sister*- The term "Jacob's sons" usually refers to the group; they were clearly complicent in the crime, although the actual murders were committed by Dinah's two brothers. The plundering was perhaps their way of showing that they had seen through the real motivation of these people- it was to take the wealth of the Jacob family (:23). But as with the language of demons in the New Testament, the final clause is written from their perspective- they did this because "they" had defiled their sister. Only Shechem could be accused of defiling Dinah, so they are in the grip of guilt by association thinking; and the language of 'defilement' for pre-marital consensual sex seems rather a quasi-spiritual motivation for doing what was plainly wrong.

Gen 34:28 *They took their flocks, their herds, their donkeys, that which was in the city, that which was in the field*- This was showing that they had seen through the real motivation of these people- it was to take the animals wealth of the Jacob family (:23). It must have been a major operation, consciously planned and executed; for they took the animals which they had which were "in the field". But Jacob later curses his sons for how they hamstrung the cattle- presumably, those they couldn't carry away with them. And he saw this as a reflection of their deep anger problem. We note that straight afterwards, whilst the Jacobites are still at Shechem, Jacob commands the family to throw away all their idols. We can assume they took some of those idols from Shechem.

Gen 34:29 *And all their wealth. They took captive all their little ones and their wives, and took as plunder everything that was in the hous*e- Taking the wives / women rather than killing them suggests that they then married them or slept with them; for this was the idea of taking women as "plunder". They did this on the excuse that one of the men had raped their sister, when in fact the young couple wanted to get married and the sex was consensual. Their evil is presented as being far greater than that done by Shechem, and their sin was of the same order and nature of rape, which they falsely accused Shechem of. Yet they did it on a mass scale. They are presented as very selfish and hypocritical.

Just as Shechem compares favourably with the Israelite Amnon, so the behaviour of Jacob's sons here is utterly reprehensible compared to the sin of Shechem. They massacred the men and took their women captive- the implication being, they raped / had sex with them. That was how conquest was done- kill the males and rape the women. But the genealogies of Jacob's sons never reveal they had any children by all

these very many women of Shechem whom they took. The implication therefore is that they raped and then abandonned them. All in reaction to how Shechem had slept with their sister and sought to honourably marry her. It is part of a wider theme of God's people behaving far worse than the secular people around them. The point being, that God's people are His people by grace and not because they are better than others.

Gen 34:30 *Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, You have troubled me, to make me odious to the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites. I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house*- So true to our experience, even after the night of wrestling Jacob slipped back at times into the old way of thinking. His pathetic bleating here is a case of this: "*I* being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against *me* and slay *me*; and *I* shall be destroyed, *I* and *my* house". Just note all those personal pronouns. God had promised to go with him and make him a multitude, not "few in number", and the whole tenor of all the promises was that there would come a singular seed from the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who would become a great house, or nation. But in the heat of the moment, all this was forgotten. He had only recently feared that he would be 'slain' by Esau and his family destroyed (Gen. 32:11 s.w., "he will come and *smite* me, and the mother with the children"), and been brought to see that this fear was a lack of faith in the fulfilment of the promises to him. We too can learn something in one crisis, but then need to be re-taught it, or reveal our lack of having learnt, when the essence of the crisis is repeated again in a later similar incident.

The primary audience of Genesis was Israel in the wilderness, and as they approached Canaan, they must likewise have felt that they were going to be overcome by the local tribes. Yet such fears of not inheriting the Kingdom are presented as being but the same element of faithless fear which was in Jacob at this time. They feared they would be "destroyed" (s.w.) by the local tribes (Dt. 1:27). But somehow God would miraculously preserve them, as He did "Israel" at his first formation as a nation.

This section began with Jacob returning in peace (Gen. 33:18), just as he had wagered with God- 'If You return me in peace, then Yahweh shall be my God'. But that peace is shattered by the sins of his own sons. However in the next chapter, Jacob goes out of his way to indeed make Yahweh his God, by insisting that all idols be cast away. So Jacob was driven by circumstance and failure to realize that the only "peace" worth having was peace with God. He was being reminded of what he learnt on the night of wrestling- that having peace with God is "all things" even if you don't have peace with man.

In the bigger picture, we wonder 'why these things happen'. I have suggested above that one dimension was in order to stop the Jacobites intermarrying and socializing with the Canaanites. But we also note that Jacob had bought [probably leased] some land near Shechem and therefore intended to settle down there (Gen. 33:19). But after this

incident, Jacob obviously wanted to move on- and God confirmed this by telling him in Gen. 35 to go to Bethel, to fulfil his covenant with God to make Yahweh his God if he returned to Bethel. We too look back on our lives, and perceive that we were moved on, even when we wanted to stay. The record shows weakness all around- but God works through that weakness.

Gen 34:31 *They said, Should he deal with our sister as with a prostitute?*- Humanly, the sons of Jacob, unrepentant as they were, should have taken the consequence of their evil at the hand of the vengeful surrounding tribes. But God, in His grace, preserves them by a miracle (Gen. 35:5). By contrast, the unbelieving Shechemites acted more honourably. The Prince of Shechem didn't rape her, and he didn't just discard her. He could easily have just taken her as his wife with no more discussion with her family. He did the honourable thing in that he honestly wanted to marry her, and would do absolutely anything to enable this (Gen. 34). The brothers acted in greed and hurt pride, but justified it by exaggerating what had happened in their own mind; and they repeated the lie to themselves until they believed it were true.

As noted on :3, Shechem did not use Dinah as a prostitute, and their comment is tantamount to accusing their sister of being a prostitute. But they were so desperate to justify their sick actions that they cared nothing for the logic of their false accusations. We see that in people today, and their comment has the ring of psychological credibility in the situation. Indeed it was generally understood that a prostitute was a woman whose family disowned her and took no responsibility for her. A prostitute's honour has no need to defence. A prostitute is willing to engage in her deeds in return for some benefit; and so the language of prostitution is clearly inappropriate to Dinah. And the story ends with this, inviting us to view the brothers as totally misresponding to the situation. The story of course begs the question, 'Was Dinah raped?'. My take is that she was not raped by Shechem- but she was terribly used and abused by her own father and brothers in order to advance their very wrong material agenda, not to mention their hypocritical, religious pride.

GENESIS CHAPTER 35

Gen 35:1 *God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there. Make there an altar to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother*- God wished to restimulate in Jacob memories of how God had been with him from others who sought to kill him in the past. And He works in our lives according to the same pattern. God was asking Jacob to perceive that the promise that he would return home in peace had in fact been fulfilled; and Jacob needed to respond. Jacob had promised that "this stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God's house" (Gen. 28:22). It seems Jacob had somewhat forgotten that wonderful incident (Gen. 31:13 also sounds like a

reminder), and his promise of response. This is why God uses the name "Bethel", house of God, rather than Luz, the local name of that place. Jacob didn't need to build a house for God, Bethel; God had already done that in building Jacob a house in the sense of a family, by His grace. David had to learn the same lesson. But what God wanted was grateful sacrifice in response; and this God is our God.

Gen 35:2 *Then Jacob said to his household, and to all who were with him, Put away the foreign gods that are among you*- They were "foreign" in that they had taken them with them when fleeing Laban.. Just as Israel took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea. But Rachel and Leah were from Haran; Rachel had taken her father's gods with her. Now they were being asked to perceive the land and people of their birth as "foreign" and strange. They were being asked to perceive the land promised to Abraham, which they had entered now many of them for the first time, as their native land; and to reject their birth culture and gods as "foreign". The same radical reorientation is experienced by all who truly identify as Abraham's seed. The moment of truth came during Jacob's wrestling with the Angel. He realized then that in our relationship with God, it's all or nothing. And after that, he firmly rejected the ways of the world in his own life and that if his family; he made them bury all their idols. This connection between the night of wrestling and Jacob's rejection of idols is hinted at in 1 Kings 18:31; here, Israel openly renounce their idolatry and claim to turn to Yahweh with their whole heart. To celebrate this, "Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of *Jacob* unto whom the word of Yahweh came saying, Israel shall be thy name". The change of name that night, and its repetition here after they throw their idols away, is associated with Israel's rejection of idolatry. And then finally, at the very end, Jacob realizes his earlier idolatry and confesses it, and emphasizes his utter conviction that there is only one God, the God of his fathers, Yahweh, the God of Messiah, his very own God. Jacob resigned the things of this world for the sake of what was implicit in the promises, when he told his family to throw away their idols. These household teraphim would have been the property deeds to Laban's property, but because of what God had promised him at Bethel all those years ago, Jacob was willing to resign all that hope of worldly advantage. The reference may specifically be to idols which they had just looted from Shechem in Gen. 34.

Purify yourselves, change your garments- The garments were presumably used for pagan rituals. The young Joseph may well have had to do this, and the same words are used of how he did so later when leaving prison and going before Pharaoh (Gen. 41:14). So much in Joseph's life repeated; and it was as if God was weaving a theme with him concerning his clothes, which are mentioned at several critical points in his life. The connections for Joseph would've continued, as he reflected how he had been saved out of his "anguish" (Gen. 42:21), the same word translated "distress" in :3, just as his father and indeed Joseph and all the family had been at this time.

Gen 35:3 *Let us arise, and go up to Bethel*- The language of arising and going is all careful obedience to the command received in :1, and echoes the call of Abram to leave Ur and go where he was told.

I will make there an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went- As noted on :1, Jacob is aware of his promise in Gen. 28:22 and wishes to recognize that God has returned him in peace. But he had to recognize that by faith, because he was at this point fearful that the surrounding tribes would wipe him out in revenge for the murders at Shechem. He reasons that God's past deliverance of him must encourage them that He would continue to do so. The Hebrew word for "distress" is often used about the anguish and distress which befell Israel / Jacob because of their sins; and yet by grace they were delivered from them. All those deliverances are based upon this deliverance of Israel / Jacob and his sons from the consequences of their shameful actions at Shechem. And this looks forward to Israel's latter day deliverance likewise. Jacob shall be saved from his final day of distress at the hands of the peoples of the *eretz* (Jer. 30:7), and *yasha*, "saved", is a form of Yehoshua, Jesus- for He will be the final source of that great salvation by grace. But it requires a like repentance, of casting away their idols and self reliance. And yet God was with Jacob in the way he went... even before Jacob had accepted Yahweh as his God. This is the grace all God's Israel have known- that He is "with" us even before we come to Him.

The LXX uses the same word as the New Testament does for “tribulation” in several passages pregnant with latter day significance:

“The day of my [Jacob’s] *distress*” at the hands of Esau (Gen. 35:3)

“The *anguish* of his [Joseph’s] soul” at the hands of his half brethren and the Ishmaelites (Gen. 42:21)

“I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and *troubles* shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?” (Dt. 31:17)- a passage in the Song of Moses regarding Israel’s latter day tribulations.

“Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of *trouble*, and of rebuke, and blasphemy” (2 Kings 19:3)”- Sennacherib’s Assyrian invasion at this time was a clear prototype for the latter day invasion described in Ezekiel 38 and elsewhere.

“The time of Jacob’s *trouble*” from which he will be delivered (Jer. 30:7)

“There shall be a time of *trouble*, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Dan. 12:1). This time of trouble is specifically for Israel in the last days.

Gen 35:4 *They gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem*- Ornaments / amulets were worn at the time in order to fend off evil spirits; the way Moses records how at least twice Israel threw them away could be understood as a hint that they needed no defence against demons, because of God's Almightiness (Gen. 35:4; Ex. 32:24). As in the New Testament, the false beliefs concerning demons / gods are not tackled head on, but rather by implication. The Law of Moses required that such things be destroyed, so we wonder quite why Jacob "hid" them under an oak which was doubtless used in pagan worship, part of the "grove" there (Gen. 12:7). Perhaps this is a hint that the repentance was not total. We think of Achan hiding such things in the earth (Josh. 7:21 s.w.). The idols were typically made of gold or precious stones and would have been the basis for much of the family's material wealth. But they sacrificed it all because they threw themselves now on Yahweh alone. Although we fear that the hiding rather than destruction of them suggests a hope to somehow regain them at some time.

"The oak" is literally "the terebinth", a word meaning 'the tree without fruit'. Worshipping idols is fruitless, as the prophets make clear.

Gen 35:5 *They travelled, and a terror of God was on the cities that were around them, and they didn't pursue the sons of Jacob*- "Terror" is literally 'dismay' and this is commonly used to describe the terror / dismay that came upon the Canaanites as Israel approached them. The primary audience of Genesis was Israel in the wilderness; they were being encouraged to ditch the idols they had brought from Egypt, as Jacob's sons did with the idols they brought from Mesopotamia; and to believe that their more powerful enemies would likewise be stunned with dismay, just as the earlier inhabitants of Canaan had been at this time.

Gen 35:6 *So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him*- As noted on :1, God specifically spoke of Bethel and not Luz, in order to help Jacob see that his plan to build a "house of God" at the place where he had slept (Gen. 28:20-22) was inappropriate; God had already done that. All Jacob had to do was offer grateful sacrifice. The stress on "in the land of Canaan" is perhaps to show that indeed God had returned Jacob to his father's house in peace; although Jacob was at that point surrounded by his enemies. But he had to believe that with God's abiding help, he was indeed at peace. Or perhaps he now understood "peace" as not meaning peace in this world, in which we must have tribulation, but peace with God.

Gen 35:7 *He built an altar there, and called the place El Beth El; because there God was revealed to him, when he fled from the face of his brother*- See on Gen. 33:11. As noted on :1 and :6, Jacob now accepts the new name for Bethel, realizing that it was the grace

of God's revelation to him which meant that effectively God had built His own house; and Jacob's response was to recognize that and offer grateful sacrifice. "Revealed" translates a word used often in the Pentateuch to mean 'expose naked', to denude, multiple times used in the phrase "uncover nakedness". This in Hebrew is a shocking, radical idea. That God revealed Himself naked as it were to Jacob, that night he laid down alone when fleeing from Esau. The denuding was in showing what God is really and essentially about- which is pure grace, offering to a man who didn't yet fully believe in Him to preserve him and return him home, and do him good at his latter end.

Gen 35:8 *Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; and its name was called Allon Bacuth*- Why the mention of this, and the stress on such great grief for her (Allon Bacuth = "oak of weeping")? Perhaps because she had been the *de facto* mother figure for Jacob. We note that little is said of Rebekah apart from her stellar commitment to the leading of the Spirit when invited to go and marry Isaac. Her evil plan for Jacob to get the birthright blessings reveals very much that is faithless and unspiritual; and she has no other recorded behaviour in the record. If indeed she was a distant mother to her children, hence the note about Deborah, this might explain some things. Deborah is presented as being buried under an oak just as it was beneath an oak that the idols were buried (:4). Again, one could suspect that this pagan symbol was being somehow taken over by Jacob's family.

It could be that she was the wet nurse for Rebekah, who went with her mistress in the expectation that Rebekah would soon produce children, and she would be the wet nurse for them. She is simply anonymous in Gen. 24:59: "They sent away Rebekah, their sister, with her nurse". Her faith in the fulfilment of the promises would have been tested for 20 years. No woman's death is recorded in the OT unless she is significant. It could be that she, the obscure, the lowest of the low servant [as a wet nurse was], is given the honour of a mention just as "Quartus, the [slave] brother" is mentioned amidst the list of erudite believers in Rom. 16. To demonstrate how God is the God of the small and insignificant, and their deaths are as significant to Him as those of the more notable. But *contra* this is the possibility that she had come to Jacob's family with news of his mother's death, and remained with Jacob. In this sense, she would've effectively become a surrogate mother to him. It could be that she had been Rebekah's nurse in the sense that she had breast fed Jacob and Esau. So Jacob saw in her a mother figure. His deep grief at her passing reflects how he was indeed a mumma's boy. It has been observed: "It is entirely in keeping with the sentiments of the narrative as well as the marriage customs and practices of the times for Rebekah to give her wet nurse Deborah to her favoured son Jacob. Thus, Deborah could have joined Jacob's retinue at any time that Rebekah chose to award ownership of her dowry slave woman to Jacob". So she may even have gone with Jacob when he fled from Esau; she would have been present

at Bethel when Jacob first slept there. And had to have all that scaffolding removed to come finally to total relationship with God. Deborah was buried beneath an oak / terebinth in Bethel- and we've read in :4 that this was where they had just buried their idols. It was as if the loss of the scaffold of Deborah led Jacob to deeper commitment to Yahweh, symbolized by burying his idols. Hence the connection between burials beneath an oak within this chapter. These things happened at Bethel, the very place where Jacob had promised to make Yahweh his God if he returned there. And so it was no accident that his surrogate mother died there.

We see that in this chapter, the deaths of Rachel and Isaac are also recorded. And the apparently insignificant Deborah ranks amongst them. But maybe that's because she was a surrogate mother to Jacob. The place is named in memory of the intense weeping for Deborah, just as the place of his beloved Rachel's burial gave rise to the naming of the place as 'Rachel's pillar'. 'Allon Bacuth' can mean 'Another / double mourning' as well as 'the oak of mourning'; lending weight to the Jewish tradition that Deborah had come to tell Jacob of his beloved mother's death. The mention of Deborah's death at this point is hard to otherwise understand. Thus he mourned for them both. If the loss of his mother was indeed prominent in Jacob's mind, this would explain why God now reminds him that his real name is Israel and not the name Jacob which his mother had given him. The loss of parents at whatever age is still a removal of our scaffolding, prodding us towards the intimacy with God which He so seeks.

Jacob had apparently reached that point when he wrestled with the Angel, and ended up clinging to the Angel, begging for the blessing of grace and forgiveness for who he was and how he had been. But he had slipped away from it. But I suggest that when Deborah died and he quit his idols for good, he returned to that intensity of personal relationship with God. This would explain why the wrestling with the Angel with tears is somehow associated with Bethel in Hos. 12:5, as if the tears of weeping for Deborah were connected with the tears of weeping in the Angel's arms and grip: "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him at Bethel, and there he spoke with us". Jacob didn't wrestle with the Angel at Bethel [but at Mahanaim / Peniel]; but the connection is because it was there at Bethel, at the funeral of Deborah, that his weeping for his surrogate mother turned into a weeping for God's grace and forgiveness, just as he had done in Gen. 32. "Deborah" means 'bee' or 'source of honey'; and she had provided milk to Jacob in his infanthood. She dies as soon as Jacob is established in the promised land, a land of milk and honey. Perhaps we are to deduce from this, again, that she had been a crutch for him; and now she was removed, so that he would experience God's promises for himself.

Gen 35:9 *God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan Aram, and blessed him*- This may not be strictly chronological, in which case it is not a description of the name change being repeated a second time. Whether that is the case or not, the idea is

that God appeared to Jacob "again" as He had done at Bethel, where God denuded Himself to Jacob (see on :7). The idea would then be that this amazing self revelation of God at Bethel was repeated when Jacob's name was changed. This could refer to the night of wrestling, or to some new appearance when the name change was repeated. The 'denuding' of God was in showing the very barest essence of Himself; which was grace, to call Jacob "Israel", by grace.

The blessing alludes to God's earlier promise at Bethel: "I will not forsake you until I shall have done" what I promised. But those promises will only have their total fulfilment at the Lord's return and Jacob's resurrection. So although death is unconsciousness, in that we feel nothing; God does not forsake us at death. All His working amongst the nations to bring about the time of His Son's return is done for us, because He has not forsaken His dead people. Death itself is not, therefore, a being forsaken by God.

We see too God's grace. It seems Bethel was an existing shrine; and Jacob says that if indeed Yahweh returns him in peace, he will accept Yahweh as his God and make a house to God there, Bethel would become a shrine devoted to Yahweh rather than the gods it currently served. Jacob never does this; instead, God offers to multiply Jacob's descendants so that *He* builds Jacob a house- a house of people. Exactly as He responded to David's desire to build Him a physical house.

Gen 35:10 *God said to him, Your name is Jacob. Your name shall not be Jacob any more, but your name will be Israel. He named him Israel*- As noted on :9, this may not be a repeat of the name change, but rather a historical reference to the name change on the night of wrestling. If it is a repeat, the suggestion would be that just as Jacob appears to have somewhat forgotten about the significance of God's appearance at Bethel 20 or 40 years previously (see on :1), so he was failing to appreciate the wonder of the name change.

Jacob's name change being repeated may reflect God's perception that Jacob had changed; or it could be that he was being encouraged to accept it still, to accept that it was really true. 2 Kings 17:34 criticizes men for worshipping Yahweh but also their own gods; they are rebuked with the comment that God had made a covenant with "the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel". The suggestion is surely that when Jacob became Israel, he quit the life of half-hearted service to God. This was the decision he came to that night when he wrestled with the Angel, and his name was changed. Then he realized that there were only two ways, the way of the flesh and the way of God (cp. Mt. 6:24; 7:13,14; James 3:11,12). It is for this reason that soon after the wrestling incident and change of name, Jacob purges his family of their idols (:2). Once he has done this, God now reminds him the second time that his name has been changed. Like Jacob, we find it very hard to ascertain our spiritual growth; the very construction of our

natures makes 100 % accurate self-examination impossible (Ps. 19:12; Prov. 14:12; 1 Cor. 4:4 RSV). It's not only that we fail to perceive all our errors; we also fail to realize when we have made a significant turn for the better in our lives. Yet God perceives this, as He did with Jacob that night when He renamed him. This perhaps the hardest struggle we have; to really grasp the height of God's positive perception of us. It took Jacob, spiritual hero that he was, 50 years; for only in his final speeches does Jacob openly use the term Israel about himself. And a like joy, that almost child-like playing around with that 'new' name he'd received 50 years back, should characterize our spiritual maturity.

Your name *is* Jacob could be read as God's lament that Jacob was still acting as the heel catcher, rather than being Israel. The way God repeatedly interchanges the names Jacob and Israel (e.g. Is. 46:28 "Fear not Jacob, be not afraid Israel") reflects His acceptance that the formation of Israel in each of Israel's component members... is still not total. None of us are yet totally transformed into the image of the Lord Jesus, who is the final, finished, perfected Israel of God. For the suffering servant called Israel is ultimately the Lord Jesus crucified and thus glorified.

Gen 35:11 *God said to him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations will be from you, and kings will come out of your body*- See on Gen. 43:14. The command to be fruitful and multiply recalled the command to Adam and to Noah. It was as if Canaan was now a new land for them to populate; as it were, empty of anyone else. This promise was given only once Jacob had openly renounced idolatry in his family. At this point, Jacob already had plenty of sons and probably grandchildren. His sons had been old and strong enough to destroy Shechem. So Jacob is being led to realize that the essential fulfilment of the promises was not in immediate material things. He was being led to realize that the fruitfulness in view was yet future, and the promise of "kings" was only going to be fulfilled in the future. For his sons never became kings but remained as shepherds all their days. It may even be that "kings" was to be read as an intensive plural, hinting at the one great Messianic King who was to come. Likewise it is hard to see any immediate fulfilment of the idea that from one nation would come "a company of nations"; indeed, the idea is apparently contradictory. How could one nation be a company of nations... The fulfilment was and is in the way that peoples from all nations can be baptized into Jacob's great seed, the King, the Lord Jesus, and be counted as part of the one nation of God's people. And who knows how much of this Jacob perceived as he mulled over this strange promise.

God is almighty, and therefore He will and can fulfil His promises. The command to be fruitful and multiply is that of Gen. 1:28. Jacob was being encouraged to make a new start. He is told to multiply, to have more children. But apart from Benjamin, he

apparently disobeys this. He did make some kind of new start by casting away idols, but as with so many of our new starts, it was incomplete.

Gen 35:12 *The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and to your seed after you will I give the land*- Again, upon closer examination, these words were pregnant with future implication. The land was not given to Abraham and Isaac in their lifetimes; they died without possessing it, let alone eternally. It was given to Abraham in the sense that it was 'given by promise' (Gal. 3:18); the promise of future inheritance was seen as the gift in this life. And as the land had thus been 'given' to his fathers, so it was given to Jacob.

Gen 35:13 *God went up from him in the place where He spoke with him*- Why is this mentioned? Perhaps to invite us to see the Angel ascending away from Jacob, recalling to his mind the vision of the stairway to heaven in Gen. 28:12,with Angels ascending and descending upon it, directly from him to heaven. But the same term is used of God going up from Abraham (Gen. 17:22); clearly Jacob is being assured that he is the seed of Abraham with the very same promises made to him. All Abraham's seed go through the same reassurance.

Another reason why "God went up from him" is the complete the clear allusions to the promises to Abraham in Gen. 17:

Yahweh 'appeared' to Abram (17:1)= God 'appeared' to Jacob again (35:9)
I am 'El Shaddai' (17:1) = I am 'El Shaddai' (35:11)
Neither shall thy name anymore be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham (17:5) = Thy name shall not be called anymore Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name (35:10)
And I will make you exceedingly fruitful and I will make you nations (17:6) = be fruitful and multiply, a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee (35:11) [*we note here how "I will make you fruitful" required Jacob to act, to "be fruitful". But he apparently has no other children apart from Benjamin. But despite not obeying the condition, Jacob still receives the blessing, by grace]*
And kings shall come forth from you (17:6) = And kings shall come out of thy loins (35:11)
And I will give to you and to your seed after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession (17:8)= And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it and to thy seed after thee will I give the land (35:12)
And God went up from Abraham (17:22) = And God went up from him (:13).

The clear similarities were to confirm to the doubting Jacob that indeed, he was the seed of Abraham; and the promises to Abraham had indeed been made to him too. We too have moments in our pilgrimage when that truth is reaffirmed to us. We became

Abraham's seed at baptism, heirs according to the promise; but the personal truth of it has to be reaffirmed to us, we must be persuaded again that what we are in theory and status is in fact to be felt reality for us.

Gen 35:14 *Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He spoke with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it, and poured oil on it*- There are a few hints that the way of thinking associated with a life of idolatry was still in Jacob. Thus he set up pillars to God and also put a pillar over Rachel's grave (:20); something which was later forbidden under the Law because of its evident association with idolatry (same word in Lev. 26:1; Dt. 12:3; 16:22; 2 Kings 3:2; 10:27). He had done this previously, in a way his forefathers are not recorded as doing (Gen. 28:18,22; 31:45,51,2). However, this was done at this moment in time as a genuine sign of his devotion to God. Instead of building a house to God as he had earlier promised, by turning the pillar he had earlier set up into a temple (Gen. 28:22), he simply repeated what he had done there 40 years ago- he just set up a piece of rough stone as a makeshift altar, recognizing that this was all he was, rough stone; and that was in fact all God wanted. The anointing of the rock with oil was later understood by Jacob as pointing forward to the Messianic seed, Jesus the good shepherd; for he ends his days with reflecting upon "the shepherd, the stone of Israel / Jacob" who would 'come out of' him (Gen. 49:24).

Gen 35:15 *Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him Bethel*- God had already referred to the place by this name (:1), in allusion to how Jacob had promised to build God a house there, but by grace God had built him a house / family there. Only now does Jacob accept this, and refer to Luz as Bethel. It's rather like his slowness to accept his renaming from Jacob to Israel. It had to be twice repeated to him, and even then, only at the end of his life did he openly use the word about himself.

Jacob had vowed to build a house to God there, but he only makes a stone altar. And there is no mention of him tithing to God now. So as with ourselves, he was indeed grateful, but the gratitude was not as deeply expressed as he had undertaken to. How many of our prayers of thanks are similar?

Gen 35:16 *They travelled from Bethel. There was still some distance to come to Ephrath, and Rachel travailed. She had hard labour*- The fact Rachel did just before Ephrath or Bethlehem, where Messiah was to be born, may be another hint at her unspirituality. She didn't make it to Christ. We wonder why they were travelling when Rachel was about to give birth. Perhaps they travelled because they were still fearful of the vengeance of the tribes because of their massacre of Shechem. If they had trusted in

God's protection, they would have remained in one place at least until Rachel had given birth. Perhaps it was this lack of faith and the stress connected with fearing death at the hands of the surrounding tribes which contributed to Rachel's pregnancy complications and untimely death.

Gen 35:17 *When she was in hard labour, the midwife said to her, Don't be afraid, for now you will have another son*- The reference was to Rachel's proud boast when Joseph had been born some years before, that Yahweh would give her "another son" (Gen. 30:24). She must have struggled in those years as she failed to fall pregnant. God had not promised her another son; she presumed upon that. And getting pregnant now much later in life was not without its risks, and led to her death. The "don't be afraid" may well be a reference to Rachel's fear that her proud boast that Yahweh would add another son would not be fulfilled. Or perhaps "Don't be afraid, you have had another son" addresses Rachel's fear she had 'only' brought forth a female. Sadly she died in slavery to others' perceptions- that ultimate worth in life for a woman was in how many sons she produced for her husband. And yet she died having been out performed in that metric by her despised sister. It was the tragic death of all those who will only compare themselves amongst themselves. And so she died in "sorrow", naming the child 'son of my sorrow / bitterness', her sorrow that she hadn't 'made it'. She had earlier told Jacob: "Give me children, or else I will die" (Gen. 30:1). She had nothing else in her worldview apart from being the mother of many sons. And she died giving birth to her second son, consumed by sorrow, and bitterness that she had not produced more sons than her sister. And so many die like this, in the bitterness of broken dreams, because they would not set their sights on spiritual ambitions rather than those in mere conformity to the metrics of success in their culture. Be it home ownership, second home ownership, career, wealth etc.

The Hebrew here means 'You have had another son'. The gender of the child was apparent to the midwife. It has therefore been suggested that Rachel died of complications associated with a breech birth. And we can ponder the effect that had upon Benjamin.

Gen 35:18 *It happened, as her soul was departing (for she died)*- The soul of a person is their life, and at times the idea of soul and spirit are interchangeable; the idea is that as she breathed her last, she used her last bitter breaths to name the child Benoni.

That she named him Benoni, but his father named him Benjamin- There is a strange appropriacy in Rachel dying in childbirth; for in great unspirituality she had asked Jacob [who had served 14 years for her, so great was his love for her] to give her children or else she would die (see on Gen. 30:1). We do tend to get what we really want, with all its consequences. Rachel dies not in joy that Yahweh had given her another son (Gen.

30:24), but rather in depression, naming the child "son of my sorrow". She passes from the scene a bitter woman, who was ultimately unfulfilled and untouched by the unusual love of Jacob for her, let alone the love of God. Jacob tried to reverse this shameful naming, by calling the son Benjamin, the son of his right hand, almost implying favouritism in the very name.

Gen 35:19 *Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath (the same is Bethlehem)*- As noted on :16, Rachel didn't quite make it to the birthplace of the Messianic seed, the Lord Jesus. She was buried by the roadside, rather than in the family grave where Leah was buried along with Abraham and Sarah and Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 49:31). Jacob sadly recognized that the love of his life for whom he had been obsessed for 14 years and made such huge problems for himself… was not really one of the faithful family, and had no real heart for the things of the promises.

Gen 35:20 *Jacob set up a pillar on her grave. The same is the Pillar of Rachel's grave to this day*- Pillars were later forbidden because of their pagan associations, but it's left an open question as to whether there were such associations with Rachel. However the others of the faithful family were buried in a cave (Gen. 49:31); no mention is made of a pillar. It was Rachel who so loved her father's idols that she felt she couldn't live without them, and therefore stole them. So perhaps the paganic associations of a pillar were appropriate for her.

Gen 35:21 *Israel travelled, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder*- This is the "tower of the flock" associated with Bethlehem in the Messianic prophecy of Mic. 4:8. Rachel died before reaching Bethlehem; Jacob went there and beyond. I have suggested this may hint at her lack of Messianic appreciation, and in this case, Jacob would be presented here as having what she lacked in this respect.

Gen 35:22 *It happened, while Israel lived in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve*- It could be that with Rachel's death, it became clear that Jacob favoured the sons of Rachel and Joseph, although one of the youngest sons, was effectively now the firstborn for Jacob; even though Reuben was the firstborn. He therefore rapes Bilhah as an expression of his anger with his father, and also as an expression of power; we recall how Absalom slept with his father's wives publically in order to demonstrate his power, rather than doing so from lust. I suggest that Reuben's action was likewise not from lust, but rather he used sex as it is still often used in primitive societies- as a demonstration of power. It was for this reason that at the end of his life, Jacob stripped Reuben of the birthright and effectively gave the double portion intended for the firstborn to Ephraim

and Manasseh, Joseph's sons. Sadly, Jacob never fully learnt to forget the whole 'thing' about the blessing of the firstborn that he and his mother had been so wrongly obsessed with gaining. And Reuben too didn't learn the lesson. We too can come to our deathbeds with elements of weakness, no matter how God has sought to help us overcome them. And yet like Jacob, we are still saved by grace.

As with the incident concerning Dinah and Shechem, Jacob comes over as being informed of the matter but not doing much. He did however strip Reuben of the birthright, although apparently only at the very end of Jacob's life.

The Hebrew of this verse has a strange pause in the middle of it, suggesting we need to pause and consider how awful was the thing Reuben had done. Paul may well have the incident in mind when he rebukes the Christian church in Corinth for a brother sleeping with his father's wife, which Paul says is unheard of amongst the Gentiles (1 Cor. 5:1). But, it was heard of amongst the people of God- Reuben, the firstborn of Israel, had done it. And so the theme develops that the people of God are often more immoral than the unbelieving world around them; but are saved by grace, not their good works. This seems so true of the Abraham family, whose 'faithful' members often contrast poorly with the more decent and ethical unbelievers amongst whom they lived. The point is that the people of God aren't necessarily good people, although they ought to be; they simply throw themselves upon God's grace.

We will note in the Joseph story that it is Reuben and Judah who show compassion to Joseph, seeking to save him from being murdered by the other brothers; and proactive in responding to the feelings of Jacob their father about Benjamin. But it is Reuben and Judah whose gross failings are recorded at this point; here we read of Reuben's gross sexual misbehaviour, and we will read of Judah's in Gen. 38. But it was those two who, whilst never apparently expressing repentance in a public way, were thereby so touched by God's grace that they became compassionate to others.

Gen 35:23 *The sons of Leah: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun*- The list is of twelve tribes, and this number rather stuck throughout the Biblical record. And this raises the question as to whether Jacob's attempt to incorporate Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh as his personal sons... was really accepted as legitimate by God. Because in this case, there would have been 14 tribes of Israel. Reuben is still called the firstborn, right after the note in :22 that he had slept with his father's concubine, for which Jacob demoted him from being firstborn. On the stones on the High Priest's shoulders which bore the names of the tribes, Reuben's name comes first ("You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the other stone, *in the order of their birth*", Ex. 28:9,10). We also later read things like "The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel" (Ex. 6:14); "These are the names

of the children of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn" (Gen. 46:8); "The children of Reuben, Israel's firstborn" (Num. 1:20; 26:5). It's as if God did not accept Jacob's obsession with rearranging the firstborn- an obsession he had momentarily quit after wrestling with the Angel, whose face appeared as that of Esau. Jacob was weak in this matter right to his death. And God as it were took no notice of Jacob's machinations about the firstborn. Perhaps this is also why in :29 we read the "Esau and Jacob his sons buried him"; Esau the firstborn is named first. It could equally be that Reuben repented; God forgave him, but Jacob didn't.

Gen 35:24 *The sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin*- We wonder why Benjamin is listed amongst the 12 sons born to Jacob in Paddan Aram (:26). I think that the answer is that quite simply, Semitic writing and culture is not so strictly accurate as Western and other cultures today. There are no footnotes pointing out exceptions; numbers and situations are rounded up; "all" is used in a very general sense. This is difficult for literalists to cope with, but it is of such pathetic literalism that has arisen so much of the petty criticism of the Biblical text.

Gen 35:25 *The sons of Bilhah (Rachel's handmaid): Dan and Naphtali*- The order is: Sons of Leah, sons of Rachel, sons of Rachel's handmaid, sons of Leah's handmaid. Perhaps the order is an attempt to demonstrate that the sons of the handmaids were finally accepted as legitimate sons of Jacob, although the sons of the proper wives are put first as if to reflect that God never fully accepted the handmaids as Jacob's legitimate wives.

Gen 35:26 *The sons of Zilpah (Leah's handmaid): Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob, who were born to him in Paddan Aram*- See on :24. The impression is being given that the people of Israel / Jacob were formed outside the land of promise, and then brought into it. Just as Adam was as it were introduced into Eden, and Abraham likewise brought into the land. It was again so relevant for the wilderness generation, who had been born in Egypt and were being brought into the *eretz* as they heard Genesis first read to them.

Gen 35:27 *Jacob came to Isaac his father, to Mamre, to Kiriath Arba (which is Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac lived as foreigners*- This is presented as his first meeting with Isaac after returning from Laban, but quite some years had passed now, around 10-14. The promise that God would return him to his father's house in peace was not therefore fulfilled at this point; it was fulfilled in him coming to his father's house in the sense of his family, Esau, in peace- in peace with God through forgiveness, most importantly. I think that is how Jacob came to understand it, otherwise we would expect to read of

him making some symbolic visit to his "father's house" immediately after meeting Esau acceptably. However, the father's house to which he returned in peace may well refer to the family, rather than any literal "house". His peace with Esau was the fulfilment of that promise, to return him in peace to his father's house.

Gen 35:28 *The days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years*- This meant that he would have lived until the time Joseph supposedly died. The record is not in strict chronological sequence, as the story of Joseph is told separately, and this concludes "the generations of Isaac" (Gen. 25:19).

Gen 35:29 *Isaac gave up the spirit, and died, and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. Esau and Jacob, his sons, buried him*- "Full of days" rather than full of years could mean that his days had been filled with significance, rather than living the same day over and over year after year. The term is clearly not the same as just meaning "old".

GENESIS CHAPTER 36

Gen 36:1 *Now this is the history of the generations of Esau (that is, Edom)*- Semitic peoples tend to add second names in reflection of an incident experienced or particular theme or characteristic displayed in the person's life. And thus Esau was also called Edom, 'the red one', reflecting his red complexion and being covered in red hair, and perhaps also the incident with the "red, red soup" which led to his selling his birthright. We note that these generations of Esau include those of Seir from Hor (:20-30), implying the family of Esau had intermarried with that family. Rather than converting people into his family, Esau's family as it were married into the world around them.

Gen 36:2 *Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan*- In contrast to Isaac and Jacob, who went to great efforts not to do so. Time and again in the record of Esau it is emphasized that he married Gentiles. The record mentions this fact no fewer than nine times in Gen. 36 alone! Why such emphasis? Surely to demonstrate how through the millennia of human history, God has remembered Esau's behaviour and held it against him, recording it for our learning.

However this particular verse could be translated as meaning that he took his wives [and children] from among the Canaanites and sent them elsewhere, out of the promised land- which also reads spiritually negative, see on :6.

Adah the daughter of Elon, the Hittite- Adah is the Bashemath of :34. As noted on :1, Semitic peoples went by more than one name because names were added to them which reflected their experiences and characteristics. Aholibamah is also called Judith

(Gen. 26:34); Adah is there called Bashemath in the same place; and the woman who is here called Bashemath is called Mahalath in Gen. 28:9.

And Oholibamah the daughter of Anah- "Tent of the High Place". The names of Esau's line and wives often suggest idolatry. The description of Israel as Aholibah in Ezekiel 23:4 recalls Esau's wife Aholibamah, again associating them with their relatives who had chosen to leave the covenant. Apostate Israel are described in the very language of the adversaries / Satans of God's people. Because they acted like the world around them, from which they had been called out, they were ultimately judged by God as part of that world.

The daughter of Zibeon, the Hivite- Called a Horite (:20) because Hor was the area Zibeon lived in, although by ethnicity he was a Hivite. LXX "Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah the son of Zibeon", as in Gen. 36:14,24.

Gen 36:3 *And Basemath, Ishmael's daughter*- The Mahalath of Gen. 28:9. Ishmael had been circumcised into the covenant but chose not to remain in it.

Sister of Nebaioth- "High places", another hint at idolatry.

Gen 36:4 *Adah bore to Esau Eliphaz*- The Eliphaz the Temanite of the book of Job, who it seems eventually came to know God through Job's forgiveness of him and prayer for him. So we see here how relationship with God skipped a generation, as often happens.

Basemath bore Reuel- "Friend of God". We wonder if as with Eliphaz, this was another example of a spiritual person emerging from an unspiritual background and genealogy.

Gen 36:5 *Oholibamah bore Jeush, Jalam, and Korah*- Again the names are not indicative of spirituality, these three respectively meaning things like "Hasty" (like Esau), "Occult" and "Bald".

These are the sons of Esau, who were born to him in the land of Canaan- Esau's family is set up as a fake Israel. Jacob's sons are presented as all born outside Canaan from non-Canaanite women, whereas Esau's sons were all born to him from local Canaanites, and were in that sense Canaanites.

Gen 36:6 *Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the members of his household, with his livestock, all his animals, and all his possessions, which he had gathered in the land of Canaan, and went into a land away from the presence of his brother Jacob*- Leaving the land of promise is tantamount to taking oneself out of the things of God's Kingdom. It is never used in a very positive way. Esau went out from the land of Canaan into Edom, maybe slinking away from the face of his brother Jacob, sensing Jacob's righteousness and his own carnality; he didn't want to inherit the

Kingdom, he wanted a kingdom for himself in this life. "Went out" is the language of Judas going out (Jn. 13:30), Cain '"went out" (Gen. 4:16), as did Zedekiah in the judgment of Jerusalem (Jer. 39:4; 52:7). Even in this life, those who leave the ecclesia 'go out' after the pattern of Judas, condemning themselves in advance of the judgment by their attitude to the ecclesia (1 Jn. 2:19 cp. Acts 15:24). The unrighteous flee from God now, as they will then (Hos. 7:13). The ungrateful servant "went out" and condemned his brother- thus condemning himself (Mt. 18:28). Yet Peter in this life "went out" from the Lord (Mk. 14:68) and then some minutes later further "went out and wept bitterly" (Lk. 22:62), living out the very figure of rejection at the judgment- and yet was able to repent and come back. In this life we can be judged, condemned, weep... but still repent of it and thereby change our eternal destiny. But at the final judgment: it will be just too late. That 'judgment' will be a detailed statement of the outcome of the ongoing investigative judgment which is going on right now.

Gen 36:7 *For their substance was too great for them to dwell together, and the land of their travels couldn't bear them because of their livestock*- Circumstances repeat within the experiences of God's family and of human beings generally, with whom God is working. This is exactly the language of Abraham and Lot separating from each other for the same reason. And Lot went off to a land, Sodom, which was the spiritual death of most of his family.

Gen 36:8 *Esau lived in the hill country of Seir. Esau is Edom*- The primary audience of Genesis was Israel on their wilderness journey; perhaps so much detail is given about Esau's descendants, and the emphasis is upon "Esau is Edom" (:1,8,9,43) because Israel were passing through or near these peoples. Genesis sought to explain to Israel the historical background of those peoples; they were their distant relatives, who had chosen not to be part of the Abrahamic line of promise, although individuals amongst them did so, as I have noted several times in this chapter.

Gen 36:9 *This is the history of the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill country of Seir*- See on :8. The Israelites who first heard "Genesis" were "many days" in this hill country (Dt. 2:1), and were told that God had given this area to Esau as a possession (Dt. 2:5; Josh. 24:4). Esau as the direct grandson of Abraham could have had the promises of inheritance of the *eretz* relevant to him; but he chose to go out of that land. Mount Seir was just outside the promised land (Josh. 15:10). And so God accepted that and gave him an inheritance in Seir, although without the promises of eternal inheritance and of the saviour seed. He wanted a possession immediately in this life, and God gave Esau what he really wanted.

Gen 36:10 *These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz, the son of Adah, the wife of Esau; and Reuel, the son of Basemath, the wife of Esau*- Reuel, friend of God, may have been a believer, despite having a father and mother and maternal grandmother who didn't want the things of the Kingdom promises. The new creation in Christ means that we are free of such background influences if we truly respond to the word of promise.

Gen 36:11 *The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz*- This could be the "Eliphaz the Temanite" of the book of Job, who [unlike most of his relatives] had *El*, God, in his name, and who thanks to God's grace and Job's prayer for him, is presented as finally being a penitent believer. So not all Esau's line were outside of God's salvation purpose; always, individuals can step out against the wind of their environments, and forge a relationship with God.

Gen 36:12 *Timna was concubine to Eliphaz, Esau's son; and she bore to Eliphaz Amalek. These are the sons of Adah, Esau's wife*- Amalek became a major enemy of Israel; but his father Eliphaz was a believer, if as suggested on :11 he is the Eliphaz of the book of Job. And so we see what is apparent in the records of the kings of Judah; good men have bad sons and bad men have good sons. Spirituality is personal and not inherited; and bad background is not an insurmountable handicap to faith and spirituality.

Gen 36:13 *These are the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife*- Again, the names of the sons are distinctly unspiritual, especially bearing in mind the Semitic way of giving a name to a person which reflects their character. Respectively, these names mean "declining", "sun rising" and "wasting". Their birth names could have been recorded, but instead the names they were known by later are recorded.

Gen 36:14 *These were the sons of Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: she bore to Esau Jeush, Jalam, and Korah*- As noted on :5, these three respectively meaning things like "Hasty" (like Esau), "Occult" and "Bald". And as explained on :13, people were born with a name but then were known by another name, which reflected their later character, appearance or experiences. We have a prime example here, in the name "Korah" which means "bald" or strictly 'one who has become bald'; hardly a birth name for a baby boy. The fact the names of the children often reflect paganism or other unspirituality (e.g. "hasty" and "occult") is therefore a reflection of how they actually became known in their lives. And Esau's descendants are full of such spiritual wasters.

Gen 36:15 *These are the chiefs of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of Esau: chief Teman, chief Omar, chief Zepho, chief Kenaz*- Some Kenizites (Caleb and Othniel) were adopted into Israel (Josh. 14:14), confirming the picture we get here- that some individuals could always break free of family environment and associate themselves with God's purpose and promises. As the twelve sons of Jacob were to be princes of Israel, so the sons of Esau were "chiefs" or sheikhs. We have here the idea developed that the children of Esau were an imitation Israel; they too were blessed materially, but without the spiritual dimension which was present in the people of Israel, God's people.

Gen 36:16 *Chief Korah*- See on :14. It seems Eliphaz had a grandson and also a brother of this name (:5). "Sons of Adah" could easily mean 'grandsons' as well.

Chief Gatam, chief Amalek: these are the chiefs who came of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Adah- This would have been significant information for the Israelites in the wilderness who first heard Genesis, as they fought with Amalek (Ex. 17:8,9).

Gen 36:17 *These are the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: chief Nahath, chief Zerah, chief Shammah, chief Mizzah: these are the chiefs who came of Reuel in the land of Edom; these are the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife*- Respectively, the names mean 'He who declines', 'dawn' [maybe with pagan reference]and 'he who faints from fear'. Again, bear in mind that these names were not birth names, but reflected how these men became known.

Gen 36:18 *These are the sons of Oholibamah, Esau's wife: chief Jeush, chief Jalam, chief Korah: these are the chiefs who came of Oholibamah the daughter of Anah, Esau's wife*- Oholibamah, "tent of the high places", was remembered for her idolatry in her name. And women were only associated with tents on the high places because of their prostitution, as "worship" there was male oriented. Esau married a cultic prostitute, and bore him three children. This is a tacit admission of his own idolatry. As noted on :5, the names of the sons are not indicative of true spirituality, these three respectively meaning things like "Hasty" (like Esau), "Occult" and "Bald".

Gen 36:19 *These are the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these are their chiefs*- The preceding verses have listed 14 "chiefs" who came from Esau. Jacob had 12 sons and two adopted sons counted as his sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) making 14. Again we

see Esau's descendants presented as a mirror of the true people of God, an anti-Israel, a fake imitation of the true. See on :20.

Gen 36:20 *These are the sons of Seir the Horite, the inhabitants of the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah*- The idea is that they were formerly the inhabitants of that land, but were driven out by the Edomites (Dt. 2:12,22), an encouragement to Israel in the wilderness who first heard Genesis to likewise drive out the tribes from their allotted possession as Edom / Esau had done. The sons of Seir are listed amongst the descendants of Esau perhaps on the basis of the idea that Gentile peoples were counted as his descendants, just as was to be true, in a different sense, of Abraham's true seed. As noted on :19, Esau's nation is portrayed as an imitation of the true people of God. Or it could be argued that the similarities are because God chose to bless Isaac's son in this life, but without the eternal and Messianic dimension which was attached to the line through Jacob.

Gen 36:21 *Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These are the chiefs who came of the Horites, the children of Seir in the land of Edom*- Again the names are hardly suggestive of true spirituality; Dishon and Ezer respectively mean "the trampler", "man of treasure". "Dishan" is another form of "Dishon"; it would be likely that Dishon died prematurely and so was as it were replaced by Dishan.

Gen 36:22 *The children of Lotan were Hori and Heman. Lotan's sister was Timna*- "Heman" means "raging anger", continuing the uncontrolled passion of the moment which was seen in Esau. The Chronicles genealogy likewise contains the uncommon mention of a woman. Why this special mention of Timna ["restraint"] as being the aunty of "Heman", "raging anger"? Perhaps to continue the theme developed here- that out of all this unspirituality and unrestrained human nature, there were various individuals who were different and rose above their surrounding environment. This is of huge encouragement to us today. See on :23,26,43.

Gen 36:23 *These are the children of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam*- Shobal = 'overflowing'; Alvan = 'haughty'; Manahath = 'rest / peace'; Ebal = 'naked'; Shepho = 'naked'; Onam = 'strong man'. As noted on :22, in the midst of these names with sexual and other very human connotations, Manahath has a much nicer meaning. Perhaps again we have one spiritual person amongst unspiritual siblings. See on :22,26.

Gen 36:24 *These are the children of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. This is Anah who found the hot springs in the wilderness, as he fed the donkeys of Zibeon his father*- This continues

the similarities between the faithful family and the Edomites; for Isaac was also noted for discovering wells / springs. Or as AV "This was that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness" could mean that Anah was the first to produce mules, by mating horses and donkeys in the wilderness.

Gen 36:25 *These are the children of Anah: Dishon and Oholibamah, the daughter of Anah*- Oholibamah means 'tent of the high places' and women were only famed for such places because they were cultic prostitutes there. Women are rarely named in these records unless there is some significance to them; and perhaps the idea of this reference is to show that Esau's family included a woman famed for her cult prostitution. But it is twice emphasized in this verse that this sad woman was the daughter of Anah, 'one who gives heed / pays attention'; and Anah is mentioned nine times in this genealogy, more than anyone else. Although she is described as a "son of...", "son" can simply mean 'child of'. Perhaps she is singled out for her obedience, but the point is clearly made that a spiritual person can have very unspiritual offspring.

Gen 36:26 *These are the children of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran*- Hemdan = 'desirable wine' (s.w. Is. 27:2 AV "red wine"); Eshban = 'vigorous growth'; Ithran = 'excess'; Cheran = 'angry'. We have the same idea as noted on :22,23; in the midst of very unspiritual names, we have one which speaks of something positive, of growth. Out of all this unspirituality and unrestrained human nature, there were various individuals who were different and rose above their surrounding environment. This is of huge encouragement to us today.

Gen 36:27 *These are the children of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan*- Bilhan = 'humble'; Zaavan = 'not at peace'; Akan = 'twister'. As noted on :26, we again have here one spiritual name in the midst of very unspiritual ones, remembering that names were attached to individuals according to what they were known well for. See on :22.

Gen 36:28 *These are the children of Dishan: Uz and Aran*- Job lived "in the land of Uz" (Job 1:1), another reminder that out of all this unspirituality, there were spiritual individuals within the line of Esau who rose above all the bad environment. Aran means 'shouter' and Uz means "fertility man", although Strong suggests otherwise. Fertility and paganism were well connected; out of this bad environment came the "perfect" Job.

Gen 36:29 *These are the chiefs who came of the Horites: chief Lotan, chief Shobal, chief Zibeon, chief Anah*- Anah is mentioned nine times in this genealogy, more than anyone else; see on :25. Although she is described as a "son of...", "son" can simply mean 'child of'. Perhaps she is singled out for her obedience, but the point is clearly made that a

spiritual person can have very unspiritual offspring such as Oholibamah. We note that Oholibamah was a woman but also a chief (:41).

Gen 36:30 *Chief Dishon, chief Ezer, and chief Dishan: these are the chiefs who came of the Horites, according to their chiefs in the land of Seir*- See on :21.

Gen 36:31 *These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the children of Israel*- The hint therefore is that Israel's desire for a king was in order to be like the nations around them, such as Edom. And by so doing they were rejecting God as their king, and becoming like those such as Edom who had left the family of faith.

However, the reference could be to Moses as "king" of Israel effectively (Dt. 33:5), and the idea may simply be that this was how things were before the time of Moses. The list of kings we now have could be a chronological list of those who reigned in the area up until the time of Moses and the book of Genesis being completed, which would explain why the last king in the forthcoming list is not recorded as dying, whereas the others are (:39).

Gen 36:32 *Bela, the son of Beor, reigned in Edom. The name of his city was Dinhabah*- "Robbers' den" (Gesenius). As noted on :33, Job overcame this bad background, as we can, to become a truly spiritual person. Balaam is very close to "Bela" and was also "the son of Beor", and if there is a reference to Balaam, then it would be in that he is framed as related to this man and similar to him. Again we get the impression that knowledge of Yahweh was not totally absent amongst all the descendants of Esau.

Gen 36:33 *Bela died, and Jobab, the son of Zerah of Bozrah, reigned in his place*- According to the addition to the book of Job found in the Septuagint, this is Job. Again we see how individuals amongst the otherwise unspiritual line of Esau did turn to the true God and were accepted in covenant relationship; some of the names and localities of his three friends also occur in this list of Esau's descendants and associates. In this case we marvel at the spiritual growth of Job, coming from such an unspiritual background, with the previous king living in a city called "Robbers' den" (see on :32).

Gen 36:34 *Jobab died, and Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place*- Teman is apparently near Petra and Mount Paran (Hab. 3:3), as is Dinhabah (:32). We can therefore assume that Job lived in that area too.

Gen 36:35 *Husham died, and Hadad, the son of Bedad, who struck Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his place. The name of his city was Avith*- Israel in the wilderness were the primary audience of Genesis, and they too smote Midian (Num. 31:8; Josh. 13:21). The fact others had "struck Midian" was therefore recorded as encouragement to them; and we too are intended to be inspired by Biblical history, realizing that our experiences are not totally unique, but in essence are repetitions of Biblically recorded situations and past victories.

Gen 36:36 *Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place*- Masrekah means "vineyards" and we assume he was famed for his wine; contributing to the generally negative spiritual tone found in most of these names. "Samlah" likewise means 'mantle', perhaps a referring to the mantles used in religious rituals.

Gen 36:37 *Samlah died, and Shaul of Rehoboth by the river, reigned in his place*- "The river" is the Euphrates, which formed the boundary of the promised land; again the impression is given that the people of Esau chose to live outside the promised land.

Gen 36:38 *Shaul died, and Baal Hanan, the son of Achbor reigned in his place*- Strong offers "possessor of grace" as the meaning of Baal Hanan, which would fit in with the theme of there being occasionally very spiritual people amongst the otherwise unspiritual line of Edom, encouraging us also to rise up against the factors of environment and hereditary; for his father Achbor means 'attacker'. But it could equally mean the Baal or Lord of Canaan, even though they were not in Canaan.

Gen 36:39 *Baal Hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his place. The name of his city was Pau. His wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab*- More detail is given about this Hadar, and his death isn't recorded. I suggested on :31 that this list of kings could be a chronological list of those who reigned in the area up until the time of Moses and the book of Genesis being completed, which would explain why this last king in the list is not recorded as dying, whereas the others are. In this case, Hadar would be "the king of Edom" with whom Israel had dealings in Num. 20:14.

Gen 36:40 *These are the names of the chiefs who came from Esau, according to their families, after their places, and by their names: chief Timna, chief Alvah, chief Jetheth*- There are only 11 recorded here compared to the 14 earlier in this chapter. This could be because some were assimilated into others; or because what we now read is a list of

their localities rather than of individuals, and there may have been more than one "chief" within the same single locality.

Gen 36:41 *Chief Oholibamah, chief Elah, chief Pinon*- Oholibamah ['tent of the high places'] was a woman, and I suggested on :29 that Anah was also a female chief. Elah = 'oak tree', associated with paganic shrines; Pinon = 'distracted'. All evidence of paganism and unspirituality.

Gen 36:42 *Chief Kenaz, chief Teman, chief Mibzar*- Kenaz = 'hunter'; Teman = 'stronger', Mibzar = 'strong hold'; all the language of human strength and prowess. See on :43.

Gen 36:43 *Chief Magdiel, and chief Iram. These are the chiefs of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession. This is Esau, the father of the Edomites*- Iram = 'wisdom of the city'. The names of the other chiefs in :41 and :42 were all very unspiritual and some have definite paganic hints. Therefore Magdiel, 'precious to God', stands out in its meaning. Again as noted on :22, we are being shown that out of an unspiritual lineage, family and environment, individuals can be transformed and overcome all that to be part of God's covenant purpose. This is significant encouragement for we today who can feel swamped by unspiritual environments.

GENESIS CHAPTER 37

Gen 37:1 *Jacob lived in the land of his father's travels, in the land of Canaan*- The significance of this statement is that Jacob was intended to live in Canaan and had suffered hugely in order to leave Mesopotamia. The contrast is between the Hebrew term for "lived", which means 'to settle down', and that for "travels", which means to live temporarily. Although Isaac spent more of his life in the *eretz* than Jacob did, he moved around a lot in the land; whereas Jacob settled down permanently [relatively speaking] in one location.

Note that Isaac never left Canaan, he lived there all his life, but it was still the land of his sojourning ["travels"], his temporary dwelling. Just as this world is for us, no matter how stable our lives may appear in secular terms.

The word "God" never occurs in any form throughout Genesis 37. Nor is there any mention of prayer nor faith- exactly as we have in the book of Esther. But clearly we are to discern the hand of God at work. Just as God may be apparently absent in our lives and do no visible miracles; but considering His higher hand reveals invisible miracles and His definite presence and purpose.

Gen 37:2 *This is the history of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers-*
“Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers” is the standard English translation; but the Hebrew word order is: "Joseph was shepherding his brothers, along with the flock”. He had been made the family priest, and therefore had the coat of many colours. The "evil report" he brought back was therefore about their insubmission to his leadership. His dreams asserted that leadership- and he asks his brothers to "hear" or 'obey' them.

So it seems that at 17, Joseph had already been made the chief shepherd of his father's extensive flocks. But he was deposed from that by his brothers. He would likewise quickly become the chief household manager of Potiphar's house, and be quickly deposed. He quickly became the prison manager- and that ended quickly. He was then suddenly made the ruler of all Egypt, the greatest civilization and empire on planet earth at the time. But given his previous experiences, he would have accepted this humbly and with a premonition it wouldn't last long. In fact it lasted all his life. Likewise with being given a significant item of clothing, initially the coat of many colours, which he suddenly lost. He was given a similar significant coat when the manager of Potiphar's house, and it was suddenly removed from him. So that when he was suddenly dressed in all the regalia of Egypt, he took it humbly and was prepared to lose it at any time.

Literally "being the son of seventeen years". Joseph is also described as "the son of old age" in Jacob's opinion (:3). This could quite legitimately be read as meaning that he was considered by Jacob to be spiritually mature beyond his years, and indeed it does seem he was.

He was a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father’s wives. Joseph brought an evil report of them to their father- The sons of Bilhah (Dan and Naphtali) and Zilpah (Gad and Asher) were perhaps the least connected to the Jacob family and the promises. Perhaps this was what led to their poor behaviour which Joseph reported. "Was feeding the flock" could mean "was the shepherd of the flock"; although very young, he had been pronounced 'chief shepherd' by Jacob, as a way of investing him with the titles and roles of the firstborn after Reuben had lost that role. In this case, we see again how Joseph is set up as a type or representative of the Lord Jesus, the chief shepherd of Israel's flock.

The patriarchs having more than one wife at a time signals that all was not well morally within the Abraham family. The repeated way in which they lied about their wives also indicates that they didn't take their marital responsibilities as they should have (Gen. 12:13; 20:3,13; 26:7). Abraham's apparently casual relationship with Hagar, Judah's use of a harlot (apparently the sort of thing he often did), Esau's many carnal wives, Dinah's love affair, Reuben's incest (Gen. 49:4)… all this creates a certain impression of weakness in this area. Joseph's evil report regarding his brothers may well have featured

news of their playboy escapades while far away from usual family life (note the similarities with 1 Sam. 2:23,24).

The generations of Jacob began with Joseph. God effectively saw him as the firstborn, whereas Jacob had machinated about Reuben and Judah as being the firstborn. Again we see how human firstborn and preeminence is seen otherwise by God.

"Being a lad with" the sons of Bilhah may mean they treated Joseph as their servant or lackey. But the servant was to become their saviour. Maybe this treatment was part of the evil report Joseph brought to Jacob. Noah likewise was the youngest son, treated as a run around by his older brothers, which meant he married much later than them. But it's all a classic case of the despised, suffering servant becoming the saviour. We see the intended juxtaposition- Joseph was 17 but was the shepherd of the flock and his brothers, but he was the servant. He was the classic servant leader, clearly looking forward to the Lord.

Gen 37:3 *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age*- Here the Spirit frames the record in Jacob's favour. We have shown that most of Jacob's children were born within a few years of each other, and in any case, Benjamin was the youngest. It seems that the Spirit is almost making a weak excuse for Jacob's favouritism, or perhaps picking up Jacob's self-justification for his favouritism and treating it as if it is valid. This is imputed righteousness. Jacob should have learnt from all the problems caused by his father's favoritism towards Esau and his mother's towards himself. But he didn't, and just as both Abraham and Isaac lied about their wives, so this weakness of having favourites continued from Isaac to Jacob.

Literally "being the son of seventeen years" (:2), Joseph is also described as "the son of old age" in Jacob's opinion (:3). This could quite legitimately be read as meaning that he was considered by Jacob to be spiritually mature beyond his years, and indeed it does seem he was.

And he made him a coat of many colours- A priestly robe (s.w. Gen. 3:21; Ex. 28:4; 29:5) which likely went with the firstborn's responsibilities. Jacob therefore dressed in Esau's clothes, and he seems to have wanted to use this opportunity to reflect his own experiences to his sons. Maybe Jacob made Joseph the firstborn after Reuben (the firstborn) slept with Bilhah. The special garment was the equivalent of a priestly robe, as the role of priest went with the firstborn role. This explains why Joseph wore it when he went out to shepherd his brothers, and why they so hated that garment. Reuben, who had been demoted from the firstborn, commendably sought to save Joseph from being killed. His weakness was therefore temporary, and he subsequently demonstrated that he held no resentment but only love towards Joseph who had been chosen to replace him.

There seems to have been something unusual about the Lord's outer garment. The same Greek word *chiton* used in Jn. 19:23,24 is that used in the LXX of Gen. 37:3 to describe Joseph's coat of many pieces. Josephus (*Antiquities* 3.7.4,161) uses the word for the tunic of the High Priest, which was likewise not to be rent (Lev. 21:10). The Lord in His time of dying is thus set up as High Priest, gaining forgiveness for His people, to 'come out' of the grave as on the day of Atonement, pronouncing the forgiveness gained, and bidding His people spread that good news world-wide.

One simple takeaway from the Joseph story is that he was born with good cards and bad cards, just like us all. The record doesn't mention his weaker points although for sure like any man, he had them. But this is to point up how he was born into a hard situation, the favourite son of the favourite wife, hard working, smarter than the others, spiritually minded, a born victim of jealousy. He couldn't help that, as many are born likewise into impossible situations or with handicaps of various kinds. But he rose above them and tenaciously held to his mission, to save his brethren. That's the lesson.

Gen 37:4 *His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and they hated him, and couldn't speak peaceably to him*- They wouldn't greet him with the standard *shalom* greeting. This hatred "grieved" Joseph deeply (Gen. 49:23); Jacob says that it was as if Joseph had archers shooting at him, so we can assume that he had several attempts to harm or kill him before the incident now recorded. This means that Jacob sending Joseph alone to them was done with his full knowledge that harm was going to arise, and his attitude was a window onto the feelings of God as He sent His Son to his brethren. According to that parallel, Jacob sent Joseph to them hoping that without his presence, he would somehow reconcile them to himself. See on :13. It meant also that Joseph's willingness to go to his brothers alone was spiritually motivated; for he would surely have sensed what might happen.

Gen 37:5 *Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him all the more*- This parallels how the Lord spoke forth what He heard from God (Jn. 8:38; 12:50) and was hated unto death for it. Joseph likely didn't want to speak forth what he had been shown, and he did so with the spirit in which we may nervously share God's word and plan with those whom we know will hate us for saying it. The same word for "hated" is used in the promise that the Messianic seed would triumph over those who hated him (Gen. 24:60). It was their hatred which was therefore the background of the dreams, which I suggest were extensions of the Abrahamic promise repeated to Joseph; for the dreams stated as much, that Joseph would triumph over those who hated him, i.e. his own brothers.

Gen 37:6 *He said to them, Please hear this dream which I have dreamed*- This is entreaty, as if he is asking them to believe something they don't want to. Perhaps if they

had fallen before him then, accepting he was the chosen firstborn and spiritual leader, then the whole sad history of the next chapters need not have happened. The dreams were an invitation to "hear" them and respond to them. In this we see the open ended approach to God to the fulfilment of His will and prophetic plan. And yet perhaps Joseph was repeating the mistake of Jacob, in insisting that in this life he should be accepted as the firstborn. Before birth it had been decreed that Esau should serve Jacob, but that was only to come true in the future. But Jacob wanted it in this life. And Joseph possibly made the same mistake, in wanting the brothers to accept him in this life as the firstborn. The way the dreams feature his mother bowing to him, when she was dead, was surely a hint that the intended fulfilment was not in this life but at the resurrection. And the fulfilment was not essentially in Joseph, but in the future Messianic seed whom he represented and prefigured. Jacob's final comment upon Joseph is that he was representative of the future Messianic seed (Gen. 49:22-26), but if they had all been more Christ-centred then all the personal angst against Joseph would not have happened.

The Hebrew translated "hear" carries the idea of 'be obedient'. Joseph had the coat of many colours, he was the priest of the family; but they didn't want to heed him. Probably they had returned to their idolatry after burying their idols in Gen. 35. And he is asking them to obey him in a spiritual sense. But they refused. And yet the following years would bring them to this obedience. This approach would explain why in the apparent fulfilment of the dream, his mother Rachel did not bow to him, as she was dead. Indeed, that aspect of the dream requires the fulfilment is ultimately at the resurrection. It is perhaps why there is no comment that the dream was fulfilled when the brothers bowed to him. God wants our obedience; if we don't give it, then He still works, even through the consequences of our sins, in order to bring it about. And Genesis is full of examples of where disobedient people are still worked with by God to their final blessing [think of Abraham not immediately going to Canaan, nor separating from his family].

Gen 37:7 *For behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves came around, and bowed down to my sheaf*- The patriarchs were shepherds and cattle herders- not sedentary crop farmers. The dream transported them into another world or situation other than what they knew then. The dream was God's way of giving the Abrahamic promises to Joseph. He was being given more detail- that his mother Rachel would be resurrected, and along with his brothers, would all bow down to his sheaf, which also would be lifted up [another hint at resurrection?]. Jacob in Gen. 49 understands all this correctly, finally- that it spoke not so much of Joseph, but of the Messianic seed whom he typified. This means that the bowing of the brothers to Joseph was but a primary fulfilment of the promise. It wasn't complete, because Rachel was not there. Joseph was likened to a sheaf (37:7)-

and Christ was the wave sheaf (Lev. 23:11,12). It was "his sheaf", Messiah, who was to be worshipped by all Israel. The things of the Kingdom / land were revealed in the picture of fruitful grain harvests, and those of the Name of Jesus in the way that Joseph is being set up as a type of the Messianic seed. Perhaps if the brothers had immediately accepted him as such, then the course of history would have not gone as it did. The way the promise had a primary fulfilment as the brothers bowed to Joseph in Egypt fits in with the theme of the promises all having initial fulfilment in this life, but pointing forward to the more significant future fulfilment.

Jacob had quite wrongly sought to obtain the blessing of the firstborn, which included the wording that his family should bow down to him (s.w. Gen. 27:29). Although he had resigned that stolen blessing to Esau when he repented on the night of wrestling, Jacob still likely disliked the message being repeated here- that he was to bow down to others, in this case, his young son Joseph or the Messianic seed represented by him.

Gen 37:8 *His brothers said to him, Will you indeed reign over us? Or will you indeed have dominion over us? They hated him all the more for his dreams and for his words*- This was the Lord's experience: "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Lk. 19:14), "We have no king but Caesar" (Jn. 19:15). But "have dominion" is the Hebrew word used of how Joseph ruled over all Egypt and those who came to buy corn from him such as his brother (Gen. 45:8,26). However, that was but a primary fulfilment; the main fulfilment must be yet future.

One lovely feature of this whole account is that when these dreams came true, there is no mention of the fact. Joseph doesn't rub the point in; neither are the brothers recorded as humbly admitting that the dreams had come true. Likewise the New Testament often doesn't labour the point that the Lord's life and work was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies like Is. 53. This is left for us to perceive- and be even further strengthened in faith by the beautiful subtlety of it all.

Gen 37:9 *He dreamed yet another dream*- The double dream of Gen. 41:32 was a sign of absolute certainty of fulfilment. When Pharaoh had two dreams, and the prisoners together had two dreams, Joseph would have recalled his double dreams, and would have thereby been encouraged that they would be fulfilled too. Each of the three dreams in the Joseph story is a double dream (Joseph's dreams, the dreams of butler and baker, Pharaoh's dreams). When Joseph tells Pharaoh that double dreams mean they definitely come true, he said this, therefore, in faith- that his own dreams would come true. That faith is contrasted with both his father and his brothers protesting that these dreams could never come true. And I suggest he had this in mind all through, that circumstances would work out so that his brothers came bowing to him. I suggest that is what motivated him to suggest Pharaoh set a man over all Egypt to manage the people would come to buy grain- inwardly scheming that he would be the one chosen.

He showed great spiritual ambition in all this. But Joseph also understands the double dream of Pharaoh to mean that God will "soon" fulfil it- and the double dream of the butler and baker indeed immediately came true. Joseph therefore understood that his own dreams would "soon" come true; but he understood that the "soon" was relative to God's view of time, and not his. The dreams of Pharaoh would take seven to fourteen years to come true; but Joseph understood that as "soon". We like Joseph must see that our redemption and the fulfilment of God's plan for us is likewise "soon"- in the ultimate perspective.

It could also be that Joseph's two dreams were fulfilled [to some extent] in the two visits of the brothers to Egypt- they twice bowed before him. Although the fulfilment is still incomplete, because at those points his parents didn't bow to him. The full fulfilment will be at the resurrection.

And told it to his brothers, and said, Behold, I have dreamed yet another dream: and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me- It must have taken Joseph quite some courage to explain the dreams to his brethren. "He dreamed yet another dream, *and* told it his brethren" (AV). There was quite likely a certain bucking up of courage in the spirit of the Lord Jesus at age 30, when he 'came down from Heaven' and started preaching the glories of his future Kingdom to a cynical Israel. This is our struggle, to tell forth the things revealed to us. As noted on :36, Potiphar and Pharaoh both mean "sun", and had temporal mastership over Joseph. When Pharaoh ["the sun"] pointed out that in the throne, he would be above Joseph... he must have remembered this dream. We have established here the basis for how sun, moon and stars, the figurative heavens, refer to Israel and its leadership, or founding fathers.

Gen 37:10 *He told it to his father and to his brothers. His father rebuked him, and said to him, What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves down to you to the earth?*- This reveals how Jacob's view of the promises, even at the age of 108, was very much on a surface level. Rachel was dead (Gen. 35:19), and Jacob mocked the suggestion that she would ever "come" to bow to her son as it implied a resurrection. It has been suggested that Joseph had the dream as a very small child, before the death of Rachel. But the dream spoke of his eleven brothers; so that is not a possibility, unless his dream was also a prophecy that Jacob would have another son.

Jacob's anger with Joseph's claim that all his brothers would bow down to him is explicable when we remember that Isaac had promised Jacob that this would be *his* blessing (Gen. 27:29 cp. 37:10). Yet at the end, he realized that the promised blessings didn't *only* apply to him on a personal level, and he even conferred such a blessing on Judah (Gen. 49:8). See on :7.

The bowing down will ultimately be in gratitude. And Rachel, presented in the record as unspiritual to her last gasp, will do likewise. We wonder if she will bow down in gratitude because she will be saved because of Joseph (consider how the faith of third parties can save in some cases, Mk. 2:5).

Gen 37:11 *His brothers envied him*- As Israel envied Moses for spiritual reasons (Ps. 106:16; Acts 7:9), so they did the Lord(Mt. 27:18), after the pattern of the brothers' spiritual envy of Joseph. Spiritual envy leading to persecution is quite a common feature in Biblical history (Job, Jeremiah, Paul...). And it isn't absent from the Christian experience either. Envy is a great theme in the Abraham family. The Philistines envied Isaac (Gen. 26:14); as (we can assume) Laban did Jacob; Rachel envied Leah (Gen. 30:1); Joseph's brothers envied him (Acts 7:9). Family friction certainly stalked the generations. Jacob against Esau, Isaac against Jacob, Ishmael against Isaac, Sarah against Hagar, Joseph's brothers amongst themselves (Gen. 45:24). Envy of Israel by the world and friction within Israel has been a continued characteristic (what similarities with spiritual Israel?). Yet there was also a soft streak there; Esau and Jacob evidently had a certain affection for each other and willingness to truly forgive (Esau more so than Jacob!); Abraham truly cared for Lot's fate in Sodom on at least two occasions; and the brothers genuinely cared for Benjamin and the grief of their father.

But his father kept this saying in mind- As did Mary, mother of the Lord Jesus (Lk. 2:19,51). In Lk. 2:51 it is recorded that Mary "kept these sayings". It could be that she had pondered from the LXX of Gen. 37:11 how Jacob "observed" (s.w.) the saying of Joseph / Jesus, and therefore felt that she too must meditate on all the words associated with her Son. She speaks in Lk. 1:55 Gk. of "*the* seed of him"- she understood the seed of Abraham to be Messiah, her son, and makes many references and allusions to the promises to Abraham. She had clearly reflected upon her 'first principles'.

Gen 37:12 *His brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem*- About 60 miles from their base in Hebron. Shechem was where they had massacred all the male population and pillaged the town. They were only able to return there and graze their flocks by God's absolute grace. And yet it was whilst living in this wonderful grace and salvation of them, from the consequences of their own sins, that they allowed their envy of their brother to turn to hatred and almost murder. All our sins are committed because we forget the amazing grace we live under; and because we fail to appropriately remember our past. They had clearly just hived off the memory of their shameful behaviour at Shechem. And lived graceless lives as a result.

Gen 37:13 *Israel said to Joseph, Aren't your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem?*

Come, and I will send you to them. He said to him, Here I am- The fact Jacob sent Joseph with the priestly robe, which wouldn't have been worn apart from in a religious context, suggests he intended Joseph to conduct a religious ceremony with them, which he hoped they would accept. See on :4. He wished the ceremony to give them "peace" (:14).

Joseph readily responded to his father's desire that he go to his brethren: "Here I am". Isaiah, another type of Christ, uttered similar words before his mission to Israel (Is. 6:8), and the Lord's spirit was likewise (Heb. 10:7). Yet in both Joseph and Isaiah there must have been a sense of apprehension, sensing the persecution that would come. In line with the typology of Joseph and Isaiah, there was a point when the Lord received and responded to His Father's commission. This may have been some time in His teens; perhaps 17, as with Joseph? Or at 30 when he began His ministry and came "into the (Jewish) world"?

Gen 37:14 *He said to him, Go now, see whether it is well with your brothers, and well with the flock; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem*- "Go... see whether it is well with your brothers" is the same Hebrew as in 1 Sam. 17:18, also typical of the Lord. He was sent to the shepherds and the sheep of Israel. This accounts for the special effort he made to appeal to the Jewish religious leaders, even when it seemed he was wasting time with them. Jacob wanted there to be "peace" for them ["it is well" = *shalom*, peace], which was the Lord's mission likewise; whom "God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36). We recall that they had not even given Joseph the "peace" greeting, and Jacob thought that the keeping of the ritual would rectify that. Perhaps the conclusion intended is that keeping religious rituals will not of itself bring peace between brethren. Even if our brethren cannot say "peace" to us, we should still seek their peace and blessing.

Gen 37:15 *A certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering delirious in the field. The man asked him, What are you looking for?*- The life of Jesus was a life of outgiven grace and seeking the salvation of men, after the pattern of Joseph going to seek the welfare of his brethren. Even when he was delirious [AV "wandering"] he told the stranger that he was seeking his brethren (who hated him); seeking them was his dominant desire. And so it was in the life of the Lord. Like His Father, He was willing to be incredibly patient, in order to win people. The man may well have been an Angel. The incident functioned to remind Joseph later that his life had been preserved at this point; and this would have encouraged him when in the pit and in prison that God had preserved his life before. His purpose with Joseph was therefore far from over. The question "What are you looking for / seeking?" was thereby so strongly engrained in Joseph's mind, so that in all decisions and situations he would be asking himself this

crucial question. But the Hebrew translated here "delirious" is usually used in a negative context, or erring or going astray. Perhaps his resolve to seek and find his brethren spiritually (see on :16) had weakened, and he needed this Angelic encounter to encourage him to go forward to what he rightly guessed could be death or suffering, for the sake of his brethren who hated him.

Gen 37:16 *He said, I am searching for my brothers*- The Hebrew for "searching" is also used in the sense of asking / enquiring of God in prayer. As noted above, both Jacob and Joseph had premonitions that there would be trouble, and Joseph's mission involved taking the coat of many colours for some religious rite, and seeking the peace of those who would not give "peace" to him. The incident with the man / Angel who found Joseph was likely to focus him upon his mission, to get him to verbalize it. And we have similar encounters in our lives, to make us realize our mission. The way Joseph talks about "my brothers" could imply that he felt the man knew him and his brothers, strengthening the suggestion that this was an Angel.

Tell me, please, where they are feeding the flock- The record speaks often of "the flock" in the singular. It was specifically Jacob's flock, so large that it needed all his adult sons and probably others to feed it. Joseph assumed the man knew where his brothers were; suggesting he himself understood the man who had come to seek *him* as being an Angel. And he was thereby comforted, that God was in search of *him* just as he was of his brothers.

Gen 37:17 *The man said, They have left here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan'. Joseph went after his brothers, and found them in Dothan*- About eight miles further. This all points forward to the Lord Jesus seeking and finding His Father's wayward children. In the incidents with his brethren later regarding the cup, Joseph likewise chases after his brethren and 'finds' them. His whole work with them was to seek and find them, for God. From youth to middle age, this was his very gracious mission toward them.

Gen 37:18 *They saw him afar off, and before he came near to them, they conspired against him to kill him*- There are steep hills near Dothan which would have enabled them to see Joseph approaching across the plain. The leaders of first century Israel initially recognized Jesus of Nazareth coming to them as the Messiah (Mt. 21:38 cp. Gen. 37:20; Jn. 7:28). They saw (i.e. understood, recognized) him, but then they were made blind by Christ (Jn. 9:39). It was because they "saw" Jesus as the Messiah that the sin of rejecting him was counted to them (Jn. 9:41). "When the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves (i.e. conspired), This is the heir; come, let us kill him" (Mt. 21:38). Mt. 21:38 is quoting the LXX of Gen. 37:18.

Gen 37:19 *They said one to another, Behold, this dreamer comes*- Heb. '*baal /* master of dreams'. They perhaps meant that he considered himself the *baal*, their master as the one having the status of the firstborn, on account of his dreams. Jealousy over the status of being the designated firstborn is a major theme in the record. Isaac replaced Ishmael, Jacob replaced Esau, Jacob wanted Joseph to replace Reuben, and even at the end of his life, Jacob wants to replace Manasseh with Ephraim (Gen. 48:14). The lesson was never learnt, an yet by grace, Jacob and his sons will be saved. This is comfort to us as we come to realize that both we and others shall go to their graveplanks with some areas of our lives and thinking still not subdued by the Spirit as they should have been.

Gen 37:20 *Come now therefore and let's kill him, and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say, 'An evil animal has devoured him'*- They never 'said' this; Jacob was led by them to wrongly deduce it (:33). But such misleading and deception is tantamount to telling the lies. Giving false impressions, even without speaking a word, is therefore the same as lying. This legalistic, but vain, attempt to avoid guilt for the sin is all prophetic of the Jewish attitude to the Lord's crucifixion.

The plot to kill Joseph is here directly related to his dreams. Dreams, when publically spoken forth, were believed to have absolute power in the lifetime of the dreamer. There are many accounts of those who spoke forth a dream being killed, lest their dream come true. It was thought that the death of the dreamer would stop the dream coming true. When they finally do bow before Joseph, they were tacitly admitting that his dreams were coming true and therefore he was not dead. By doing so, they should have joined the dots and seen that therefore Joseph must be alive. And their psychological fixation with believing Joseph was dead was because they were so adamant that they could never bow down before their spiritual superior.

We will see what will become of his dreams- Likewise the Lord's inspired prophecies of His death and resurrection must have motivated the Jews' slaying of Him. The brothers failed to appreciate that the dreams were not so much talking about this life as about some future point, when Rachel would be resurrected. So murdering Joseph would not disprove the dreams. The selling of Joseph as a slave was probably seen by them as a way of forcing his dreams to not be fulfilled- they thought that by doing this, he was not to be a ruler, but a slave. Again and again we see how human efforts to falsify God's word only in fact fulfil it.

Gen 37:21 *Reuben heard it, and delivered him out of their hand, and said, Let's not take his life*- Reuben had slept with his father's concubine, and yet despite that awful sin, he still had a better side to him. And we should remember this in considering our feelings about those who have committed what are without doubt serious sins. He still considered himself the firstborn, despite his demotion from that as a result of the incest

of Gen. 35:22. He points forward to the efforts of the unspiritual Pilate to save the Lord (Jn. 19:12).

Jacob cursed Reuben as being as downhill as water in sleeping with his concubine. He meant that Reuben had acted as caught up in a downward spiral of lust, just as water always continues to flow downhill. But here and later, Reuben shows that man can repent and pull out of such downward spirals.

Gen 37:22 *Reuben said to them, Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him-that he might deliver him out of their hand, to restore him to his father*- Joseph and Nicodemus were inspired with that sense which we possess all too fleetingly: that in the light of the Lord's death, *nothing else matters*. They were both typified in some way by Reuben and Judah, who when confronted with the reality of murdering Joseph, spoke out unashamedly in front of their unspiritual brethren (Gen. 42:22). They pointed forward also to Pilate, who wanted to chastise and then release the Lord (Lk. 23:16). Like the Jews who crucified the Lord Jesus, these men clearly had a conscience even in the midst of their sin. In our outreach to the world, we must never conclude that some people have no religious conscience. All are made in the image of God and somewhere, there is a conscience toward Him which we can connect with through the message.

Gen 37:23 *It happened, when Joseph came to his brothers*-Just as the Lord came to His brothers and was rejected, betrayed for pieces of silver and slain (Jn. 1:11 "he came to his own"). The camera, as it were, is showing Joseph walking across the plain towards them (:18), and now is zoomed in close-up as Joseph comes to them, and they grab his coat.

That they stripped Joseph of his coat, the coat of many colours that was on him- Just as the Lord was stripped of a specially made coat (Jn. 19:23). Was Joseph naked in the pit? The same LXX word is used in Mt. 27:28; was the Lord naked on the cross? See on Heb. 6:6 "open shame". Joseph came to them wearing the special coat, the sign of the firstborn, as if he came to them with some religious message and wanted to perform some religious ritual. We recall how Jacob dressed in Esau's coat of the firstborn when deceiving Isaac.

Gen 37:24 *And they took him and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty*- "Dothan" means 'two wells'. Perhaps he was thrown into one of these which was dry.

There was no water in it- Representing death and the grave (Zech. 9:11; Ps. 40:2). When Zedekiah called Jeremiah out of the prison house to meet him and show him the word of God, he ought to have perceived that he was going through the very experience of Pharaoh with Joseph (Jer. 37:17,20). Jeremiah’s desperate plea not to be sent back to

prison to die there surely echoes that of Joseph to his brethren; for Jeremiah was let down like Joseph had been into a pit with no water in, so reminiscent of Joseph. But Zedekiah didn't want to see all this; he should've listened to Jeremiah, as Pharaoh had listened to Joseph and saved himself. It was all potentially set up for him; but he refused to take note. The lack of water in the pit may imply there were therefore poisonous snakes and scorpions within it, as was typical in that area.

Gen 37:25 *They sat down to eat bread*- Ignoring Joseph's screams for mercy (Gen. 42:21), as the soldiers sat down and watched the Lord on the cross, eating their army rations. The callousness of the brothers reminds us of what they did in the massacre at Shechem. Every one of them would receive multiple life sentences in high security prison if they were alive today. And yet these harsh, wicked men... became the foundation pillars of God's people. Even though there is little record of their transformation in this life. They were saved by the grace of their wonderful brother and heavenly Father. They are parade examples of men who cannot find the humility to express their repentance in public words, and yet in their own way are still repent. For repentance is a matter of the heart, and it is the heart God looks upon.

"And they sat down" after killing the Lord Jesus- Mt. 27:36.

Their sitting down to eat suggests a lack of conscience. Haman did the same after arranging for the Jews to be slain, as Jehu did after the murder of Jezebel. In contrast, Darius refused to eat after he had sent Daniel to the lion's den. In this case, as with Haman and Jehu, the eating was done rather than fasting to demonstrate a good conscience. But God worked on them to help them repent. And we see how feeling good conscience does not of itself justify us, as Paul also states (1 Cor. 4:5).

And they lifted up their eyes and looked, and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing spices and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt- Jacob later sent such balm, made from fragrant gum trees which grew in Canaan, called ladanum (Gen. 43:11). The brothers were intended by the hand of providence to reflect that in going to Egypt with such gum balm, they were retracing the steps of Joseph and those merchants. God works to restimulate within us memory of our unrepented of sins, and this is a classic example.

Throughout the records of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his children there is continual repetition in the manner in which the record is written. This repetition is of both experiences and of the language used to describe those experiences. The repeated language about going down to Egypt is an example. Thus Gen. 39:1- 8: "Joseph was brought down to Egypt... the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down thither... down to Egypt" (37:25). There are other examples: "The Lord was with Joseph... and his master

saw that the Lord was with him". "His master the Egyptian... his master". "Joseph... was a prosperous man... the Lord made all that he did to prosper". Potiphar "made him overseer over his house...from the time that he had made him overseer in his house". "All that he had he put into his hand... over all that he had... the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had... he left all that he had in Joseph's hand". "His hand... into his hand... Joseph's hand... to my hand". This kind of linguistic device suggests that the Spirit in Genesis is inviting us to observe the development of theme and to note emphasis. The above example from Joseph's life is one of many such sets of evidence. The repetition of certain descriptions and common experiences in the lives of Abraham's family members is to enable us to build up a very clear picture of what they were like as people. We are being enabled to get to know them as a family. This is necessary for us if we are to realistically obey the New Testament commands to see Abraham and the patriarchs as our spiritual fathers, to model our daily walk upon them, to see in them the examples which should dominate our lives and thinking. The way the record repeats their similar experiences reveals certain family traits; the majority of which are *negative*. This takes some appreciating.

Gen 37:26 *Judah said to his brothers, What profit is it if we kill our brother-* At least two of his ten persecutors were unhappy about what they were doing , and said so (:22). Perhaps the whole group egged each other on to adopt an attitude none were totally happy with in their conscience- Ditto for first century Israel? But the motivation of Judah may simply have been "profit", and we note that "Judah" is effectively the same word as "Judas". The Hebrew for "profit" is usually used of wealth unjustly obtained. Judah reasons that there is no cash value in just murdering Joseph. Later, Joseph was to shower them with silver in the mouths of their sacks, and even his silver cup; to show them that he repaid this evil with good, and that silver was immaterial when compared to grace.

And conceal his blood?- Blood is a symbol of both life and also death (also in Num. 35:19,33; Lev. 20:9). Both the Lord's death and His life form a covenant / testament / will for us to obey- in both baptism and then in living out the death and life in our daily experience. We cannot be passive to it. Judah means that there is no cash advantage if they just kill Joseph and conceal or cover their [responsibility for] his blood (as in Job 16:18; Ez. 24:8). The same word is soon to be used twice of how Judah in turn will be deceived by Tamar covering / concealing herself (Gen. 38:14,15). This is not simply an example of 'what goes around, comes around'. God makes such circumstances repeat because He wants to help people to repent, to realize the effect of what they have done to others in the hope it will elicit sensitivity and repentance.

Gen 37:27 *Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not let our hand be on him; for he is our brother, our flesh. His brothers listened to him*- This recalls "We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30). "Let not our hand be on him" may mean that they thought that the rigours of slavery would be enough to kill him, and in the same spirit, the Jews handed Jesus over to the Romans. Does the antitype indicate some of the brothers thought this fact would absolve them of guilt? Like the Jews, they were very eager to minimize their guilt through legalistic manouevre; but they end up, like we do, realizing that they had to throw themselves upon the grace of the one who had effectively died and been resurrected. They likely held some belief that a special curse would come upon them if they themselves killed their own flesh brother; I suggest this is how we should read this verse, rather than seeing any softness toward Joseph on their part.

Gen 37:28 *Midianites who were merchants passed by*- These Ishmaelites lived in Midian.

And they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver- The Lord Jesus was "him... whom they priced on the part of the sons of Israel" (Mt. 27:9 RVmg.). The reference to "the sons of Israel" is surely an allusion to the sons of Jacob selling Joseph for his value. Twenty pieces of silver was the price of redemption for a teenager (Lev. 27:5); the Lord was sold for thirty pieces, the price of a slave (Ex. 21:32). There is much intended repetition of theme within the Joseph story. They received pieces of silver for Joseph; and Joseph later stuffs their sacks full of silver. He is showing his absolute grace- not demanding silver back from them, but rather showering them with even more silver.

The idea of selling Joseph into permanent slavery was perhaps attractive to the brothers because it apparently assured them that his dream would never come true. They would never be his slaves, they thought- because they were making him a lifetime slave. But as with the Lord Jesus, the slavery of the despised, suffering servant becomes the path to His Lordship over those He was sold to serve.

They brought Joseph into Egypt- According to some reconstructions of the geography, their route would have taken them through Mamre and Hebron, where Jacob was and from where Joseph had just come from. It would've all been so terribly painful for him, as it was for the Lord. Joseph later understood that he had been sent by God to Egypt for a saving purpose (Gen. 45:8); and Ps. 105:21 is explicit that God "sent" Joseph to Egypt. This was perhaps one key to Joseph's amazing grace and forgiveness towards his brothers- he firmly believed, and eagerly perceived, that their dysfunction and bad behaviour towards him was in fact used by God. We need to perceive the same, lest we become consumed by bitterness.

Gen 37:29 *Reuben returned to the pit; and saw that Joseph wasn't in the pit; and he tore his clothes*- Reuben wasn't present; perhaps he had gone somewhere in order to try to arrange some release of Joseph. The Divine camera of inspiration invites us to view Reuben alone at the pit, and then returning to his brothers (:30) who were nearby but not directly at the pit. Maybe he had gone to the pit alone in order to get Joseph out of it. I suggest on :30 that Reuben may not have been totally sincere in all this. He tore his coat because he wanted Joseph's coat, the sign of the firstborn.

Gen 37:30 *He returned to his brothers and said, The child is no more; and I, where will I go?*- Such an outburst would be appropriate for Reuben as the firstborn who was responsible for his brothers. But he had been stripped of that position after the incest of Gen. 35:22. So his words may not have been completely sincere, but rather an insistence that he was in fact the firstborn.

Gen 37:31 *They took Joseph's coat, and killed a male goat, and dipped the coat in the blood*- This is full of reference to atonement rituals; the point being that their sin could not be covered by any such ritual of animal sacrifice, but only by the gracious forgiveness of Joseph [cp. the Lord Jesus]. To make it realistic, the dipping may not have been complete immersion. And yet the blood soaked garment becomes the visual characteristic of the Lord Jesus (Rev. 19:13). Their father would now have to make a new coat and designate another firstborn.

Gen 37:32 *They took the coat of many colours, and they sent it to their father, and said, We have found this. Examine it, please, whether it is your son's coat or not*- They sent it by messengers before they themselves arrived. This was so cruel to Jacob. The brothers implied that they did not know for sure whether it was Joseph's coat or not; even though it was the object of their intense jealousy. Their language has credibility. Even when trying to deceive, they couldn't but call Joseph "your son" rather than "our brother"; and likewise they pretended not to know very much about the coat. The whole story must have had less and less credibility as the years went by; and yet the brothers would have continued the lie all the more insistently.

"They sent it" by messengers; for the brothers themselves wouldn't have asked Jacob to discern whose the striped garment belonged to. The whole immediate family knew it was Joseph's.

We observe here how the brothers cared little for the pain of their father. But years later, they present as genuinely concerned at the damage that would be done to him if Benjamin doesn't return. So we see some genuine spiritual growth in them, although they had been unwilling to make public confession of their sin against Joseph. Likewise the headstrong and unspiritual Judah and Reuben, whose sexual failures are recorded

especially in Gen. 38, appear as the ones most eager to save Joseph, and to save their father from the pain of losing the son of his beloved favourite wife Rachel. They passed through their selfish sexual failures to being compassionate towards others. But all this spiritual growth was without specific repentance. We would so like them to all make a grand confession and beg for mercy. But pride apparently stops them from doing so, as it does so many. But that is not to say that there is no spirituality nor spiritual growth in such persons. This is why demanding the fruit of repentance for specific sins is often misplaced. Repentance may not be expressed for specific sins, people may continue believing the lies they spun [in this case, that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal]; but the apparently impenitent person may have spiritual fruit in other areas.

Jacob's response to receiving Joseph's garment was to tear his own garments and to conclude that Joseph was torn in pieces (:33). We can surely infer that the garment was torn. We can likewise infer that Joseph's garment was torn by Potiphar's wife. Because merely presenting Joseph's garment was no evidence he had tried to rape her. But presenting it torn would suggest she had struggled with her supposed rapist. In reality, she threw herself onto him, and he ran away with her gripping hold of his garment so that it tore. So again we see how circumstances repeated in Joseph's life; he not only lost his garment, but it was torn by his abusers in order to give a false impression.

Gen 37:33 *He recognized it, and said, It is my son's coat. An evil animal has devoured him. Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces*- "Joseph is... rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes" (:34); Jacob shared in Joseph's death. This is a fine prefigurement of the (sadly ignored) pain of God, as well as another example of the record having absolute psychological credibility. Jacob is pretended as falling completely ["without doubt..."] for their story. And yet he must have had his doubts. He was being placed precisely in the position of his father Isaac when he had deceived him regarding the birthright blessing. Jacob's later words about the matter are pregnant with the hint that he guessed something was wrong with the story: "[Joseph] went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I haven't seen him since" (Gen. 44:28). This could be taken as meaning 'This is what I thought at the time, I was sure of it; although it's true that since then, I never saw him again'.

Judah "recognized" / discerned his personal identifying items (Gen. 38:26) when Tamar exposes his sin; the same word is used of how Judah and the brothers challenged their father to recognize / discern Joseph's coat of many colours (Gen. 37:33). So through Judah's sin, he was led to appreciate how his father had felt. And that is why it is Judah who is so careful later to ensure his father is not made to feel about Benjamin how he did about the loss of Joseph.

Earlier in his life, Jacob had learned to "bear the loss" of that which was "torn in pieces of beasts"; and the same terms are used in Gen. 31:39 and Gen. 37:33, when again

Jacob has to 'bear the loss' of [apparently] having his beloved son torn in pieces of wild beasts [s.w.]. As so often in our lives, one experience is used to prepare us for a similar one, but to a much greater extent. In this case, not bearing the loss of an animal, but of a beloved son.

Gen 37:34 *Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days*- As Joseph's coat was torn, so his father tore *his* clothes. This sense of identity with the deceased is natural and is another example of where these ancient records have every psychological credibility, adding to our faith that what we are reading really did happen as stated. The "many days" can be understood as lasting until he met Joseph again, 22 years. This was the same period that he was absent from his father's house. Jacob returned to Isaac 22 years after he left when fleeing Esau [Gen. 31:41 "These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock", plus the 18 months he lived in Shechem and Bethel on the way back to Isaac]. To his father he had effectively been dead. He ought to have returned sooner. But he was being taught the grief he had brought upon Isaac his father.

Gen 37:35 *All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He said, For I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning. His father wept for him*- The Syriac says: "I will go down into the grave on account of my son mourning". He felt suicidal and wanted to die with his 'dead' son. As noted on :34, his recorded reaction is absolutely psychologically credible. His refusal to accept their comfort could reflect his skepticism about the whole story. We note too that he had "daughters", as well as Dinah. And one lie led to others. It was this which all contributed to Jacob's sense of loneliness, suspecting all around him were deceiving him.

Jacob's love for Rachel is reflected and acknowledged by the inspired record when we read of *Rachel* weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted "because they are not" (Mt. 2:18; Jer. 31:15). But these ideas are more relevant surely to *Jacob* weeping for Rachel and especially for Joseph- for Jacob wept for Joseph and refused to be comforted (Gen. 37:35). This was after the death of Rachel (Gen. 35:19). Surely the record is reflecting the unity which there was between Jacob and Rachel; even after her death, Jacob wept as it were with her kind of weeping. And yet she was not a very spiritual woman. Martin Buber notes that "womenfolk bring the household gods to the homes of their husbands from the homes of their fathers" (*Moses* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1947) p. 205). By doing this, Rachel showed both her loyalty to her husband and yet also her attachment to idolatry; a classic case of mixed motivation arising from not having wholly given herself to the one true God.

Both good and bad people go to *sheol,* 'hell', i.e. the grave. Thus Jesus "made his grave with the wicked" (Is. 53:9). In line with this, there are other examples of righteous men going to hell, i.e. the grave. Jacob said that he would "go down into the grave (hell)... mourning" for his son Joseph.

Gen 37:36 *The Midianites sold him into Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard*- "Officer" is 'eunuch', which would explain his wife's sexual frustration. "Captain of the guard" is Heb. 'captain of the slaughterers'; he was in charge of execution. This raises the question as to why Potiphar didn't immediately have Joseph executed for trying to rape his wife; the fact he didn't makes us think that actually, he suspected she was lying and didn't want to kill Joseph, although he had to be seen as punishing him. The LXX gives "chief cook", which would mean that the presence of the butler and baker in prison was likewise at the hands of Potiphar. They would've all known each other, and surely the butler and baker knew Joseph to be innocent. There is also the possibility that the keeper of the prison was in fact Potiphar, if "captain of the guard" is correct.

The words Potiphar and Pharaoh are very similar; they both mean "the sun". As Joseph was subject to these men, he would have remembered his dream- that ultimately the sun would bow down to him. But his faith in that prophetic word was to be sorely tested.

GENESIS CHAPTER 38

Gen 38:1 *It happened at that time*- Judah was intended to be in the line of Messiah. And yet he married an unbeliever. It would seem that he married young, and he made his sons marry young likewise. Note that his sons are recorded as dying "in Canaan", before Judah left Canaan to emigrate to Egypt. This requires that the events of Gen. 38 occurred whilst Joseph was suffering in Egypt, and are typical of the sin of Israel / Judah in the Gentile world before their repentance and acceptance by Joseph / Jesus. As discussed on :6, there is a chronological issue with this chapter, and the Hebrew may mean that these events happened at the time that Judah went down from his brothers sometime earlier, rather than "that time" connecting with Gen. 37.

However, it is very hard to fit all the events of this chapter into the time period between when Joseph at 17 was sold into Egypt, and when at 30 he stood before Pharoah. I suggest that this is what today we would call a footnote or excursus- to remind us that the Judah we have just read about in Gen. 37 had messed up big time. And his effort to save Joseph, who had replaced him as the firstborn, was a fruit of his repentance. He had lost two sons, and this led him towards not wanting his father to have to go through losing sons, not Joseph nor later Benjamin. We too are to trade upon our life experience, including of our failures, to come towards sensitivity towards others and their feelings. So "at that time" may effectively mean 'It should be understood that the events at that

time should be read in the light of Judah's earlier messed up life'.

That Judah went down from his brothers- See on Gen. 44:33. He separated himself from God's people, associated with Gentiles and was led into sin. But the point of the story is that God still worked through him, because Tamar was directly in the line of Messiah. God's purposes were not stopped by human failure. There were only 22 years from this time to the emigration of the family to Egypt, and it is noted that Judah's adult sons died in Canaan. Therefore we can conclude that this separation was immediately after the attempted murder of Joseph (:1), so perhaps the result of the sin was a disagreement between the brothers, so that Judah went off on his own.

"Went down" connects with how at the end of the preceding chapter, Joseph's loss makes Jacob feel he is 'going down' to his grave; and in the next chapter, we read that Joseph "went down" into Egypt. So Gen. 38 is not in fact out of context. We are being shown that through his various sins, Judah knew in essence the experience of his father and brother.

And visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah- "Visited" is AV "turned in"- Heb. 'to bend away', the language of apostasy. Clearly Judah is presented as having turned away from his brothers to the Canaanites, even though the family of Jacob were a "stench" to the Canaanites (Gen. 34:30). Judah therefore clearly identified and intermarried with the Canaanites and thereby separated from his own family. The interlude of Genesis 38 clearly presents Judah as a man who had been weak and yet through his response to his sins, was made strong. "Adullam" literally means 'to turn aside', so Judah turned aside to the place of turning aside.

Gen 38:2 *Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua. He took her, and went in to her*- Shua was the name of her father, according to the LXX and also :12. "Saw... took... went in to her" is the language of David's sin with Bathsheba; note the use of messengers to try to get themselves out of the consequences of their action. "See... take" is used throughout Genesis in a negative sense (Gen. 3:6; 6:2; 12:15; 34:2). Judah took a Canaanite woman and shamefully treated her. Esau took [s.w.] Canaanite women, but married them and treated them responsibly (Gen. 36:2). But by grace, it is Jacob's line and not Esau's who were chosen. There is a theme in the record that the sons of Jacob were not better than the sons of Ishmael and Esau who chose not to continue in God's covenant purpose, indeed they were often worse; the only difference was that they chose to hand in with God's grace.

"Canaanite" is the same word as "merchant", and we could conclude that Judah's initiative to sell Joseph to merchants was because he actually knew them and had been previously involved with them. He was possibly their son in law. The whole story is perhaps to show that from a man as mixed up and hypocritical as Judah, there arose the

royal line of Israel's kings which would climax in the Lord Jesus. "Shua" means 'wealthy / opulent'. Perhaps we see here materialism in Judah; it was he who suggested selling Joseph and getting some money out of the whole thing, rather than just killing him. His interest in the 20 pieces of silver clearly connects with that of Judas [the same name as Judah] in the 30 pieces of silver for the Lord. His son Onan likewise means "wealthy".

However this incident also shows the great hypocrisy of the brothers in slaying the men of Shechem in Gen. 35, claiming that they could not possibly intermarry. When Judah had behaved as he did with Canaanites, and in any case, the brothers grabbed the women of Shechem for themselves afterwards.

Gen 38:3 *She conceived, and bore a son; and he named him Er*- He was slain for his wickedness (:7) and yet Judah's son Shelah had a son of the same name, to as it were replace him rather than leave this wicked man unremembered in the family (1 Chron. 4:21)."Er" is a reversal of the letters 're', the Hebrew word for evil, and a play is made on this in :7. This chapter emphasizes the deep unspirituality of Judah; and yet from him was to come the Messiah and future people of God. The function of the chapter is to show "that the pre-eminence of Judah in the patriarchal family was due exclusively to grace". We may also be left to perceive that unless God had providentially moved the family into Egypt, they would have intermingled with the Canaanites and lost their covenant relationship with Yahweh. Which again is an example of grace.

Gen 38:4 *She conceived again, and bore a son; and she named him Onan*- Judah was probably only a few years older than Joseph, who was 17 at this time (:1); perhaps he was 21 (Gen. 29:35 cp. Gen. 30:25). See on :6.

Gen 38:5 *She yet again bore a son, and named him Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bore him*- Chezib means 'falsehood'. Why else mention the place? Maybe the idea is that Judah wasn't present at the birth of his third child because he was away at 'falsehood', perhaps implying he was involved in an illicit relationship there.

Gen 38:6 *Judah took a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar*- Er would have been very young at this time; for there were only 22 years from the this time when Joseph was 17 (:1) to when the family moved to Egypt. The 22 years can be calculated from Gen. 30:31; 31:41; 37:2,25; 41:46; 46:5,12. Judah was keen to see his sons married and to build up his family; Isaac and Jacob married much older. So perhaps Judah, like his fathers, was trying to force through the fulfilment of God's promises of a multitudinous seed, although his attempts failed. Indeed for the history to fit, it has been argued by Adam Clarke that Judah would have married as a teenager and Er likewise. An alternative is to think that this chapter is out of historical sequence and has

been placed here for some narrative purpose, and the "at that time" of :1 refers to some time other than the events of Gen. 37. But the record may be demonstrating Judah's manic desire to have children and force the fulfilment of the promises of fruitfulness. Another possibility is that :1 should mean "It had come to pass at the time that Judah went down from his brethren...". The incident would then refer to an earlier incident; but if Joseph was 17 at the time of chapter 37, then it would still mean that Judah was very young when he married and these events happened.

"Tamar" means "palm tree" and was used as a fertility symbol. She was set up to be fertile, but was deceived, as she saw it, by Judah and his family God, Yahweh, so that she had no children. To be left a childless widow in another man's house was real social death. It seems she was made to wear the garments of widowhood for very many years (:14), so that she would be perceived as unavailable to any other man. Inflicted because of Judah's fears that she was a *femme fatale*, and his one remaining son would also die because of her. Instead of facing the truth that his two older sons had died because of their sins and not because of Tamar.

Gen 38:7 *Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of Yahweh. Yahweh killed him*- Despite his youth (see on :6). We may think that behaviour in our late teens or early 20s can be as it were scribbled because we were young. But human behaviour counts to God, at whatever age. We note that Yahweh killed wicked people at this time. And yet the sons of Jacob had committed major wickedness in the effective murder of Joseph and the massacre of Shechem. And yet Yahweh didn't kill them. This note about Er demonstrates not only that once again, being the literal firstborn was not related to spirituality; but also that the founding fathers of Israel were preserved by pure grace. See on :10. "Wicked in the sight of Yahweh" is the phrase used about the sins of Sodom (Gen. 13:13).

Gen 38:8 *Judah said to Onan, Go in to your brother's wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her, and raise up seed to your brother*- As noted on :6, Judah was desperate to generate a multitudinous seed in his own strength and by his own devices. The Levirate laws in the later law of Moses were clearly in existence before Moses' time. Some argue that we should keep the Sabbath because it was in existence before Moses' time; but on that basis, so should we keep this principle of raising up seed, and also the separation between clean and unclean animals which was clearly known at the time of the flood.

Gen 38:9 *Onan knew that the seed wouldn't be his; and it happened, when he went in to his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest he should give seed to his brother*- The sin was not masturbation as such, as has wrongly been supposed, but not loving his

brother and being selfish. It was a sin of ommission, cloaked under an appearance of obedience- and God hates that. The same Hebrew phrase is used repeatedly of how the world's population in Noah's time *corrupted* God's way *in the earth*, and how God in appropriate response *destroyed the earth* (Gen. 6:11,12,13,17). There is therefore the implication that Judah wasn't interested in raising up a seed for God, but rather just wanted his own seed on the terms he wished. The phrase is repeatedly used in the prophets for how the earth / land of Judah was to be 'destroyed'. Judah were destroyed because like the historical Judah, they didn't want to raise a Godly seed. Ewald suggests the Hebrew suggests that Onan did this 'whenever he went in...' to her, taking sexual gratification from her without consummation. He therefore treated her as a prostitute, for his own pleasure; and was slain for it. And yet Judah his father used a prostitute at least once (and we could infer that he often used prostitutes, as Tamar knew his behaviour to be predictable) and was not slain. Again we see that Judah, one of the prominent founders of Israel, was saved by grace.

We note that in the story of Ruth, an anonymous relative refuses to raise up seed to his dead relative- and was apparently not slain. Indeed Dt. 25:5-10 taught that such a person should be shamed but not executed. But here, Onan is slain for that same sin of omission; perhaps because he didn't just refuse, he gave an appearance of obedience which was fake. Perhaps the lesson is that God hates such hypocrisy. And surely many others committed it. So we see how the same sin is punished with immediate death in Onan's case, whereas others commit the same sin but don't experience that judgment at that time. We are to learn from this that even though sinners don't always drop dead immediately, sin is still sin and the judgment in God's book is just as real. That is why we have Achan slain for touching the ark, the disobedient prophet killed by a lion, Ananias and Sapphira slain immediately- whereas others apparently get away with sin. The contrast is intentional, and serves as a reminder to never forget that the wages of sin is indeed death, despite God's patient grace. This should serve to shake us from the numbness and half awareness with which man tends to drift through life.

Gen 38:10 *The thing which he did was evil in the sight of Yahweh, and He killed him also*- Even in the darkness of a tent or inner room, God's eyes noticed every detail. Time and again Biblical history demonstrates that sins of silence and omission are just as fatal as sins of public, physical commission. Onan omitted to raise up seed to his brother, and was slain. Given the serious sins of the family, this judgment may appear severe. But as noted on :7, the function of this chapter is to underline that the development and preservation of the people of God was by grace alone. They had done far worse things than these young men who were punished so severely, and yet they were preserved by grace.

The experience of losing two sons is surely what leads Judah to be especially sensitive to how his father would feel if Benjamin were not to return to him. God has a way of

working through human sin, and its consequences, in order to bring us to greater sensitivity to others. If we respond as God intends. And so the Judah who breaks with his family (:1) becomes the one who becomes so responsible towards his younger brother Benjamin and the feelings of his aged father. Judah who had deceived his father with a garment [Joseph's blood stained coat] is himself deceived by a woman hiding beneath a garment (:14). And yet he learns from this and moves towards responsibility for his earlier deception of his own father. Likewise the Judah who had caused his father so much grief over the loss of Joseph, becomes the Judah who is so careful to avoid causing his father such grief over Benjamin.

Gen 38:11 *Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, Remain a widow in your father's house, until Shelah, my son, is grown up; for he said, Lest he also die, like his brothers. Tamar went and lived in her father's house*- Judah saw Tamar as some kind of *femme fatale*, responsible for the deaths of his two sons when clearly they died for their own sins. And yet she was to become the source of fruitfulness (Ruth 4:12) and directly in the line of Messiah (Mt. 1:3). Judah is again portrayed as totally wrong in his judgments and attitudes.

Gen 38:12 *After many days, Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died. Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers to Timnah, he and his friend Hirah, the Adullamite*- One wonders if Judah was in an illicit homosexual relationship with this man. The word for "friend" is also translated "lover". Having lost his wife early, Judah was in the mood for living as a single man; and Tamar knew this meant using prostitutes and capitalized upon that. We see here how so many factors worked together, including serious human sin and dysfunction, to result in a pregnancy given by God which led to the Messianic seed (Ruth 4:12; Mt. 1:3). It is all an example of how God never gives up with human weakness amongst His covenant people, but seeks to work His purpose out despite it and through it.

Gen 38:13 *It was told Tamar, saying, Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep*- Sheep shearing was associated with immorality and alcohol abuse. Tamar knew that Judah was the type who would sleep with prostitutes at such a time- again indicating his low moral character at this time.

Gen 38:14 *She took off of her the garments of her widowhood, and covered herself with her veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gate of Enaim, which is by the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown up, and she wasn't given to him as a wife*- The camera is trained as it were directly upon her, so that we imagine her wrapping herself and sitting in the gate, in the shadows. "Enaim" means 'place of the opening of the eyes'. Through this sin, Judah's eyes were to be opened to himself. And that was what made him sensitive to the sufferings of his brother Joseph and his father Jacob.

There is a connection with how Rachel was not given [s.w.] to Jacob to wife when she ought to have been (Gen. 29:26). Circumstances repeated within the lives of the Abraham family, just as they do within and between our lives, that we might learn the lessons. Given the chronological issues discussed on :6, she was expecting to marry Shelah when he was just a teenager, which seems to mean that Judah had given her other reasons to think that he would not let her marry Shelah. Her motives may well have been simply revenge against Judah, whom she rightly considered a hypocrite. And yet from these poor motives came the one who would be in the direct line to the Messiah. We wonder if she did in the end marry Shelah, because he had children, who became respected within Judah (Num. 26:20; 1 Chron. 4:21-23).

We wonder what Tamar's motives were. It is fashionable to present her as the powerful feminist who fought back from an underdog position. But we can perhaps more realistically read her as a woman who is understandably and justifiably angry that Judah has messed around, and left her without children. She was desperate to fall pregnant at any cost. And whilst she was condemned to a life of celibacy by Judah, she observed him sleeping with whores when he had the inclination. She was angry with him, and the anger and frustration boiled over. And so she hatched the plan she did- and it worked perfectly, because she knew Judah and had spent many frustrated years watching his behaviour patterns. He was so angry that she was willing to die the death of a whore in order to by all means get pregnant and spite and shame Judah. But despite all that, it was from this unlikely pregnancy between Judah and Tamar that the line of Judah's kings was to come- and the Lord Jesus. Whatever dysfunctional background there is, it does not force us to sin. The Lord Jesus had it, but never sinned.

Gen 38:15 *When Judah saw her, he thought that she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face*- There may be a connection with how Jacob didn't know he had slept with Leah rather than Rachel. Perhaps there was such a culture of shame about sex that women covered their faces during intercourse; and we can understand a prostitute in those shame based societies wishing to do that. Again we see the strange continuities within the Abraham family, the same experiences passing from father to son. A different word for "prostitute" is used in :21,22; that word means a cult prostitute. It could be that Judah thought nothing of sleeping with cult prostitutes as part of idol worship, which makes his spirituality appear at an all time low.

In Gen. 37:26 Judah argued that there would be no cash advantage if they just killed Joseph and concealed or covered their [responsibility for] his blood. The same word is now used twice of how Judah in turn is deceived by Tamar covering / concealing herself (:14,15). This is not simply an example of 'what goes around, comes around'. God makes such circumstances repeat because He wants to help people to repent, to realize the effect of what they have done to others in the hope it will elicit sensitivity and repentance.

Gen 38:16 *He turned to her by the way, and said, Please come, let me come in to you, for he didn’t know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, What will you give me, that you may come in to me?*- Tamar's plan was based upon the assumption that Judah on returning from a sheep shearing celebration would likely want a prostitute. And she was correct. Judah later sees her as "righteous" for what she did (:26). He presumably was felt to have a legal duty to get her pregnant even if Shelah refused. He had turned aside to Adullam, and now he turns aside to Tamar. His progressive failure was at Enaim, the place of the opening of eyes.

Gen 38:17 *He said, I will send you a young goat from the flock. She said, Will you give me a pledge, until you send it?*- The fact Judah was apparently unprepared for sleeping with a prostitute, having nothing of value upon him to pay her apart from his personal identity items, all suggests that he was drunk and just looking for opportunistic sex under the influence of alcohol and lust.

Judah gives a pledge in Gen. 38:17 in connection with his immorality. It cannot be incidental that he later offers his life as a pledge to his father to guarantee the return of Benjamin (Gen. 43:8-10). We are surely meant to detect Judah's spiritual growth between these two "pledge" incidents. pledge" incidents. We note Judah offers to "bear the blame / sin" if Benjamin doesn't return (Gen. 43:9). He has matured from seeking to hide his blame / sin in his behaviour with Tamar.

Gen 38:18 *He said, What pledge will I give you? She said, Your signet and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand. He gave them to her, and came in to her, and she conceived by him*- These sound like large demands, from a woman who was anonymous behind her veil. Judah perhaps only agreed because he was drunk at the time, and felt desperate to have sex at any cost. Judah's staff was the symbol of his rulership. By grace alone it was later to be promised: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Gen. 49:10). The staff / sceptre he had abused and devalued was ultimately not to be "lost" but to last eternally. But he had thrown it away in his mad desire for immediate sexual gratification with a whore.

Gen 38:19 *She arose, and went away, and put off her veil from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood*- The camera is as it were close in now upon her, as we see her removing the veil and returning to who she was.

Gen 38:20 *Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend, the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman’s hand, but he didn’t find her*- The connections within the

record continue; for Judah had been party to using a goat to deceive his father (Gen. 37:31) just as his father Jacob had used goat skin to deceive his father. Yet this family who apparently 'never learnt', never 'got it', were the family God chose from which to build His covenant people- in order to display His grace and sovereign choice. The way Judah sent the payment through another person reflects his desire for anonymity, and we note his subsequent fear of shame over the issue. The fact he parted with his personal identity documents, as it were, is therefore confirmation of my earlier suggestion that he was a drunk man desperate to have sex at that moment at whatever personal cost to his reputation.

Gen 38:21 *Then he asked the men of her place, saying, Where is the prostitute, that was at Enaim by the road? They said, There has been no prostitute here*- The word for "prostitute" differs from that in :15; this one means a cult prostitute. Again the implication is that Judah thought nothing of such idolatry.

Gen 38:22 *He returned to Judah, and said, I haven't found her; and also the men of the place said, 'There has been no prostitute here'*- All this enquiry would have meant that everyone knew what had happened. Rotherham gives "devotee" for "prostitute", confirming the idea that Judah slept with her on the basis of idolatry.

Gen 38:23 *Judah said, Let her keep it, lest we be shamed. Behold, I sent this young goat, and you haven't found her*- The fear of shame confirms my earlier suggestion that he must have been drunk to behave like this, giving his personal identification to an anonymous prostitute. Judah is trying to present himself as an honourable man who kept his pledge to send a goat. But he had not kept his pledge to give his son to Tamar. Around the Lord's death we see the same attempt at petty obedience to cover more major disobedience. And we can do the same, and so much legalistic obedience is of this nature.

Gen 38:24 *It happened about three months later, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar, your daughter-in-law, has played the prostitute; and moreover, behold, she is with child by prostitution*- The person who told Judah this was presumably part of Tamar's plot. Because she was technically free to marry. The reason given for the death penalty was that she was a prostitute; and only Tamar or those party to her plan knew that she had acted as one only for Judah. Perhaps they only knew she was pregnant from prostitution because she herself had said as much. The men of the place claimed there were no prostitutes operating there.

Judah said, Bring her out, and let her be burnt- This may not necessarily mean to be burnt to death, but rather to be branded in the cheek or forehead so that she would be stigmatized as a prostitute. If burning to death, this was a more extreme punishment than death by stoning. Burning was the specific punishment for a whore whose father was a priest. So we wonder whether Tamar's father was a pagan priest, thus making Judah and his family's involvement with her even more hypocritical. We note the obvious hypocrisy in Judah- it's a classic. He transferred his own guilt for immorality and usage of prostitutes onto another, namely a prostitute. And this is why religious people often condemn others in the strongest terms for what they themselves do. They subconsciously transfer their own sense of guilt and need for punishment onto another, whom they punish. And they at times do this by slandering and then punishing another person for the very sins which they themselves commit.

Burning to death for adultery was stipulated only for the wife of a priest (Lev. 21:9). Judah perhaps considered himself or Shelah to be the family priest, again showing his deep unspirituality and the tragic state of affairs within Jacob's family.

Judah didn't give Shelah to Tamar because he clearly feared that he would lose his son, just as he had lost two other sons and his daughter by Tamar. He was concerned about preserving his own inheritance, and assumed that Tamar was somehow cursed by God and would be the source of death rather than the continuation of his line. Whereas God worked through that woman, by utter grace, to ensure that Judah would have children through Tamar who would be in the line of Messiah. God works through human sin, in order to show His grace, as it comes to a climax in Jesus.

Gen 38:25 *When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, By the man, whose these are, I am with child. She also said, Examine, please, whose these are- the signet, and the cords, and the staff* - Just as Judah had said to his father, "See, is this your son's coat" (Gen. 37:32); so it was now said to him, in order to try to bring him to repentance for what he had done to Joseph and Jacob. We see similar repetition of circumstance in the brothers' encounters with Joseph- to try to lead them to repentance. It's not merely some poetic justice; but these things were worked through by the Spirit to bring people to realize how others felt when we sinned against them. The Hebrew translated "cords" can mean a distinctive personal garment. So Judah used a goat and a distinctive garment (Heb.) as pledges, and was deceived with regard to them. Yet we have just read of him using the blood of a goat on Joseph's garment to deceive his father.

Gen 38:26 *Judah recognized them and said, She is more righteous than I, because I didn't give her to Shelah, my son*- Her motives may have been partly revenge against the hypocritical Judah who had purposefully tried to leave her in her father's house without children. But perhaps she believed in the promises of the Messianic seed and believed

that Judah should produce Messianic ancestors; and indeed, the Lord's line is traced through their son Perez (Mt. 1:3). And this was her 'righteousness' in the matter.

Judah "recognized" / discerned his personal identifying items (Gen. 38:26) when Tamar exposes his sin; the same word is used of how Judah and the brothers challenged their father to recognize / discern Joseph's coat of many colours (Gen. 37:33). So through Judah's sin, he was led to appreciate how his father had felt. And that is why it is Judah who is so careful later to ensure his father is not made to feel about Benjamin how he did about the loss of Joseph.

"She is more righteous than I" is indeed a confession of sin and repentance. But Pharaoh said the same, and didn't retain the intensity. Whereas to his credit, it seems Judah remained humbled and his attitudes to Jacob and Benjamin reflect that abiding transformation. What Judah did was a serious sin, worthy of the Canaanites but not Israel: "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she is your son's wife. You shall not uncover her nakedness... for all these abominations have the men of the land done that were before you, and the land became defiled); that the land not vomit you out also, when you defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For whoever shall do any of these abominations, even the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people" (Lev. 18:15,27-29). So we could also read "She is more righteous than I" to actually be a rather incomplete statement of repentance. Judah presents himself as righteous, and Tamar as more righteous than himself. The more usual expression is simply "I have sinned" (Ex. 9:27; Num. 22:34; Josh. 7:20; 1 Sam. 15:24,30; 26:21; 2 Sam. 12:13; 24:10,17). We might rather wish to find this on the lips of Judah at this point. As with Aaron after the golden calf incident, repentance is incomplete and hardly verbalized- but there is still fruit of it.

But Judah develops from this idea that he has at least some righteousness, so that in Gen. 42:12-14 he says to Joseph: "What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? Or how can we dec1are ourselves righteous? God has found the iniquity of your servants". He realized finally that he has no righteousness at all. And on that basis, Joseph / Jesus counts him as righteous.

He knew her again no more- This could suggest that he had used her several times as a prostitute. Pregnancy after one act of intercourse is unusual, although clearly God's hand was in it. Her whole plan depended upon her getting pregnant by Judah so it would be unsurprising if she had played her trick several times.

Gen 38:27 *It happened in the time of her travail that, behold, twins were in her womb*- The similarities are clear with Rebekah bringing forth Esau and Jacob, and we are going to read a similar tension over the matter of the firstborn. By now we are fully prepared

for the firstborn not to be the most blessed; and we are not disappointed. This was something which God kept trying to teach the family over the generations, but like us in some areas, they were very resistant to it. Judah ends up effectively married to Tamar, although they never have sex (:26)- so he lived as he had made her live. Why they didn't have sex isn't explained- perhaps she refused him. And so life goes, that we come to understand what we put others through. To help us to repentance, but also to deepen our self understanding, our empathy for others, as we are prepared for the Kingdom which we shall share with those we sinned against. Judah and Tamar were the joint parents of the twin boys, and they as it were replaced the two sons whom Judah had lost. We see here the Divine ecology. And the implication is that Judah repented, although he is not recorded as expressing it very clearly; and was blessed as a result.

The Judah of Gen. 38 is transformed. At this point, he presents as a man "motivated by self-interest, cold-hearted and detached from familial relationships, lacking judgement, untrustworthy, deceptive, self-righteous and merciless". But all that was finally transformed in the Judah who speaks with Joseph at the end.

Gen 38:28 *When she travailed, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, This came out first*- Scarlet seems a strange colour to use, seeing that there is plenty of red blood flowing anyway at childbirth. Scarlet is the colour of kings and rulers; they all realized that there was going to be tension over the issue of which child emerged first from the womb, as in that culture, this was so important. What now happens is God's way of trying again to teach the family that the firstborn was not so significant, because the ultimate firstborn was the promised Messianic seed of the future.

Gen 38:29 *It happened, as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out, and she said, Why have you made a breach for yourself? Therefore his name was called Perez*- The theme of the second born being the chosen one continues. It was accepted that Perez was the one in the line of the Messianic seed and that this pregnancy was of God (Ruth 4:12), even though he was not technically the firstborn. "Made a breach" is literally 'to spread abroad', and is the word used in the promises of how the Messianic seed was to break forth or spread abroad (Gen. 28:14).

We note the theme in the Abraham family of sibling rivalry; the account here clearly echoes that of Jacob and Esau struggling, and the persistent failure in perceiving that birth order is irrelevant. We note too that Onan showed no loyalty to his brother Er, in refusing to raise up seed to his brother.

Gen 38:30 *Afterward his brother came out, that had the scarlet thread on his hand, and*

his name was called Zerah- As noted above, the firstborn was to come "after" the younger. But the entire family struggled to learn this. Although Jacob had made Joseph firstborn instead of Reuben by giving him the priestly robe of many colours, at the end of his life, Jacob still seems to bless Judah as the firstborn. They just would not learn that order of birth was irrelevant to the only blessing that really mattered. We too can be blind to some whole area of thinking or behaviour, despite the Father's continual efforts to help us get our priorities right. So the story concludes with Judah's repentance, and yet as ever, that repentance doesn't mean that he 'got it' completely; he clearly didn't, just as his father Jacob was to die uttering things which reflected spiritual immaturity and a failure to 'get it'.

GENESIS CHAPTER 39

Gen 39:1 *Joseph was brought down to Egypt. Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the hand of the Ishmaelites that had brought him down there*- "Officer" is 'eunuch', which would explain his wife's sexual frustration. "Captain of the guard" is Heb. 'captain of the slaughterers'; he was in charge of execution. This raises the question as to why Potiphar didn't immediately have Joseph executed for trying to rape his wife; the fact he didn't makes us think that actually, he suspected she was lying and didn't want to kill Joseph, although he had to be seen as punishing him. The LXX gives "chief cook", which would mean that the presence of the butler and baker in prison was likewise at the hands of Potiphar. They would've all known each other, and surely the butler and baker knew Joseph to be innocent. There is also the possibility that the keeper of the prison was in fact Potiphar, if "captain of the guard" is correct.

Egyptologists suggest that "the captain of the guard" was specifically responsible for the execution of prisoners, and the "prisons" of Egypt were really just holding areas for those condemned to execution or trial. The cases of the butler and baker confirm this. The fact Joseph is sent to prison rather than to death, and remains in prison so long, is all rather strange. It is indeed a parade example of God's grace working behind the scenes to preserve Joseph. But it is also a sign that Potiphar wished to preserve Joseph, probably because he actually disbelieved his wife, and his recorded anger was with her not Joseph. And we see the connection between the captain of the guard and the prison keeper; I suggest they were the same person. And indeed, Joseph married the daughter of "Potiphera", possibly again the same person.

We wonder how Joseph was feeling at this time, and what story he told Potiphar. In his desperation in Gen. 40:15, Joseph repeats the narrative he had told so often that he almost believed it: "For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews". "For indeed" suggests this was his repeated self explanation and how he presented himself

to others. He so loved his brothers that he kept repeating the narrative that he had in fact been kidnapped and sold into Egypt. When in fact it was his own nasty brothers who had tried to murder him in the dry pit, infested with scorpions and snakes, and had sold him into slavery. On one hand, we may argue that this is living an Alice in Wonderland life, painting evil as good and unrealistically counting the wicked as righteous. That is particularly out of vogue in our ever complaining society, where people love to raise past hurts and present them in the most negative light. On the other hand, this is what imputing righteousness by grace is all about.

The words Potiphar and Pharaoh are very similar; they both mean "the sun". As Joseph was subject to these men, he would have remembered his dream- that ultimately the sun would bow down to him. But his faith in that prophetic word was to be sorely tested.

Throughout the records of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his children there is continual repetition in the manner in which the record is written. This repetition is of both experiences (e.g. lying concerning their wives: Gen. 12:13; 20:3,13; 26:7) and of the language used to describe those experiences. Gen. 39:1- 8 provides an example of this: "Joseph was brought down to Egypt... the Ishmealites, which had brought him down thither... down to Egypt" (Gen. 37:25). "The Lord was with Joseph...and his master saw that the Lord was with him". "His master the Egyptian... his master". "Joseph... was a prosperous man... the Lord made all that he did to prosper". Potiphar "made him overseer over his house... from the time that he had made him overseer in his house". "All that he had he put into his hand...over all that he had... the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had... he left all that he had in Joseph's hand". "His hand... into his hand... Joseph's hand... to my hand". This kind of linguistic device suggests that the Spirit in Genesis is inviting us to observe the development of theme and to note emphasis, realizing that God likewise works according to patterns in our lives.

Gen 39:2 *Yahweh was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man. He was in the house of his master the Egyptian*- "The Egyptian" (:1) is stressed because if the Hyksos dynasty were then ruling Egypt, they were not Egyptian but closer to the Semitic peoples of Canaan; and it was an unusual for an Egyptian to be in such a position of power. But the idea is that the promises to Abraham began to be fulfilled in a primary sense, in that a Gentile family was blessed for the sake of the seed of Abraham. "Prosperous" is s.w. used about Daniel and his friends prospering in captivity in Babylon (Dan. 3:30 6:28); and there are clearly intended parallels between Joseph and Daniel, both being called to interpret dreams and then suddenly promoted. Again we see a continuity in God's dealings with men, which we should also discern between our lives and those of Biblical characters or other contemporary believers we know.

Gen 39:3 *His master saw that Yahweh was with him, and that Yahweh made all that he did prosper in his hand*- All this is language appropriate to the Lord Jesus, whom Joseph pointed forward to. For Yahweh was "with" Him supremely and prospered His "hand" (Jn. 16:32; Acts 10:38 cp. Acts 7:9). It is really stressed that Yahweh "was with" Joseph (:2,3,21,23; Acts 7:9). Yahweh was likewise "with" Abraham through making a covenant "with" him (Gen. 15:18 s.w.); Yahweh being personally "with" Abraham's seed is a major part of the promise (Gen. 28:20).

Gen 39:4 *Joseph found favour in his sight*- Just as the Lord grew in grace or favour with God and man (Lk. 2:52).

He ministered to him, and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand- "Overseer" is s.w. Gen. 40:4, where in prison Joseph is given the oversight of the other prisoners. I suggested on Gen. 37:2 that when he was a teenager, Jacob had put his entire flock under Joseph and made him the religious head of the family with status of the firstborn after Reuben's demotion. He was to have the situation repeat when in prison, and then under Pharaoh. Situations repeat within our lives too, each one preparing us for another. With Jacob, Potiphar and in prison, each exaltation led to a dramatic demotion or a sudden end; and this prepared Joseph not to be proud when exalted under Pharaoh. He would've thought "And how long is *this* exaltation going to last?". Because he was humble, that final exaltation lasted for the rest of his life. But each exaltation was so that he might serve others (or the sheep, in the first case).

Gen 39:5 *It happened from the time that he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that Yahweh blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of Yahweh was on all that he had, in the house and in the field*- This blessing was a primary fulfilment of the promise of blessing through the seed of Abraham, who would "be a blessing" (Gen. 12:2,3). Joseph may have reflected that the same had happened to Laban's house due to the presence there of his father Jacob. The same Hebrew words are used: "Yahweh has blessed me for your sake" (Gen. 30:27). We should be on the look out for the primary fulfilment of the new covenant blessings in our lives too.

Gen 39:6 *He left all that he had in Joseph's hand. He didn't concern himself with anything, except for the food which he ate*- This confirms what we later learn in the history, that Egyptians would not eat with Hebrews (Gen. 43:32). The Biblical record meshes together perfectly.

Joseph was well-built and handsome- "Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured" clearly means he was good-looking (like his mother, Gen. 29:17 s.w., grandmother and

great-grandmother). The record seems to stress that the family was good looking. Perhaps this gives another angle on an old chestnut: Was the Lord Jesus Christ good looking and handsome as the Son of God, or weak and ugly as the suffering servant? On the cross, "his visage was so marred more than any man... there is no beauty that we should desire him... despised... we hid as it were our faces from him" (Is. 52:14; 53:2-4). Yet Joseph was strong and good looking, pleasing in the eyes of men (and women). So may we suggest that the Lord too was naturally strong and attractive, but he lost this due to the mental trauma of his life, resulting in his repulsive physical appearance as he hung on the cross.

There is an undoubted link between sexuality and spirituality (witness the typical meaning of the Song of Solomon). The Hebrew text of Gen. 39:6,7 suggests that it was Joseph's spiritually attractive personality that mesmerized Potiphar's wife; and what good living, socially aloof Christian office worker has not experienced the attention this attracts from colleagues of the opposite sex?

Gen 39:7 *It happened after these things*- Joseph came to Potiphar when 17, and was 30 when he was exalted before Pharaoh (Gen. 41:46 cp. Gen. 41:1), so he may have been in his early or mid 20s. He contrasts favourably with Judah, who at that age married a Canaanite and lived immorally (see on Gen. 38:6). That is perhaps the reference of "these things". The brothers had falsely accused Shechem of raping Dinah and judged them harshly on the basis of that false accusation. Joseph is likewise falsely accused of rape and punished. He was like the Lord Jesus carrying the sins of others in his own body and life, suffering as others suffer for their sins although he was personally innocent.

That his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph; and she said, Lie with me- The Egyptian tale of Anat tempting Aqhat is similar in outline terms to Potiphar's wife tempting Joseph; as the god Khnum hides a precious object in grain, so does Joseph; the Egyptian fertility deities were gods of dreams and associated with the stars; they are at times slain by wild animals and their blood stained clothes presented as evidence (Documented in Donald Redford, *The Biblical Story of Joseph* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970) p. 100; W.F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1957) p. 241; A. Jeremias, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1911) Vol. 2 p. 64). Having lived several generations in Egypt, the Israelites for whom Moses was composing Genesis would've been aware of these myths. And Moses is clearly referring to them- and applying them to a real, historical person, an Israelite, who had lived 400 years previously.

We naturally dislike Potiphar's wife. If indeed Potiphar is Potiphera, whose daughter Joseph marries, this was the story's final, painful judgment of her. But this anonymous,

immoral woman was in fact a vital part in the bigger picture of Joseph's development and the salvation of so many. We have to see our own false accusers and thorns in our lives as somehow also part of a wider and far better and eternal purpose for us. Ps. 80:2 says that God as the shepherd of Israel "leads Joseph like a flock". The simple statement is that God led Joseph- and that leading was through this awful false accusation. And He still leads Joseph in that we are Joseph. Joseph is everyman. Through all these things we too are led- although it's so hard to see it at the time. God declares the past as well as the future, Isaiah says. He alone gives meaning to event. Otherwise, life is indeed "night", and we are defeated by man's search for meaning. Once we grasp the hand of God in our lives, we perceive that nothing is chance, we are all 1 percenters, our lives woven and preserved by God, to do us only good at our latter end. Without God declaring our past, giving meaning to event, we go the way of secular 1 percenters- turning to depression and addictions, because the fact we survived and the other 99 were scribbled still has no ultimate meaning.

Gen 39:8 *But he refused, and said to his master's wife*- There is a difference between his refusal, and what he says to her. We see that his refusal was deep within his own mind, a determined conviction and decision to say "No". And his words to her issued from this internal decision. This is what it is, to overcome temptation.

Behold, my master doesn't know what is with me in the house, and he has put all that he has into my hand- There may be a play on the word "know" being a euphemism for the sexual act. And Joseph may have had in mind that although his earthly master didn't know what was going on, God as his heavenly master did. It should be remembered that in the surrounding culture, slaves were seen as sexually available to their owners, as alluded to in Ex. 21:9-11. Potiphar may possibly have been OK with her behaviour. Joseph was brave to disobey the repeated command of his owner (:10). It was the accusation of rape which led to his imprisonment, but his disobedience was clearly also an issue.

Gen 39:9 *He isn't greater in this house than I, neither has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*- We note that sin is against man ["wickedness" against Potiphar] as well as against God, as the prodigal son perceived. Just as our actions hurt others, so sin actually hurts God. Perceiving this, rejecting the "You're an awesome human being" narrative, is that leads us to intimacy with God. David confessed that he had sinned against God (Ps. 51:4), using the very language of faithful Joseph who refused ongoing temptation with these words (Gen. 39:9). Could this not imply that Bathsheba wife of Uriah was similar to Potiphar's wife? Joseph is unashamed to tell this secular woman that he believes in God, and that it is axiomatic to being a believer in God that he would not do "great wickedness"; and sin against another person is sin against God. Such a

view of the gods was unheard of amongst the idolaters, who had little concept of sin in a moral sense. This same phrase is used about the "great wickedness" of marriage to unbelievers in Neh. 13:27; and yet we will soon read that Joseph does this.

The account of Joseph's resistance of adultery is consciously reflected in the account of king David's adultery. And we see this in life- for all life is ultimately structured by God. It's not just that one life reflects another, with similarities and so forth. But one life may be an inverse of another's life, a reflection which is inverse. Because the lessons of history were not learnt. Only by fellowship with each other, engaging with each others' paths rather than mere surface level connection, can we come to discern this. So both Joseph and David are presented as young shepherd boys ["shepherding the flock" of their father is a phrase which occurs only in Gen. 37:2 and 1 Sam. 16:11; 17:34]. They were both sent by their father to enquire of the *shalom* / "peace" of their brothers, and they were both despised by their brothers when they arrived to do so. They both are "prudent" and chosen to serve a king because of it (Gen. 41:33,39 s.w. 1 Sam. 16:18). It was noted about both of them that Yahweh was with them (Gen. 39:2,3,21-23 cp. 1 Sam. 16:18; 18:12). Both are described as being young men of "beautiful appearance" (s.w. only Gen. 39:6; 1 Sam. 17:42). Both began their ruling at 30 years of age. Both were victims of others deciding it were better to kill them by others' hands (the Ishmaelites, Gen. 37:27, and the Philistines in David's case, 1 Sam. 18:17).

So this sets us up to consider the differences between Joseph and David when it comes to the adultery issue. Just as men may lead parallel lives, so close that clearly the hand of God was in the parallels- but then one fails to decide correctly when faced by temptation, and fails to take the lead from the earlier, or perhaps Biblical, character. But only by getting to know each other, or thinking ourselves into the Biblical characters, can we perceive this. Someone older than you maybe had a very similar life path, but, let's say, at age 40 encountered major temptation- which they overcame. You as the younger person are to learn from that and decide rightly as they did. Or, if they failed at that point, you are to learn that lesson.

So with David and Bathsheba and Joseph and Potiphar's wife, there was an imbalance of power. She like David could just demand sex. In both cases they were "alone in the house". Bathsheba was very beautiful, just as Joseph is described. Ms. Potiphar asked Joseph to lie with her, just as David asked Bathsheba. Uriah and Joseph are both presented as very faithful to "my lord". Potiphar's wife has Joseph thrown into prison; David has Uriah sent to his death. Likewise Bathsheba's "I am pregnant... by you, David" matches the message of Tamar to Judah- another reflection of a story. Joseph was given his lord's house to rule over, just as David was given his lord Saul's house ("I have given you the house of your lord", 2 Sam. 12:8). But David saw eventually the similarities with Joseph when he finally admits "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13), whereas Joseph refuses to sin against God (Gen. 39:9). And so David is presented as Potiphar's

wife. God gave Joseph everything except Potiphar's wife; God gave David everything likewise. The language is so similar. Uriah's "I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11) is Joseph's "How can I do this thing..." (Gen. 39:9).

Gen 39:10 *As she spoke to Joseph day by day, he didn't listen to her, to lie by her, or to be with her*- This is the more commendable as Joseph was in his mid 20s (see on :7) and so far as we know had not had the chance of sexual experience although being so handsome. The preceding Gen. 38 has recorded the various sexual sins of Judah and his family; Joseph is presented here as the parade example of avoiding and resisting sexual temptation whatever the consequences. "day by day". The contrast is intentional; and Joseph's attitude is the more outstanding because he came from a family where these values were not modelled to him by his older siblings.

Gen 39:11 *About this time*- Heb. 'On that day', or 'On this day'. The impression is given that this was not a fateful day, as many would see it; but rather the day chosen by God in His wider, longer plan. Only by reading the Joseph story to the end do we appreciate this. Or AV "On a certain day" might imply this was a feast day, and therefore all the other staff were not in the home. Perhaps Ms. Potiphar was faking illness, and Joseph was avoiding attending the pagan feast.

He went into the house to do his work, and there were none of the men of the house inside- Doubtless set up by the woman.

Gen 39:12 *She caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me! He left his garment in her hand, and ran outside*- Joseph running for the door is the visual image picked up in the New Testament and held before us as an example: "Flee fornication" (1 Cor. 6:18); "flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). Again, Joseph is presented as everyman. Potiphar's wife is therefore set up as the embodiment of our own lusts. To have done this she must have been totally obsessed and infatuated. As with the likes of Delilah, we wonder what a miserable life she lived after this incident until she came to her Godless, bitter and unfulfilled last breath.

Gen 39:13 *When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and had run outside*- Joseph lost his garment before he went into the pit and before he went to prison; Pharaoh dressed him in one, just as Jacob had done, and probably this garment was a sign of his being the house manager and had been given him by Potiphar. Situations repeated, as they do in our lives. When Joseph was given Pharoah's prestigious garment, he would have wondered how long that would last. And it was all to prepare him not to be proud.

Gen 39:14 *She called to the men of her house, and spoke to them, saying, Behold, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice*- The record has the ring of truth to it- for infatuation turns to hatred in a moment (as in 2 Sam. 13:14,15). The way she speaks of her husband as "he", and suggests Potiphar had intentionally sought to mock her by putting a handsome young man under her nose... all suggests she did not have a good relationship with him. And again, there is a psychological credibility to the entire record, of a kind which is not found in uninspired histories of the time, all of which feature gross exaggerations which are not credible if they are a strictly accurate retelling of history. The Hebrew for "mock" is used in a distinctly sexual sense in Gen. 26:8 and Ex. 32:6. "To mock *us*" may imply she claimed Joseph had sexual designs on others too.

Gen 39:15 *It happened, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and ran outside*- She repeats her statement word for word in :18. This repeating a story word for word is a clear indication that it has been fabricated. Her story lacked credibility anyway. If there were no other men in the house at the time, he need not have run outside. He was still on the premises when Potiphar came home and there is no record of him seeking to flee. To leave his garment with her would seem foolish of him, if he were guilty. And what evidence is an outer garment anyway, in this context? On examination, her story was fake. But it is perfectly credible that this is the kind of thing an infatuated woman would do when firmly turned down. The whole account has the ring of truth and credibility to it; these words were indeed spoken by this woman, and the whole thing is no myth nor garbled folklore, but the specifically inspired and recorded word of God.

Gen 39:16 *She laid up his garment by her, until his master came home*- We are left to imagine Joseph's feelings as he awaited the return of his master. The record draws us in to the events so that we enter into the feelings.

Gen 39:17 *She spoke to him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought to us, came in to me to mock me*- She cannot resist putting the blame upon her husband; see on :14. This fits exactly with the situation of the frustrated wife in a dead marriage which the record describes. And so we can confidently believe that we are reading words which were actually spoken in a house in Egypt millennia ago. The Hebrew for "mock" is used in a distinctly sexual sense in Gen. 26:8 and Ex. 32:6.

Gen 39:18 *And it happened, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment by me, and ran outside*- She repeats word for word her prepared statement which she first

made to the other male servants; see on :15. This exact word for word repetition of the statement is exactly what we would expect from someone who has fabricated a story.

Gen 39:19 *It happened, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, This is what your servant did to me, that his wrath was kindled*- It may be significant that it is not stated that his wrath was with Joseph. He could have been angry at her statement that *your* servant did this *to me*, putting so much guilt upon Potiphar. Perhaps it was with his wife, as he could see through the whole story. This would explain why Joseph was not killed but "only" imprisoned, when death would have been the usual punishment. Indeed a case can be made that this Potiphar was also the captain of the guard who managed the prison, and it was his daughter whom Joseph later married (see on Gen. 41:45. There was therefore this man Potiphar who was hanging around in Joseph's life, clearly used by providence. And why do we have to as it were read between the lines of the record to make this connection? Because that is how providence works, subtle rather than direct and 'in your face'. Joseph would have realized that clearly God's hand was at work with him. As he stood as a nervous 17 year old in a slave market in Egypt... it was all of God's grace and plan that he was bought by Potiphar or one of his servants. But it took him many years to perceive this. And the same can be said of events in our lives.

Joseph was being encouraged to see that the butler and baker were in a similar position to himself. They too had been thrown into prison and suffered the wrath of their lord for no reason (Gen. 40:1,2); both Potiphar and Pharaoh are called 'Lord' (Gen. 39:16; 40:1). They too were given dreams which came true, and one of them was exalted as promised in his dream- to encourage Joseph that his dreams would likewise ultimately come true.

Gen 39:20 *Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were bound, and he was there in custody*- "Took him" could mean Potiphar personally took him to the prison, as if he personally cared for Joseph. And the prison for the King's prisoners might mean that the conditions in it were better than in the prisons for commoner folk.

Heb. "the round house", perhaps the Tower of Heliopolis. Joseph in prison was typical of the Lord's death. Ps. 105:17-23 is the Spirit's commentary upon the sufferings of Joseph: "He (God) sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; whose feet they hurt with fetters; he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him... Israel also came into Egypt". In the context of the Psalm, God is comforting Israel that all their sufferings had been experienced by Joseph. His descent into prison, just like our humiliations, was part of being Divinely "sent", although it would hardly have appeared like that at the time. Our tendency is to focus on the injustice, rather than to accept the Divine hand, even if we cannot immediately attach meaning to event. Israel as a nation are often spoken of as being in prison in a

Gentile world (Ps. 79:11; 102:20; Is. 42:7,22; 49:9); just as Joseph was. Prison and death are often associated because a spell in prison was effectively a death sentence, so bad were the conditions. Israel being in prison is therefore a symbol of a living death. On the cross, the Lord was the great, supreme prisoner (Ps. 69:33- this is an intensive plural, referring to a singular great prisoner). Like Joseph, He went through all the emotions of the prisoner; the shame, depression, introspection, struggle with issues of injustice and the removal of freedom. As Israel were comforted in their living death by the fact that there was an individual in the past who had gone through all they were going through as a group; so the new Israel ought to take comfort together in contemplating the experiences of the Lord. He bore our communal sorrows, injustices, griefs and sins; this is why we as a community rather than purely as individuals need to be bound together in remembering Him.

"In custody" could suggest a temporary holding until the case was considered; the fact he remained there some years without trial would again indicate that Potiphar [who perhaps was also the chief of the prison] chose as it were not to prosecute. We see the similarities with Joseph being in the pit in limbo, whilst Reuben and Judah sought to rescue him; and we wonder whether Potiphar was doing the same.

Gen 39:21 *But Yahweh was with Joseph, and showed kindness to him, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison- Chesed*, "kindness", is a term often associated with the fulfilment of the promises to the fathers. It was on account of them that even in prison, Joseph was sustained. This favour in the eyes of the prison manager was what he had experienced with Potiphar, and we again wonder whether the keeper of the prison was in fact Potiphar. The way God made the eyes or view of the prison keeper gracious toward Joseph is a reflection of how God showed Joseph grace or favour; the Hebrew words for "kindness" and "favour" are related. We see here how the gift ['grace'] of God can be revealed through giving people an attitude of mind, a new pair of eyes; and this is the gift of the Spirit in the New Testament.

Gen 39:22 *The keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever they did there, he was responsible for it*- The similarities are clear with how Potiphar had treated him, and how Pharaoh would later treat him. Joseph had to pass through these two experiences and see them come to an abrupt end, so that he was prepared for the responsibility given him by Pharaoh, and to accept it with humility, suspecting all his life that this period would likewise come to an end in a Divinely controlled moment. We think of how Moses led a flock of sheep in the Sinai desert for 40 years to prepare him to lead Yahweh's flock of people in that same desert 40 years. We too can discern phases in our lives, preparing us for ever heavier responsibilities, and always seeking to educate us against pride and to make us totally dependent upon the Father rather than the flesh. The Hebrew can mean that everything was done at his command. Although Joseph was desperate to get out of prison, this

period was to prepare him for the time when all Egypt would obey his commands and organization.

Gen 39:23 *The keeper of the prison didn't look after anything that was under his hand, because Yahweh was with him; and that which he did, Yahweh made it prosper*- As noted on :22, this is exactly the language used of his prospering under Potiphar and later under Pharaoh. The Hebrew for "prosper" is used several times in the record of God prospering the plan to take a believing wife for Isaac (Gen. 24:21,40,42,56). If our heart is set on the things of the covenant, the Abrahamic promises, then somehow all will prosper. The ultimate prospering of that purpose is through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross and in our final salvation (s.w. Is. 53:10; Is. 48:15). But there is continually the evidence that that final prosperity is experienced to some degree now, even whilst we suffer injustice and the loss of freedom in life which Joseph did at this time.

GENESIS CHAPTER 40

Gen 40:1 *It happened after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord, the king of Egypt*- "After these words" (Heb.) could refer to the words of Potiphar's wife. We are led to suspect that the butler and baker were somehow also her victims, and this would confirm the experience of identity between Joseph and these two men. The obvious accusation against the butler and baker was that they had tried to poison the king. Most likely they hadn't, but the paranoia which goes along with absolute power led the king to suspect this. Stalin was similar, falsely accusing his butlers and cooks and often having them murdered. So they would have had an immediate bond with Joseph, who was likewise totally innocent. The force of "here also" in :15 may mean that Joseph "also", like the butler and baker, was imprisoned under false accusation. The death of one and release of the other was arranged to remind Joseph of what could have happened to him, and yet of the possibility too of his total rehabilitation. Commonality of experience is a bond we too can use in relationship building and sharing God's word. There seems a parallel between their sin against "their lord" and Joseph's apparent sin against his "lord" Potiphar. He is consistently called Joseph's "lord" throughout Gen. 39.

But the Hebrew for "offended" can as well mean "sinned against"; the LXX reads "sinned". The butler later comments: "I remember my sins today" (Gen. 41:9- an intensive plural for 'my great sin'). Maybe he was reflecting that his real sin was the sin of omission in forgetting Joseph and being ungrateful- which is our sin, so very often. To be unmindful of the affliction of Joseph is seen as the epitomy of the sin of materialistic, self satisfied members of God's family: "who drink wine in bowls, and anoint

themselves with the best oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Am. 6:6). Perhaps they were in prison for real offences; and one was saved by grace, and the other rightly condemned. The type is of the Lord's suffering together with two such thieves, on the cross. It would have made Joseph realize what grace means, in this case- for he would have seen a guilty man saved by grace, and even then be ungrateful for it. And this was really the story of his father's life.

Gen 40:2 *Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker*- Perhaps these two, one saved and one condemned, point forward to the two criminals with whom the Lord was crucified. Again the similarity with Joseph continues, as he was in the same prison because of his "lord's" anger (Gen. 39:19). It was this commonality of experience which enabled Joseph to reach out to those men, and this is the same basis for our appeal.

Gen 40:3 *He put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound*- Here we learn that the prison where Joseph was kept was only a temporary holding place for prisoners before trial. Joseph by grace was kept there for some years. Even when it seemed all was against him, as with us, there was another dimension of his life in which he was kept alive by grace alone.

Ps. 105:18 says that Joseph's feet were hurt with iron fetters, but presumably this was only initially; so we should read this as "where Joseph had been bound". He was able to relate to how they were on the basis that he too had been through it when he was first incarcerated. At this time he was actively running the prison and not "bound" (:6).

Gen 40:4 *The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he took care of them. They stayed in prison many days*- "Assigned" is s.w. Gen. 39:4, where in Potiphar's house Joseph was given the charge or oversight of everything. See note there. He served them [Heb.] in that they were senior officials and were in custody awaiting trial, and therefore had the right to be served. The ancient world didn't practice long prison sentences; rather was the death sentence carried out, and people remained in prison relatively short periods or whilst awaiting trial. Joseph's extended stay in prison therefore points to something unusual- the captain of the guard maybe preserved him, or Potiphar was against the death penalty, as he disbelieved his wife, but felt he had to keep Joseph there. In all this there was Divine providence. "Many days" perhaps invites comparison with Joseph's belief that double Divine dreams were definitely answered, and were answered "soon", as he says to Pharaoh. On one hand, his time in prison was "years of days" (Gen. 41:1 Heb.); the butler and baker were "many days" in the holding prison, as it felt to them. But Joseph's perspective was that God's word is answered quickly.

Indeed, as Ps. 105 notes, his trust in God's word was tested. And faith really is all about our perception of time, and how far we are able to adopt the Divine perspective on it.

Gen 40:5 *They both dreamed a dream, each man his dream, in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt*- "Each man according to the interpretation of his dream" is hard to understand. It could be intended to mean "and the interpretation of those dreams came true to each of the men", but that is not quite what the text says. The LXX simply omits the phrase. The GNB repoints the Hebrew to offer "and the dreams had different meanings", but that appears to be stating what is surely axiomatic; although it may be preparing us for the contrast with Gen. 41:25 when the two dreams of Pharaoh had the same one interpretation. The two men assumed their dreams were saying the same thing (see on :8). Joseph likewise had had a double dream in his youth. He must have wondered whether each dream had a different meaning, or whether they were saying one and the same thing. And these recurrences of double dreams would have reminded him of his own double dreams, lest he forget them. For there in prison, the temptation would have been to shrug them off as bizarre and obviously irrelevant to his life.

Each of the three dreams in the Joseph story is a double dream (Joseph's dreams, the dreams of butler and baker, Pharaoah's dreams). When Joseph tells Pharaoh that double dreams mean they definitely come true, he said this, therefore, in faith- that his own dreams would come true. That faith is contrasted with both his father and his brothers protesting that these dreams could never come true. And I suggest he had this in mind all through, that circumstances would work out so that his brothers came bowing to him. I suggest that is what motivated him to suggest Pharaoh set a man over all Egypt to manage the people would come to buy grain- inwardly scheming that he would be the one chosen. He showed great spiritual ambition in all this. But Joseph also understands the double dream of Pharaoah to mean that God will "soon" fulfil it- and the double dream of the butler and baker indeed immediately came true. Joseph therefore understood that his own dreams would "soon" come true; but he understood that the "soon" was relative to God's view of time, and not his. The dreams of Pharaoh would take seven to fourteen years to come true; but Joseph understood that as "soon". We like Joseph must see that our redemption and the fulfilment of God's plan for us is likewise "soon"- in the ultimate perspective.

Who were bound in the prison- Joseph had previously been "bound" with harsh fetters (Ps. 105:18) but was now free enough to serve them. So he could relate to them and empathize with their suffering. This was going to be an important feature of his life; and the reason for many of our negative experiences is likewise so that we can relate to others in similar sufferings. Indeed 2 Cor. 1:4-8 says that this is the purpose of suffering. The Lord's empathy with our suffering was achieved through His own suffering and tasting death for every man. These men were "confined in the prison" (Heb.), but Joseph

believes they will be led by their dreams to a far greater destiny beyond those prison walls. And this encouraged him that his dreams would likewise take him beyond the narrow confines of his present experience in the prison. But he could of course have bitterly concluded that others' dreams come true- but not his. But he rose above that. We have the same choice of perspective.

Gen 40:6 *Joseph came in to them in the morning, and saw them, and saw that they were sad*- We note Joseph's sensitivity to others and desire to help them, instead of being lost in his own bitterness and sense of injustice. This feature was taught by his sufferings; because he clearly had grown up the favourite and spoilt child, and such a background would militate against such characteristics.

One theme of the record is that circumstances repeat in life, because there is the higher hand of God over all. These men came to Joseph in the morning- and we are told concerning Pharaoh: "And it was in the morning that his spirit was troubled" (Gen. 41:8). The butler and baker tell Joseph: "We have dreamed a dream, and there is no one to interpret it" (40:8), and Pharaoh likewise told Joseph: "I have dreamed a dream and there is no one to interpret it" (Gen. 41:15). Joseph's "Do interpretations not belong to God?" (40:8)is then matched by what he tells Pharaoh: "It is not me; God will restore Pharaoh's peace of mind" (Gen. 41:16). Joseph saw the parallels. And just as he had the right, humble attitude about dream interpretation in the first case, so he did in the second case when the situation was repeated. We may fail the first time and get it right the second time; or get it right the first time and fail the second time. Or like Joseph, get it right and keep getting it right. But you have to think about your life with God in order to perceive this. And only then will you overcome man's obsessive and often depressive "search for meaning". For if man's search for ultimate meaning is left unanswered, then rich or poor, fat or thin, we slip further and further into depression and meaninglessness.

Gen 40:7 *He asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody*- The text stresses, as in :3, that the men were in the same prison as Joseph. Again we see the theme of identity between Joseph and those he sought to help.

In his master's house, saying- "In the ward of his master's house" again suggests the prison house was under Potiphar.

Why do you look so sad today?- "Sad", *ra*, has the sense of evil. They knew Pharaoh's birthday was in three days, and there would be decisions made in connection with it which would affect them; they had a presentiment of something significant and probably evil that was to happen to them.

The sensitive reader will perceive that Joseph had a strong fatherly image, even from a young age (also Gen. 41:43 mg.; 45:8). The Lord Jesus likewise; hence He referred to the disciples as His children when they were in the same peer group. This is understandable in that He is the supreme manifestation of *the* sovereign Father.

Gen 40:8 *They said to him, We have dreamed a dream*- They assume that their two dreams are one dream, and the interpretation will be identical. See on :5.

And there is no one who can interpret it. Joseph said to them, Don't interpretations belong to God?- Joseph is so sure dreams come true- and he likewise must have lived in faith that his would too. He would therefore have been looking for the day when his brothers came to him and knelt before him. Ps. 105:19 says that at this time, Joseph was tested by the word of God; he was tested as to whether he would continue to believe that God's word would come true for him, and his experience of these other dreams coming true would have encouraged him. We too are challenged to believe that the apparent disjuncture between who I am now, and who I shall eternally be... will be breached, faith shall be turned to sight, the prophetic word for me shall come true. Joseph's statement that interpretations belong to "God", i.e. the one and only God, his God... is more radical than it may seem. For the Egyptians were persuaded that interpretations belonged to the revered class of court magicians whose job it was to interpret dreams [called the *hartummim*]. To say that actually interpretations are from the God of Israel... was a slap in the face to that entire culture, and would have been immediately noticed. The butler would have recalled Joseph's statement, when later the magicians were unable to interpret Pharaoh's dream.

Another example of Joseph being tested by repeating circumstances was in the matter of playing God. In interpreting the dreams in prison, Joseph twice said that interpretations of dreams belong to God; "it is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer..." (Gen. 40:8; 41:16). Thus twice Joseph resisted the temptation to claim Divine power to himself. Some years later, however, I fear he failed a similar temptation, when he says to his brothers: "Such a man as I can indeed divine" (Gen. 44:15). He seems to be claiming for himself the power that earlier he had ascribed solely to God. But at the end of his life, when his brothers express their fear that Joseph will judge them harshly now that Jacob has died, Joseph assures them that he will not, as he is not going to play God: "Fear not, for am I in the place of God?" (Gen. 50:19). Significantly, these were the very words of Joseph's father to his mother in Gen. 30:2- showing how temptations and the essence of situations repeat across the generations and within the collective experience of groups of believers. We can discern what happened to Joseph going on in our own lives, if we will only take time to examine ourselves and the patterns of our experiences. A specific temptation or situation may, in essence, occur once, and we respond rightly; again it happens, and again we get it right; then again some years later,

and we fail; and then some years later still, and we get it right. Constantly our understanding and obedience is being tested, developed, expanded, confirmed... by the Divinely controlled, providential structure of our lives and the situations and persons we encounter. Whether we travel the world each day meeting new people and apparently "new" situations all the time, or we sit in the same room confined by illness and with a limited pool of interaction... all the same, God is equally at work with us all, every moment. Let's not lose sight of the fact that Joseph stands as a pattern for us all.

Please tell it to me- This is the same word used of how Joseph told his dreams to his family, resulting in all his suffering (s.w. Gen. 37:9,10). He was further seeing the similarities between himself and these men. If indeed they were both guilty and one was to be exalted by grace (see on :1), then Joseph would have perceived that his promised exaltation was by grace alone, as although he was innocent of what he had been accused of, he was still a sinner deserving death.

Gen 40:9 *The chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold, a vine was in front of me*- The critics claim that the Egyptians didn't drink wine. The chronology of Egyptology is open to much academic debate, and so this criticism is far from solid. But I wonder if this dream is not intended to encourage Joseph as to the fulfilment of his dreams, which were about a future time, when Israel would engage in agriculture and not pasturing cattle, and when his mother would be resurrected. Joseph's dream had only a primary fulfilment when his brothers bowed to him. Likewise it could be that Joseph perceived this dream of the butler to refer to some long distant point; it would come true in a primary sense, however. And this would have guided Joseph towards correctly understanding his own dreams- they would indeed have a primary fulfilment but the main fulfilment was at a time and culture yet to come.

Gen 40:10 *And in the vine were three branches. It was as though it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters produced ripe grapes*- The budding of the branch is elsewhere a symbol of resurrection. At this time, Joseph was being tested as to whether he would believe that God's word to him would come true (Ps. 105:19), and that word involved the resurrection of his mother to one day bow before him. The way this symbol came true for the butler was an encouragement to him. The budding and blossoming of the branch is a symbol of righteousness and Divine acceptance (s.w. Num. 17:5; Ps. 72:7; 92:12; Prov. 11:28). If the butler was righteous, he was still saved by grace according to this dream; and yet he failed to be grateful in saving another. This would have been a great lesson for Joseph; that although he was innocent of what he was accused of, he was still to realize that his salvation and predicted exaltation was all of grace, and he needed to learn the lesson of the butler and seek to save and be gracious to others. And indeed this was to be true of all Israel / Jacob's seed, who finally were to blossom and bud (Is. 27:6).

Gen 40:11 *Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand*- Joseph was to later use a cup, perhaps even Pharaoh's cup, in order to try to convict his brothers of their sin. He comments that he can "certainly divine" (Gen. 44:15) because of the cup through which he divines (Gen. 44:5). Joseph may be referring back to how he had correctly interpreted or divined this dream about the cup; and so the cup would be used in bringing about the fulfilment of his own dreams of exaltation above his brothers.

Gen 40:12 *Joseph said to him, This is its interpretation: the three branches are three days*- Joseph was confident that he had the right interpretation of dreams, and his confidence was strengthened by his interpretation of these men's dreams being proven right. He therefore was being encouraged that God's word for him too would come true.

Gen 40:13 *Within three more days, Pharaoh will lift up your head*- The Hebraism had a double meaning- to lift up in glory, or lift up ones head in execution and crucifixion. The baker's head was likewise 'lifted up'- but from off his body. The similarity was to make Joseph see that those who benefitted from the fulfilment of Divine dreams only did so by grace. For it was "just" grace that the butler was exalted and the baker beheaded.

And restore you to your office. You will give Pharaoh's cup into his hand, the way you did when you were his cupbearer- The language here so emphasizes restoration, "to your place... after the former manner" (AV). This is the language of the restoration from Babylon. Maybe Joseph reflected that what he had been promised in his dreams was so much greater; not an exaltation in order to be restored, but an exaltation far higher than he had ever been.

Gen 40:14 *But remember me when it will be well with you, and please show kindness to me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh*- To hold a plan in one's own mind is to have it 'with' them. The Hebrew text here bears this out, when Joseph begs: "Remember me with yourself". So for the essential purpose of God in His Son to be 'with' Him does not in any sense imply that a person was literally 'with' God in Heaven. "Remember me with thee" (AVmg.); Joseph perceived that the exaltation of the butler was intended to look forward to his own exaltation. He realized that his dreams would have their final fulfilment at the resurrection when his mother would arise; but he confidently expected a primary fulfilment in his own life. We ought to have that same confidence for this life as well as that which is to come. But Joseph also realized that the fulfilment of the Divine plan requires some volition from men; and so he begged the butler to play his part. "Show kindness" is a term elsewhere associated with the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises; Joseph believed that those promises would have a primary

fulfilment in his life, in his exaltation from prison. And he urged the butler to play his part in fulfilling them. And yet as with us, and all the Abraham family, especially his father Jacob, there is here a very human desire to force through the fulfilment of the promises by dint of human device.

"Remember me..." is almost a pathetic plea, recalling his desperate pleas for help when in the pit (Gen. 42:21). Joseph learnt what it felt like to beg for assistance, and not find it. Instead of getting bitter about it, he surely vowed to be different, and he was given the opportunity to do so when made the manager of the world's greatest famine relief program. Many of course respond to having their pleas unheard by closing up their heart of compassion. But he instead used his negative experiences to confirm him in being eager to do for others what had not been done to him.

Doubtless the thief on the cross had in mind the desperate plea of Joseph: “Have me in remembrance when..." you come into your position of power (Gen. 40:14 RV). The thief had perhaps meditated upon the implications of the Lord’s prayer: “Your kingdom come". He saw it as now being certain because of the cross- “when you come in your Kingdom...". And yet he felt as if he was in prospect already there before the coming King, as he hung there before Him on the cross. The thief’s words “Remember me when you come in your Kingdom" is almost certainly reference to Gen. 40:14, where Joseph desperately and pathetically asks: “But think on me when it shall be well with you..". Joseph went on to say “...here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon" (Gen. 40:15). This is very much the spirit of “This man has done nothing amiss...". And again we have the Lord in the midst of two criminals, one to be saved and the other damned, just as here with Joseph.

And bring me out of this house- The same words are often used by Moses in describing how Israel had been brought out of the house of Egyptian bondage (e.g. Dt. 13:5,10). The primary audience of Genesis was Israel in the wilderness, and they would have clearly seen the connection. Just as it seemed Joseph was suffering unfairly in that house of bondage at the hands of the Egyptians, so had Israel been. But they too had been brought out, through the Red Sea.

Gen 40:15 *For indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews*- Joseph wasn't "stolen", he was sold by his brothers; but he had so often generously told the story that way that he spoke of it as "indeed" true. Just as his brothers repeated the lie about Joseph being dead to the point that they believed it. His generosity of spirit is revealed also in how he doesn't talk in detail about his suffering at the hand of Potiphar's wife. The same words are found in Gen. 44:8, where the brothers are accused of having stolen things out of the house of Joseph's house. Perhaps the idea was that Joseph felt they had stolen him, in that they had stolen the best years of his life; and he wanted them to know how it feels to be a convicted thief, because they had in this sense stolen

him. Joseph like the Lord was very positive about his brothers. But in talking to them, he is quite clear that "You sold me here", "You meant it for evil". Just as the Lord was very realistic with the disciples about their slowness of heart to believe, and yet spoke of them so positively to the Pharisees. He is likewise realistic with us in His relationship with us, but very positive about us to the Father.

And here also- The force of "here also" here may mean that Joseph "also", like the butler and baker, was imprisoned under false accusation; see on :1.

Have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon- The shame of Joseph in the dungeon was that this was for the lowest of the low, according to Ex. 12:29- a type of the supreme degradation of Christ on the cross. "Dungeon" is s.w. "pit", the grave, in Zech. 9:11. We sense Joseph's deep internal outcry against the cruel injustice of what had happened to him. He remains for all time an encouragement to those tempted to lose their faith through the experience of bitter injustice.

Gen 40:16 *When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph*- This again has the ring of psychological, imaginable truth to it. We are led by the text to correctly imagine his eagerness to hear something good about himself too.

I also was in my dream, and behold, three baskets of white bread were on my head- White bread would be leavened bread. Just as the things in the butler's dream represented good spiritual things elsewhere in the Bible, so the things in the baker's dream have generally negative associations.

Gen 40:17 *In the top basket*- If this means the third basket, then the idea is that the baker's death would be on the third day. Or maybe the idea was that his body would be pecked by birds on the third day.

There was all kinds of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head- The works of the baker came to represent him personally; for it was his flesh which was to be eaten by birds (:19). Birds devouring the works of the hands of sinners is the language of the final judgment (Rev. 19:21), suggesting that this is all encouragement to Joseph that judgment day would come and all injustice will be then finally resolved; see on :19.

Gen 40:18 *Joseph answered, This is its interpretation. The three baskets are three days*- We wonder if the three days look forward to the Lord's death and resurrection, which is the basis upon which men shall be judged, and thereby saved or condemned.

Gen 40:19 *Within three more days, Pharaoh will lift up your head from off you, and will hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from off you*- It could be that the

baker really was guilty. The language here is used of the sinner whom God curses (Dt. 21:22,23). The whole situation looks forward to the day of final judgment. Maybe Joseph was being encouraged that judgment would indeed come, and the wicked condemned and the innocent restored. For he would have struggled so much with a sense of injustice, of judgment / justice not being done for him. And this situation encouraged him that finally, it would be done.

Gen 40:20 *It happened the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants, and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants*- We can imagine how Joseph felt when the message came that these two men who were in bonds, fed and perhaps washed by him as their servant (:4), were suddenly to go into Pharaoh's presence. He would have seen the power of the prophetic word in the dreams, and reflected that his dreams required a like exaltation. This is why when the call came, he would have been expecting it; the experience of the butler was to show him the path he was to tread.

Gen 40:21 *He restored the chief cupbearer to his position again, and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand*- The final salvation of Israel is often described in terms of restoration (Acts 3:21). It is a theme which began with the cursing of Eden, in hope of restoration in terms of the Kingdom of God coming on earth. But even in this life there is a sense of restoration; restored to how God intended us to be for Him.

Gen 40:22 *But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them*- The point is made that Joseph's interpretation of dreams came true. It was to encourage him that his own dreams would likewise.

Gen 40:23 *Yet the chief cupbearer didn't remember Joseph, but forgot him*- Joseph was "forgotten" in prison, just as Simeon later felt the same. Joseph therefore did this to him, knowing his brothers would leave Judah in prison feeling 'forgotten', so that Judah would enter into his sufferings. Our trials likewise are lovingly orchestrated so that we might identify with the sufferings of Christ. Joseph's pleas for mercy were ignored when he was in the pit; and now likewise in the dungeon. Later Israel were condemned for not being "grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Am. 6:6). This experience of being ignored and forgotten didn't make Joseph bitter and self-centred; rather it made him the more sensitive to others. For all time we have the challenge to resist the natural human tendency towards ingratitude, and to simply forget the grace shown to us, allowing life and daily busyness to crowd out our obligation to gratitude. The same word will be used of how people would quickly forget the blessing of seven good harvests (Gen. 41:30). Time and again in Deuteronomy, Moses begs Israel to "not forget" God's goodness. So

often we are given examples of people who did not remember but forgot God's grace, or Joash who remembered not the kindness of Jehoiada to him (2 Chron. 24:22). It is why we break bread, to remember and not forget- because that is our tendency. Regular giving thanks for food is one way in which we can keep working at our need to show more gratitude. The grateful person is far less likely to be consumed in bitterness and self pity.

GENESIS CHAPTER 41

Gen 41:1 *It happened at the end of two full years*- Joseph would have been expecting that the butler would get him out of prison, and thus his own dreams would have their primary fulfilment. But that didn't seem to happen, for two years. Perhaps at this time particularly, Joseph was tested by God's word (Ps. 105:19), i.e. his faith in it was tested. Each day would have dragged... "two years of days", as the Hebrew is literally. And yet Joseph lived believing that double dreams meant they would surely be fulfilled- and soon. But "soon" from God's perspective. Over 14 years in the case of Pharaoh's dreams. Like us, on one hand Joseph by faith accepted God's perspective. In another sense, he felt the drag of time.

The parallels between Joseph and Daniel are clearest in Gen. 41. They were young Hebrews in Gentile lands, both "handsome" (Dan. 1:4). Pharaoh's dream occurs two years after Joseph's incarceration (41:1), just as Nebuchadnezzar's dream occurs two years into his reign (Dan. 2:1). "Pharaoh had a dream" (41:1), and "Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams" (Dan. 2:1), the spirit of both kings was "troubled". They called their wise men, who were unable to explain the dreams. Their officials [Arioch cp. the the butler] in both cases are aware of a Hebrew captive who can interpret dreams. In both accounts they were "hurriedly" brought before the king, and both were asked by the king if they would really interpret the dream. Both ascribe interpretations to God- perhaps Daniel perceived the similarities, and was encouraged in his humility by that of Joseph. Both recount the king's dreams, and provide interpretation. Joseph's statement that the dream is "determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about" (Gen. 41:32) surely inspired Daniel to say that "The dream is true; and its interpretation is trustworthy" (Dan. 2:45). Both men were subsequently worshipped, given gifts, and made rules in a foreign land, with the Gentile rulers perceiving the spirit of the one true God in these young men. Some of these similarities could never have been contrived by Daniel. But he chose to continue the similarities in that he perceived how he was being 'set up', as a second Joseph, and responded appropriately- especially by saying that it was his God and not him who could interpret dreams. We must be on the lookout for which Bible characters are being repeated in our lives. Perhaps the Joseph story is so long and detailed because so many of us have found his life indeed to be the template for our own experiences. We might also ponder how Joseph is never recorded as praying to

God. But Daniel immediately thanks God for being given the interpretation and is presented as a man of prayer. Perhaps he perceived this apparent deficit in Joseph, and decided to learn from Joseph's apparent omission. This leads on to the observation that Daniel's response to his interpretation of the dream in Daniel 5 differs sharply from Joseph's response. Although they receive the same rewards [gold chain about the neck etc.], Daniel refuses them whilst Joseph accepts them. And Daniel appears to have always gotten out of working for the evil empire, whilst Joseph marries into it and dedicates his life to it. But we are assured of Joseph's salvation in Hebrews 11.

That Pharaoh dreamed: and behold, he stood by the river- In consort with the gods, for the Nile was thought to be the god Hapi. And yet Joseph will go on to speak of one singular God, the God of Joseph, who is responsible for both good and bad, famine and fertility.

Gen 41:2 *Behold, there came up out of the river seven cattle, sleek and fat, and they fed in the marsh grass*-

The cow was a symbol of fertility. The Egyptian goddess Hathor is represented with the head of a cow. The god Osiris is represented in Egyptian drawings as an ox accompanied by seven cows. Clearly the Egyptian theology was being subverted and it would seem Pharaoh accepted that, and quite possibly became a believer. He like other Pharaohs removed his officers at a whim; but Joseph remained in power for decades and was never removed.

A hymn to the Nile now in the British Museum describes the Nile as "overflowing the gardens created by Ra giving life to all animals ... watering the land without ceasing ... Lover of food, bestower of corn ... Bringer of food! Great Lord of provisions! Creator of all good things!". Pharaoh imagined that such prosperity came up out of the Nile; but his pagan ideas were overturned by *evil* and famine coming up out of the Nile. And then Joseph explains that his God, the one God, is the One responsible for all things, not the god of the Nile. Pharaoh was being challenged deeply, and he does well to resign his whole belief system in a moment.

Gen 41:3 *Behold, seven other cattle came up after them out of the river, ugly and thin, and stood by the other cattle on the brink of the river*- As noted on :2, this was a radical inversion of the Egyptian paganic worldview, whereby only good and fat things came from the Nile. The Nile played a huge part in the thinking and belief structure of Pharaoh. Yet he stood by the river, on its banks (:1), and now the cattle appear on its banks. Presumably we are meant to understand that he was looking across the river to the opposite bank. He was being encouraged not to 'stand before' the Nile as a man stands before an idol, but to look over it, beyond it, to new possibilities and realities. Consistently, the nature and symbolism of the dreams and Joseph's repeated talk about

one God... was all designed to uproot his whole belief system and bring him to Israel's God.

Gen 41:4 *The ugly and thin cattle ate up the seven sleek and fat cattle. So Pharaoh awoke*- He may have seen the two types of cattle merge into each other. "Sleek and fat" is AV "well favoured", the very Hebrew phrase used of Joseph (Gen. 39:6). He may well have been called or nicknamed that term. Joseph may have perceived that those good cattle were him. He therefore was inspired to assume he would be the man through whom the effect of evil, the seven thin cattle, would be resolved. He would later realize that all meant for evil in his life was turned to good through his remaining a part of God's saving plan (Gen. 50:20). "The ugly" is s.w. "evil"; and the same words are used of the false suggestion that an "evil beast" had "eaten up" Joseph (Gen. 37:33). See on :20. The dreams showed that evil was not going to prevail ultimately- because Joseph was going to be faithful to the Abrahamic covenant, and God would work through him, therefore, to the blessing and salvation of Israel and the world around them.

The good and evil cattle taught a profound lesson. The loss of the good to the evil was so that a far greater good could come. The unbeliever would see the glass half empty, forgetting the good years and lamenting the evil. Joseph likewise could have just lamented his evil. He was the well favoured cattle who lost all that due to evil, but his loss overcame that evil. That evil, the loss of his good, was to bring about a far greater good. This is the only way to successfully cope with our experience of evil. Otherwise we are left lamenting our loss of good, potential or otherwise, and are left with no answer to man's search for meaning.

Gen 41:5 *He slept and dreamed a second time: and behold, seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, healthy and good*- The corn of the Nile valley, the *triticum compositum*, was famed for bearing seven ears upon one stalk; and it was exactly that which was to be offered to the gods. The paintings of the Thebaid show stalks with seven heads of grain being specifically offered to the gods, and other stalks being eaten by the people. Joseph's suggestion was that it not be offered to the gods, but be stored up by a man acting on behalf of God, and given to hungry people. This was all a request to Pharaoh and the Egyptians to invert their whole belief system.

Gen 41:6 *Behold, seven heads of grain, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them*- There is an element of unreality in this, because as the miserable critics correctly point out, a wind directly east is rare in Egypt. But this was the point- a new thing was to arise in Egypt. And it was an east wind which destroyed a later Pharaoh at the Red Sea, and was used by God in bringing the plagues. The dreams, like Joseph's about his dead mother bowing to him, all have this element of unreality which speaks of

something Divine. We could observe further that the hot winds which afflict Egypt came from the South; it is the land of Israel which is affected by the *hamsin*, the hot wind from the East. Perhaps Joseph gathered from this that the famine inducing East wind was going to affect Israel too; it would come primarily as judgment upon his family, but the wind would be so strong that Egypt would suffer that judgment too. He would have been encouraged to see that this was the very scenario which would make his brothers come begging to him for grain, as he had dreamed years ago. And it would have encouraged him to suggest Pharaoh appoint a man to manage things, envisaging exactly how events did indeed transpire. But still he had to wait through the seven good years for the famine to come. In faith, and having adopted God's perspective, he still considered this as a "soon" fulfilment of God's prophetic word.

Gen 41:7 *The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy and full ears. Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream*- The swallowing up of good by evil was perceived by the Egyptians as a sign the gods were either dead or had turned against them. And they were intended to think that- and come to realize that Yahweh was the only God, responsible for good and 'evil' (Is. 45:5-7).

Gen 41:8 *It happened in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all of Egypt's magicians and wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh*- The situation repeated at least twice in Daniel's time (Dan. 2:1; Dan. 4:5). These similarities are in order to teach us that our situations are not unique, but rather are in line with the Father's previous activities with men.

One theme of the record is that circumstances repeat in life, because there is the higher hand of God over all. These men came to Joseph in the morning- and we are told concerning Pharaoh: "And it was in the morning that his spirit was troubled" (Gen. 41:8). The butler and baker tell Joseph: "We have dreamed a dream, and there is no one to interpret it" (Gen. 40:8), and Pharaoh likewise told Joseph: "I have dreamed a dream and there is no one to interpret it" (Gen. 41:15). Joseph's "Do interpretations not belong to God?" (Gen. 40:8)is then matched by what he tells Pharaoh: "It is not me; God will restore Pharaoh's peace of mind" (Gen. 41:16). Joseph saw the parallels. And just as he had the right, humble attitude about dream interpretation in the first case, so he did in the second case when the situation was repeated. We may fail the first time and get it right the second time; or get it right the first time and fail the second time. Or like Joseph, get it right and keep getting it right.

Gen 41:9 *Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, I remember my sins today*- I discussed on Gen. 40:1 the question of whether the butler really had sinned. But all

the same, he felt he had committed a very serious sin in allowing the busyness of daily life and his demanding job to make him simply forget Joseph's need and tragedy. Perhaps an intensive plural is being used here- as if to mean 'my very great sin'. To forget others' need due to the busyness of our lives is a great sin.

Gen 41:10 *Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, me and the chief baker*- I suggested earlier that the butler may not have sinned and like Joseph was in prison at the whim or "anger" of others. Therefore he became an example to Joseph of how Divine dreams could really change destiny. For Joseph too was placed in prison due to the "wrath" of Potiphar.

Gen 41:11 *We dreamed a dream in one night, I and he. We dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream*- The idea is that the interpretations came true.

Gen 41:12 *There was with us there a young man, a Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard, and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams. To each man according to his dream he interpreted*- I suggested that Potiphar was in fact the manager of the prison, and also the father of Joseph's future wife. In this case we have this confirmed, for even in prison Joseph was known as the servant of the captain of the guard, who was Potiphar. Joseph is described here with the term for "slave". Evidence has been found of Egyptian laws and culture which stated that a slave must never become a ruler nor be arrayed in royal clothes, not even as a reward for faithfulness. I will later suggest that Joseph calmly believed that he would be exalted to power in Egypt, so that his brothers would come bowing to him for food when his sheaf [grain] stood and their grain had collapsed. Just as God had revealed to him in his youth. So Egypt, the world, appeared to preclude Joseph from ever getting to a position where he would be in power in Egypt, receiving international visitors [his brothers] and having them bow to him. But he believed in God's word to him, and believed that this would happen even if Egypt, the world, appeared to make that an impossibility. We face the same challenge of faith.

Gen 41:13 *It happened, as he interpreted to us, so it was: he restored me to my office, and he hanged him*- The implication was that Joseph's interpretations were what had restored him.

Gen 41:14 *Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon. He shaved himself, changed his clothing, and came in to Pharaoh*- "They made him run hastily out of the dungeon…and changed his raiment" (AVmg.)- This

speaks of the energy of Christ's resurrection; the change of clothing would then speak of the Lord's change of nature, Zech. 3:3,4.

Gen 41:15 *Pharaoh said to Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. I have heard it said of you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it*- Perhaps Paul alludes here in saying that no man can know the things of the Spirit of God, apart from the man to whom the Spirit reveals them (1 Cor. 2:10,11). In this case, Joseph like Daniel is being set up as our pattern.

Gen 41:16 *Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It isn't in me. God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace*- I have developed the point throughout this chapter that the nature of the dreams and their interpretation was a direct attack on Pharaoh's belief system; God was seeking to convert him, as He was the Pharaoh at the time of the exodus. The LXX brings this out here: "Without God an answer of safety shall not be given to Pharaoh". The one God alone could give the king peace.

Joseph at this point was clearly the role model chosen by Daniel in similar situations, centuries later. And this is how the Biblical record should function for us too. This is the advantage of knowing the Biblical text; we see our own situations are not without precedent, but are repetitions of the same Divine hand in earlier human history.

Joseph is repeating his earlier experience with the butler and baker when interpreting their dreams. He insists that he is not of himself a magician or psychologist. He stresses that God can interpret dreams, and therefore, he, Joseph, can interpret dreams- implying that he is very very close to God and feels he knows God's mind. He is confident he manifests God. In Gen. 40:8 the Hebrew is a word play, although not apparent in translation: "Isn't it *God* who has interpretations? So tell *me*". And he says the same here to Pharaoh. He got it right the first time, and he gets it right again when the temptation to self-exalt is again placed before him.

Gen 41:17 *Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood on the brink of the river*- Literally, on the lip of the river; this apparently is an Egyptian term and is found in the papyri discovered from that time. It has been observed that the text here was written by one who was fluent in both Egyptian and Hebrew, which would fit Moses, who was educated in all the learning of Egypt.

Gen 41:18 *And behold, there came up out of the river seven cattle, fat and sleek. They fed in the marsh grass*- 'Coming up' is a major theme. The ears of corn 'came up' (5), as the cattle came up from the river. The word is used of how blossom 'came up' on the vine in the butler's dream (Gen. 40:10), of how Joseph 'came up out of' the pit (Gen. 37:28); and of how finally the brothers came up to Joseph (Gen. 44:33). The Egyptian

hieroglyph for a year was the picture of a cow. So the interpretation of seven years was logical. Drawings of seven fat cows are found on Egyptian tombs from the time; they represented a prosperous afterlife. The dream is seeking to lead Pharaoh away from these ideas, and to see that in this life he is going to have both a blessed future for a while, and also suffering. And he cannot just let the future happen, hoping and assuming his future will be good; he must act now to manage it succesfully. The later Pharaoh, like so many people, failed to learn from history.

Gen 41:19 *And behold, seven other cattle came up after them, poor and very ugly and thin, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for ugliness*- There is an element of the unreal in all the dreams in the Joseph story; this is not simply seven years of famine, but famine such as had never been known, whereby animals ate each other (:20). Pharaoh says that the seven good cattle came up out of the river Nile, in line with his belief that the gods of the Nile only gave good. But we are specifically told in :3 that the bad cattle also came up out of the Nile, "seven other cattle came up after them out of the river, ugly and thin". Pharaoh cannot bring himself to say this about the Nile. But he was being taught that his entire worldview was mistaken. Both good and evil came from Israel's God, not the Nile, and the Nile gods were not therefore only the source of good. And he appears to have the humility to accept this.

Gen 41:20 *The thin and ugly cattle ate up the first seven fat cattle*- Animals only eat each other in extreme famine. The dreams of Pharaoh at the time of Joseph were a clear inversion of the surrounding pagan ideas. One of the foremost Egyptian gods, Osiris, had seven cows; it must have taken some courage for Joseph to comment on the fact that the seven fat cows were to be eaten up by the seven thin ones (possibly representing Israel in the long term, cp. Hos. 4:15–16; Am. 4:1). The pagan ideas of Pharaoh were not explicitly corrected; instead, the supremacy of Yahweh and His people over them was taught by implication.

"Ate up" is the same word used in Gen. 43:2 of Joseph's brothers eating up the corn of the good years. They then are presented as the "ugly" [s.w. "evil"] cattle in Joseph's life who meant evil to him (Gen. 50:20), who was described with the same term as the handsome sleek cattle; see on :4.

Gen 41:21 *And when they had eaten them up, it couldn't be known that they had eaten them, but they were still ugly, as at the beginning. So I awoke*- This was not simply a prediction of seven years of plentiful harvest followed by seven years of famine. The idea was that the evilness [s.w. "ugly"] of the famine years would be neutralized. But as Joseph explained, that was in fact conditional upon wise management and strong leadership in the first seven years. This conditional aspect to the fulfilments would have made him reflect that his own dreams likewise depended partly upon his sheaf standing

up, of his own volition. The description of the thin cows eating up the fat cows (Gen. 41:21) is alluded to in the Hebrew text of the curses for Israel's disobedience in Lev. 26:26: "you shall eat, and not be satisfied". The seven years of famine were therefore to be seen as a curse. Disobedient Israel would be treated like Egypt, which is a theme throughout all the curses of Lev. 26. Egypt represents the world, and those rejected from the new Israel will likewise "be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32), sent back into the world they loved to share the world's judgment.

Gen 41:22 *I saw in my dream, and behold, seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, full and good*- "Heads of grain" translates a single Hebrew word which has no reference to grain; it means a stream, a branch, something which comes off something else. And "stalk" likewise translates a Hebrew word usually translated "branch"; it is the word used for the seven branches of the candlestick. The picture may not necessarily have been of grain, although we shall later read of grain being gathered in abundance; but of seven branches coming out of one branch, the impression being of fecundity. The idea could be that the goodness of the Israelite candlestick was to bring blessing on the world to neutralize the evil. The Egyptian corn god, Npri, was symbolized by seven such ears of corn. But the Egyptian gods were to be shown unable to resist or countervail the evil which Yahweh would bring. And Pharaoh humbles himself to accept that, whereas a later Pharaoah refused, and so all the ten plagues were targetted at the Egyptian gods to make him learn that lesson. Man can avoid so much suffering, if he humbles himself before God's word and simply believes it- rather than insisting upon being an empirical learner.

Gen 41:23 *And behold, seven heads of grain, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them*- The same word for "blasted" is repeatedly used as a figure for Divine judgment (Dt. 28:22; 1 Kings 8:37; 2 Kings 19:26 "corn blasted"; Am. 4:9 etc.). Seeing that Egypt doesn't usually get an east wind, Pharaoh was surely intended to understand that this spoke of superhuman judgment from one almighty God.

Gen 41:24 *The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads of grain. I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me*- Dream interpretation was a major science with the Egyptians. There were "dream books" which were consulted to give the meaning of the various things dreamt, and provided guidelines for interpretation. None of these had the ring of truth for Pharaoh. "Explain" is s.w. "declared" in :25; *God* explained / declared it whereas the magicians could not. Yet it was Joseph who in contrast to the magicians declared it. Joseph knew that he was God's man in this situation, the manifestation of God, although as he clarifies in Gen. 50:19 "Am I in the place of God?". However that sentence could as well be translated "I

am in the place of God", and therefore, in the context, his brothers need not fear that he would condemn them as God didn't.

Gen 41:25 *Joseph said to Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one*- This is in contrast to the two dreams of the butler and baker, which they assumed were one singular dream, but had different interpretations. See on Gen. 40:5,8.

What God is about to do, He has declared to Pharaoh- See on :24. Speaking within a society where there were multiple gods, Joseph gives no opening statement to the effect that he believes in only one God. He simply speaks from that assumed position, and our witness likewise has power from speaking from assumed positions about God and His Son, rather than seeking to offer some apologetic argument for those positions. When you talk to an agnostic about God, using phrases like "God willing", talking unashamedly and naturally about your prayers, you make a powerful witness. As noted on :38, Joseph's language of only one God rubbed off on Pharaoh and he too started reasoning likewise.

The Hebrew is literally 'what He is doing'. Joseph so believed in the dreams that for him, it was as if the whole sequence of events was already in motion. He adopted the Divine perspective, as we should; see on :32.

Gen 41:26 *The seven good cattle are seven years; and the seven good heads of grain are seven years*- Seven was understood as a Divine number, a good number. That it would be associated with good years was understandable for the Egyptians, but not that it should be associated with evil. The belief system of Pharaoh was being challenged- the one God of Joseph and Israel was responsible for both good and evil (Is. 45:5-8).

The dream is one- See on Gen. 40:5,8.

Gen 41:27 *The seven thin and ugly cattle that came up after them are seven years, and also the seven empty heads of grain blasted with the east wind; they will be seven years of famine*- Several studies have revealed the similarities between Moses' account of Joseph and the Gilgamesh Epic and other Mesopotamian writings. World-wide famines of seven years' duration are a common theme in many of the Epics. But they are usually explained as arising from the death or anger of a demon / god (See documentation in Donald Redford, *The Biblical Story of Joseph* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970) p. 98; C.H. Gordon, *The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations* (New York: Norton, 1965) pp. 69,88). Gilgamesh 6.104 describes Ishtar as preparing for the seven year famine in an almost identical way to Joseph. Ishtar is being deconstructed, and brought down to a human level- a faithful human being, Joseph, rather than any god or Ishtar, was who prepared for and staved off the effects of the famine through his obedience to God. And

it was the one God of Israel who brought the seven year famine, rather than any demon or Satan figure. The similarities between Joseph and Osiris, the Egyptian fertility god, 'the provider of food', also can't be lightly dismissed. Like Osiris, Joseph was confined until the word of his prediction came true, and afterwards he taught wisdom to the elders of Egypt (Ps. 105:19,22). The allusion is surely intended to rid the Israelites of any hankering to still believe in Osiris, within whose cult they had lived for 400 years, and instead to believe that it is Yahweh who provides fertility and the blessing of food through His obedient servants here on earth like Joseph. The pagan fantasies are alluded to but brought down to more human, earthly terms, with Yahweh being presented as the only true God.

"Empty" is the word used of the empty pit that had no water where Joseph was thrown (Gen. 37:24). It is quite likely that the pit where Joseph was cast was in fact a grain storage pit that was "empty". There were such "tithepits" in the old England, where grain was also stored in pits. The description of it as "empty" of itself supposes that it was at times "full" of something- probably grain. Joseph himself had in essence been through what the people were to suffer, lack of water and empty, dry conditions; and had been saved out of it. As 2 Cor. 1:4 makes clear, all we suffer or experience is in order for us in some way to help others who suffer. Only in this way can we answer man's native, inborn search for meaning.

In a dated but fascinating book entitled *The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1933), A.S. Yahuda demonstrated that the syntax and vocabulary of the Joseph story is very similar to Egyptian idiom. This would strengthen my suggestion that Moses is consciously seeking to engage with and deconstruct the Egyptian stories, amongst whose influence Israel had lived for four centuries. Moses is writing what could be termed 'The *Israelite* epic', in response to the 'stories' and epics of the surrounding peoples amongst whom they lived and through whom they travelled. But Moses paints this picture, constructs the true, Divinely inspired version of the story, through engagement with and allusion to the incorrect stories and epics of the Gentiles. And in linguistic terms, Yahuda shows at depth how Moses is writing with allusion to Egypt and Egyptian in a manner which only the Israelites who had lived in Egypt would have perceived- e.g. Moses records how the cows in Pharaoh's dream represented years, but the hieroglyphic symbol for "year" was a cow. And Moses, trained in the learning of Egypt whilst being a native Hebrew speaker, would have been the appropriate person for the Spirit to inspire to write in this way.

Gen 41:28 *That is the thing which I spoke to Pharaoh. What God is about to do, He has shown to Pharaoh*- Joseph invites Pharaoh to perceive him as speaking for God; and Pharaoh agrees, stating that God's Spirit is in Joseph (:38). Joseph mixes the ideas of present and future in saying that this thing "is" and yet is "about" to be done; hence

GNB: "It is just as I told you- God has shown you what He is going to do". The weather pattern was already working out. And God through Joseph had shown it to Pharaoh.

Gen 41:29 *Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt*- The Hebrew for "plenty" is used many times in the record here, but only twice elsewhere; Prov. 3:10, as so many Proverbs, alludes to this historical incident in saying that if Yahweh is honoured with substance [a reference to the tithe], "so shall your barns be filled with plenty". Pharaoh's acceptance of Joseph's interpretations was tantamount to rejecting his paganic belief system, and so effectively Yahweh was being honoured with Egypt's substance. The emphasis upon "all the land of Egypt" may mean a more radical change in weather than we immediately imagine. For the Egyptians only cultivated along the banks of the Nile, and a good harvest was a result of the Nile flooding the river plains to a high level. But good harvest throughout "all the land of Egypt" seems to imply far more than that; there would be abundant harvest not only along the Nile flood plain. The emphasis is upon the good harvests coming in Egypt, but famine consuming the entire "land" or 'world' around Egypt, the land promised to Abraham. Joseph clearly perceives that therefore his brothers will come from Canaan to Egypt to buy food and he wants to be the one before whom they bow in gratitude for it.

Gen 41:30 *There will arise after them seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt. The famine will consume the land*- The same word is used of how the butler forgot Joseph (Gen. 40:23). Joseph had spent two years (:1) reflecting how blessing was so easily forgotten, and he imagined how this would be the case. We too easily forget blessing, it is human to do so; hence the "cup of blessing which we bless" at the regular breaking of bread meeting. This is designed to help us against this tendency to forget blessing and be swamped by what is immediately before our eyes. People want to enjoy blessing now, and then they forget it. Joseph knew that the way of wisdom, seeing both good and evil as from God, meant that in time of blessing one must remember the evil and seek to negate it. He could of course have become swamped with bitterness, but he didn't.

Gen 41:31 *And the plenty will not be known in the land by reason of that famine which follows; for it will be very grievous*- "Which follows" translates two Hebrew words which together can mean 'which rightly follows'. The imagery of the dreams, such as blasting and the east wind, is all elsewhere used of Divine judgment. "Seven years of famine" is specifically stated to represent Divine judgment in 2 Sam. 24:13. There would be blessing and then judgment. Perhaps this was God's way of saying that Egypt's injustice to Joseph was to be punished by judgment, and yet through Joseph's grace they were to be saved out of it. See on :34. Just as Joseph saved Egypt from the consequences of the

evil they did to him, so he was to save his brothers from the consequences of their sins. Whilst we do at times suffer the consequences of sinas David did, it is not inevitably nor always so, and the Lord's work is in fact to save us from those consequences. See on :34.

Gen 41:32 *The dream was doubled to Pharaoh, because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass*- The idea is 'God is hastening to do it', as if Joseph saw that this apparently future sequence of events was already being operationalized; see on :25. The idea may be that God will very suddenly bring about the fulfilment. Which is why we cannot predict things like the Lord's return, as if we have a timeliness of preceding events. The fulfilment of the dreams in the Genesis story was always sudden. The good harvests began immediately, the butler and Baker had their dreams fulfilled suddenly, and the brothers suddenly found themselves bowing to Joseph. Or we could reflect that the dreams of the prisoners and Pharaoh began to come true immediately; but Joseph's dreams didn't. He was to accept by faith that the process leading to the fulfilment had started right away.

Each of the three dreams in the Joseph story is a double dream (Joseph's dreams, the dreams of butler and baker, Pharaoah's dreams). When Joseph tells Pharaoh that double dreams mean they definitely come true, he said this, therefore, in faith- that his own dreams would come true. That faith is contrasted with both his father and his brothers protesting that these dreams could never come true. And I suggest he had this in mind all through, that circumstances would work out so that his brothers came bowing to him. I suggest that is what motivated him to suggest Pharaoh set a man over all Egypt to manage the people would come to buy grain- inwardly scheming that he would be the one chosen. He showed great spiritual ambition in all this. But Joseph also understands the double dream of Pharaoah to mean that God will "soon" fulfil it- and the double dream of the butler and baker indeed immediately came true. Joseph therefore understood that his own dreams would "soon" come true; but he understood that the "soon" was relative to God's view of time, and not his. The dreams of Pharaoh would take seven to fourteen years to come true; but Joseph understood that as "soon". We like Joseph must see that our redemption and the fulfilment of God's plan for us is likewise "soon"- in the ultimate perspective.

Gen 41:33 *Now therefore let Pharaoh look for a discreet and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt*- Joseph knew that there must be some fulfilment of the prophetic revelation that his sheaf must arise. I dare to think that Joseph made this suggestion hinting that he could be that man. The Hebrew for "look" is literally 'to see'. Joseph is definitely offering himself- 'see for yourself a discreet and wise man', he tells Pharaoh. When Pharaoh is looking at and 'seeing' Joseph right in front of him. This was spiritual

ambition indeed. The years in slavery and prison, all the rejection, injustice and betrayal by his brethren... did not break his faith in God's prophetic word to him. Had he not had those experiences, and the dreams had come true painlessly, he would have been proud; and there would have been no reason for his brothers to bow before him. There can be no true, legitimate exaltation without the humbling hand of providence first. By seeking to fulfil the dreams, Joseph showed that he recognized that God's revelation requires some degree of human effort to fulfil it. But we note that he understood the dreams as meaning that he was to care for and provide for his brothers- not simply get aggrandisment over them for its own sake. See on Gen. 45:6 for another example.

The same Hebrew phrase "discreet and wise man" is used about the leaders of Israel (Dt. 1:13) and also every individual in Israel (Dt. 4:6; Ps. 107:43; Hos. 14:9), and is used multiple times in Proverbs about whoever gives heed to God's word. Joseph knew that he had received God's word, and that it had given him the wisdom he had just shared with Pharaoh. His desire to be set over Egypt was not motivated by personal pride, but in order to be a blessing to the world and to save his brethren, all in fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises. We too cannot just wait for these promises to be fulfilled; they are the basis of the new covenant in which we are. We must have vision and be proactive as to how we can be a blessing and source of salvation in this world.

Gen 41:34 *Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint overseers over the land*- "Appoint" is the same word used three times of how Joseph was appointed to authority in prison and in Potiphar's house (Gen. 39:4,5; 40:4). He had clearly been prepared for the responsibility he would now bear and the job he was to do. "Overseers" is the same word used of Pharaoh's officers with whom Joseph had been imprisoned. All he had been through was now making sense and was appropriate background experience for what he now had to do. And so it shall be in our eternal work in the Kingdom; we are being prepared for it now, although we don't realize the details.

And take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt's produce in the seven plenteous years- A fifth was a double tithe. It was also seen as the amount which should be paid in compensation for theft or fraud, especially when committed in ignorance (Lev. 5:16; Lev. 6:5; 22:14; 27:13; Num. 5:7). This is quite a significant catena of verses; and we must remember that the Law of Moses was codifying things which were already understood. It all suggests that Egypt had sinned, even if most were ignorant, and there had to be this compensation. I discussed on :31 the idea that the famine was Divine judgment upon Egypt in response to what they had done to Joseph. It was Joseph who suggested this "fifth", so we wonder if he did struggle with feelings of anger over it all, and yet came down on the side of mercy rather than judgment. He clearly wanted the brothers to come to repentance through experience of discipline, he wanted there to be some recognition of wrong, as he saw it as a step required toward their salvation. And so perhaps he also saw the situation with the Egyptians.

Gen 41:35 *Let them gather all the food of these good years that come, and lay up grain under the hand of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it*- The "them" refers to the overseers whom Joseph suggests should be appointed. It would have meant a huge administrative task and a shakeup of the existing administration and government. Ps. 105:22 states that Pharaoh gave Joseph power "to discipline (AV "bind") his princes at his pleasure, and to teach his elders wisdom". The wisdom Joseph had was from God (see on :33), so this was really an invitation to teach the Egyptian leadership the wisdom of the true God. There is no record that Joseph ever 'bound' any princes; he didn't want to do to others what had been done to him, rather than seeking the opportunity to make others suffer as he had. The idea presumably was that any who didn't invert their superstitions and follow Joseph's policies would be disciplined or "bound" in prison. There would've been much opposition to Joseph's plans; he was a foreigner, a newcomer without political experience, and he was asking Egypt to go against their previous superstitions and religious ideas. But he was empowered by Pharaoh to do so. We tend to therefore think that effectively, Pharaoh accepted Joseph's religion, or at least, rejected his own. During the seven good years, this would have been difficult; it would have seemed that nothing now could go too wrong. So the way Pharaoh persevered in faith in the dream over an extended period is significant.

Gen 41:36 *The food will be for a store to the land against the seven years of famine, which will be in the land of Egypt*- "A store" is the noun from the verb 'to oversee', which was been used about Joseph being made an overseer in prison and in Potiphar's house (Gen. 39:4,5; 40:4). The food would oversee them; and yet Joseph would be the supreme overseer. We can therefore understand the association perceived between Joseph and the food, for he was given a title meaning 'Bread of life' (:45).

That the land not perish through the famine- This is surely alluded to in the Bible's most well known verse; God so loved this world, as He did Egypt [which represents the world] that He sent His Son, prefigured in Joseph, that whoever believes in him "should not perish" (Jn. 3:16).

Gen 41:37 *The thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants*- As noted on :36, it all required quite some faith in Joseph personally and the Divine message he was giving; and that faith had to continue over the seven good prosperous years. And prosperity is never a good environment for faith in God regarding future things.

Gen 41:38 *Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?*- Pharaoh believed in multiple gods, but Joseph had adopted the assumed position that there was only one God. And that rubbed off upon Pharaoh, who

now speaks likewise. He was open to the inversion of his belief system and was blessed because of it. Pharaoh means that Joseph knew the mind of God; this is what it means to have the Spirit of God, in this context.

"In whom the spirit of God is" is the same phrase used Belshazzar when he addresses Daniel in Dan. 5:14, “I have heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee". On one hand Daniel had to perceive the connections with Joseph, but on the other, God worked to nudge him towards this.

Gen 41:39 *Pharaoh said to Joseph, Because God has shown you all of this, there is none so discreet and wise as you*- Without doubt the absolute power of the Pharaohs made them capricious and often unwise in who they rewarded on the cusp of emotion or personal pleasure. But the exaltation was so major and so sudden, and was respected for the rest of Pharaoh's life, that we have to see something more here than the momentary emotional outburst of a powerful man. He saw something of God, and as noted throughout this chapter, he had accepted the inversion of his belief system, thanks to Joseph.

Gen 41:40 *You shall be over my house*- Pharaoh wanted Joseph to not only rule over all Egypt, but over his own family (:43). We see here another hint that Pharaoh personally accepted Joseph and wanted his private matters ruled according to Joseph's Divine principles. Joseph had been prepared for this by being made ruler over Pharaoh's house. If we keep responding to God's movement in our lives, one experience leads to another.

And according to your word will all my people be ruled. Only in the throne I will be greater than you- This must have been the greatest and quickest exaltation of all time. A man who was just an hour before a miserable prisoner shaving himself in the prison washroom was now the second most powerful person on the planet. It speaks of the Lord's exaltation, from earth to heaven, from a shamed, bleeding, spittle covered body lying in a cave in Palestine... to the exalted Lord of heaven and earth. But it also demonstrates for all time that no human situation is as permanent as it may seem. God can really do anything.

It's a debatable question as to whether Pharaoh created this new position, or whether by giving Joseph this exaltation he was effectively firing another man from his post; or maybe, providentially enough, the post was open. It could be that all this happened two full years, precisely two years, after the exaltation of the butler (:1), which would mean that again it was the time of Pharaoh's birthday, when apparently judgments were made; the baker put to death, the butler exalted. So perhaps the position was open. Joseph would have accepted the position fully aware of how easily such senior officers could be removed or killed by Pharaoh. But unlike Daniel, he accepted the position because

he knew that he could use it to save his family, and he perceived that it was part of the fulfilment of the dreams he had been given. That Joseph remained in power all his life beneath the Pharaoh was of itself a testament to God's power and purpose. Or perhaps the Pharaoh came closer to the morality of the one God whom he had come to recognize, and ceased to act in the capricious manner of despots.

The rulership of Egypt according to Joseph's word was backed up by the power to bind any objectors in prison, and to teach the officials Divine wisdom (Ps. 105:22). It points forward to the supremacy of the word of the Lord Jesus.

Gen 41:41 *Pharaoh said to Joseph, Behold, I have set you over all the land of Egypt*- Joseph was *given* the *land* of Egypt (Gen. 41:41 Heb.), using the same words as in Gen. 45:18; 48:4 concerning how the true *land* -of Canaan- had been *given* to Abraham's children. The gift of the land of Egypt was but a primary fulfilment of the greater promise. Again, we see the theme developed of primary fulfilment of the promises in this life. The promises of being fruitful and being given a land were being fulfilled, in a primary sense, in Israel's experience in Egypt (Gen. 48:4 cp. 47:27). And that fruitfulness was shared with all Egypt in the seven years of plenty. Abraham's seed was in a primary sense a blessing for the world (Egypt).

Gen 41:42 *Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in robes of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck*- Joseph had been given a special robe by Jacob which he lost; the garment Potiphar gave him was likewise grabbed from him by Potiphar's wife; so he must have thought 'how long will this one last?'. And his previous experiences were so that he would now not feel proud about having this robe of honour from Pharaoh. We note how Biblical history repeated in the similar experiences of Daniel; and we can discern such similarities in our own lives, as the Bible's narrative helps us too to make sense of our lives. The exaltation and empowerment of Joseph clearly speaks of the Lord's exaltation and similar total empowerment, so that He functions as God, without being God Himself in person.

Gen 41:43 *And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had. They cried before him, Tender father!*- Although only 30, Joseph already had a fatherly image because of his loving care for others. Or we can read as AV "Bow the knee". Joseph's faith in his dreams would've helped him not to be proud. He knew this wasn't the fulfilment of his dream of others bowing to him, but it was going to lead up to the primary fulfilment of it. He would've realized that if his brothers came to Egypt, they too would have to bow the knee to him, and thus fulfil his dreams. So he would've been on the lookout for them coming to him. Adam Clarke suggests the term could be translated

"Father of blessing". In this case, we see Joseph as a primary fulfilment of the promised Abrahamic seed who would bring blessing upon Israel's Gentile neighbours.

He set him over all the land of Egypt- It seems there were rulers over the regions of Egypt, but this was a new position created- total control over the whole nation. Joseph was a foreigner and unknown to anyone much. His rulership was very strongly dependent upon his personal relationship with the king, and the direct delegation to him of all Pharaoh's power. This again gives an insight into the Lord's relationship with the Father. The dreams and their interpretation would have been preached and taught throughout Egypt; otherwise there would have been no motivation to pay the double tithe and make operational the plans which Joseph had. Those dreams were God's word; and perhaps some perceived what we noted earlier, that the seven years of famine suggested Divine punishment, and they needed to repent of sin.

Gen 41:44 *Pharaoh said to Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without you shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt*- As noted on :43, for Joseph to practically have authority to execute his plans, he needed a clearly understood delegation of total power to him from Pharaoh; and this is what happened. It gives insight into the nature of the Lord's current exaltation. Lifting up hand or foot could be understood as idioms for agriculture; Dt. 11:10 speaks of Egypt as a place where agriculture depended upon the watering of the land by foot.

Gen 41:45 *Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah*- 'Saviour of the world', or 'bread of life'. The Lord was likewise given a new name on ascension (Phil. 2:6-9; Rev. 3:12). See on :36. The giving of an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife, daughter of a higher caste leading figure, is typical of how Egyptian citizenship was granted to foreigners. Joseph the Hebrew accepted this. Like us in this world, he was on one hand an Egyptian, appearing as one to his brothers and also to the Canaanites when he returned there to bury his father. But he retained his essential identification as a Hebrew and named his children appropriately.

And he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On as a wife. Joseph went out over the land of Egypt- "Asenath" means 'worshipper of Nath'. Joseph's wife had to forget all about her pagan past (Ps. 45:10 = Dt. 21:13), especially her father's house. Joseph alluded to what she had gone through when he spoke of how he too had forgotten all his past suffering and his father's house (41:51). What a pair they were! Both had broken free of their pasts and were dedicated to the new life together. As such they typify the relationship between Christ and His bride.

It seems hardly chance that Potiphera is the same word as Potiphar. Under Egyptian law, a slave or foreigner could not have any exalted political position unless they

married their master's daughter. So it would make sense that Pharaoh ordered Joseph to marry his master Potiphar's daughter, so that his exaltation remained legal. It could be that "Priest of On" just meant he was from the ruling caste, rather than that he was actually a priest. I suggested on Gen. 39 that Potiphar didn't believe his wife's story. Could it be that he also bore the title "Priest of On", and now his daughter married Joseph? "On" is Heliopolis (as in LXX), and I suggested that the "round house" prison was in fact the circular tower of Heliopolis. All this points to an identity between Potiphar and Potiphera. See on Gen. 39:19; it was the same "captain of the guard" who was also the manager of the prison. There was therefore this man Potiphar who was hanging around in Joseph's life, clearly used by providence. And why do we have to as it were read between the lines of the record to make this connection? Because that is how providence works, subtle rather than direct and 'in your face'. You have to read between the lines of your own life to see it, rather than having providence baldly stated. Joseph would have realized that clearly God's hand was at work with him. As he stood as a nervous 17 year old in a slave market in Egypt... it was all of God's grace and plan that he was bought by Potiphar or one of his servants. But it took him many years to perceive this. And the same can be said of events in our lives.

Gen 41:46 *Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt*- "Went throughout" is literally 'to cross over', and is a strange term to use. But the Hebrew *abar* is the root of the word "Hebrew". Literally, Joseph 'Hebrewed' throughout Egypt. News of his one God principles, the word of that God in the dreams, the rejection of superstition and paganic ideas... along with Joseph's personal travels throughout the land would have spread the Hebrew religion throughout Egypt. This would explain why even 500 years later, a significant number of Egyptians considered themselves Hebrews and left Egypt with Israel to settle in Canaan.

Gen 41:47 *In the seven plenteous years the earth produced abundantly*- Literally, 'by handfuls', a term more appropriate to the harvesting of rice than grain. The exact crop isn't specific in the original Hebrew.

Gen 41:48 *He gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was around every city, he laid up in the same*- The bread laid up in preparation for the famine seems to be alluded to when Paul writes of laying up the word as a foundation against the judgment (1 Tim. 6:19). To build storehouses in every town was a significant amount of work; perhaps it was in bitterness at this memory that a later Pharaoh made the Hebrews build him storehouses (Ex. 1:11).

Gen 41:49 *Joseph laid up grain*- Laying up or gathering corn would have made him reflect upon his dreams; he realized it was his sheaf standing up, and so he expected his brothers to come and bow down to it for the sake of corn.

As the sand of the sea, very much, until he stopped counting, for it was without number- This was the description of Abraham's seed. He realized that all this was happening for the sake of preserving Abraham's seed; which meant his brothers would come to him and bow down in search of corn from him. Likewise world events can happen for the sake of the people of God, who may be a tiny minority.

Gen 41:50 *To Joseph were born two sons before the year of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore to him*- The implication is that he had other children, but these are the two who remained within the purpose of God. It's a sober thought that such a spiritual person as Joseph produced children who didn't all accept the covenant.

Gen 41:51 *Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh, For, he said, God has made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house*- Joseph's (half-Gentile) sons were counted as the twelve tribes of Jacob, just as we are Christ's sons (Heb. 2:13). Joseph was called "tender father" (41:43 mg.) as the Lord will be called 'Father' in the future age (Is. 9:6 Heb.)

The same word for "toil" is used of the "travail" of the Lord's soul during the crucifixion process (Is. 53:11). He forgot the pain of it all but clearly remembered what had happened. His apparent hardness to the brothers was therefore not from any motive of revenge. We find here a profound statement of God's ability to make us "forget" things which otherwise would remain an endless fountain of bitterness and regret. He clearly had not forgotten his family, and it could be argued that he did all he did with the hope of saving them, although on the right spiritual basis. It is clear from :52 that he considered Egypt "the land of my affliction"; he had not forgotten the affliction in prison and through the slander of Potiphar's wife; but he forgot the pain psychologically and didn't keep reliving it. He "forgot" in the sense that God forgets sin; the fact of them is still there, as witnessed by the Biblical history being full of the record of forgiven sins. But they are forgotten in the sense of not being counted against us, and this is how Joseph was helped to "forget" his sufferings. "My toil" could refer to hard labour in prison, although the Hebrew word is also translated "misery" and "sorrow". In this word choice we have a window back onto the deep psychological sufferings which the behaviour of others brought about. They are associated with his father's family. But there is such huge encouragement here, that God through the work of the Holy Spirit on the human heart is able to do such psychological miracles. And He does so to this day. To deny such operation of His Spirit is to leave ourselves bitter and at the mercy of hard memories

which we will otherwise find impossible to deal with. This was an amazing miracle; no amount of steel-willed suppression of his past could have made Joseph paper over all the pain. But God did a psychological miracle upon him. God did not obliterate or delete Joseph's memory cells, but He made him "forget" the pain.

Gen 41:52 *The name of the second, he called Ephraim: For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction*- Life without his brothers was an affliction, and the soft life was only affliction without that relationship. The idea of fruitfulness is an allusion to the promised fruitfulness of the Abrahamic seed (s.w. Gen. 35:11). But Joseph noted that this was experienced in the land of his affliction, not in Canaan; so it was only a shadow fulfilment of the greater fruitfulness of the Kingdom which those promises spoke of. Again we see the theme of primary fulfilment of the promises in this life, even if we are not physically located in Canaan. The first audience of Genesis was Israel in the wilderness, who would well relate to Egypt as "the land of affliction", and the same word is used in this sense (Gen. 15:13; Ex. 3:7,17; 4:31; Neh. 9:9). But they were to grasp the point that even when things were going wonderfully in that land, for God's true people, it was still a land of affliction; as is anywhere apart from the Kingdom. Jacob would later comment on Joseph's fruitfulness (Gen. 49:22); but the fruitfulness was in spiritual terms, for only two of his children have any further mention in the Biblical record.

Gen 41:53 *The seven years of plenty, that were in the land of Egypt, came to an end*- Joseph may have reflected upon the strange similarity with how his father Jacob had served Laban for two periods of seven years, and Joseph had apparently been born in year two of the second seven years; which was exactly when he met his brothers again. There are at times such strange coincidences which are surely Divine, and yet we fail to attach meaning to them. Perhaps we shall know in the Kingdom; or maybe we are just supposed to take outline encouragement from the fact that our lives are under the Father's loving overall control.

Gen 41:54 *The seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread*- The "all lands" refer not to the whole planet, but the lands of the *eretz*. Just as the knowledge of the one true God had been distributed throughout Egypt, so all lands of the *eretz* would now come and meet Joseph in Egypt and hear of the dreams and their fulfilment by the one God. Jacob's sons likely heard the story- strange dreams had been fulfilled in Egypt, and there was therefore the bread of salvation available to all. And the brothers would have thought of Joseph's dreams, although probably on the level of the unconscious.

Gen 41:55 *When all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for*

bread, and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, Go to Joseph. What he says to you, do- When Mary tells the servants to do whatever Jesus says (Jn. 2:5), she is quoting from the LXX of Gen. 41:55, where Joseph's word has to be obeyed in order to provide food for the needy Egyptians. I have several times pointed out the inversion of Egyptian religious values which was required to believe in the dreams and the interpretation being enforced by Joseph. Egypt was being given the chance to know God, and famine is a judgment from God designed to elicit repentance (see on :31) and faith in Him (Israel therefore were "famished" in the desert, Dt. 8:3 s.w.). But we note that such judgment doesn't come immediately; there is not a connection between sin and Divine judgment in real time; otherwise we would all be dead. In this case, God brought blessing and then only after that judgment for sin. We may balk at the idea of the whole nation and surrounding Canaan being afflicted for the sake of one man's mistreatment. But this is how significant is just one individual to God; and we think of the huge ramifications of the Lord's crucifixion.

Gen 41:56 *The famine was over all the surface of the earth. Joseph opened all the store houses, and sold to the Egyptians. The famine was severe in the land of Egypt*- The Proverbs often allude to historical incidents in earlier Biblical books. Prov. 11:26 clearly fills out the situation that arose: "People curse someone who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it". Joseph would have been blessed by the Egyptians; and thus there was again a primary fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises of blessing upon the Gentiles of the *eretz*.

Gen 41:57 *All countries came into Egypt, to Joseph, to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all the earth*- We wonder why Joseph didn't invite his family to come, as surely he knew they were suffering. Perhaps he had learnt enough of the ways of providence to leave it all to God. Or he felt they had to take the initiative, and needed to most importantly repent before simply getting material salvation from their situation. Whatever the reason, one suggests it had a spiritual dimension to it, and was not because he didn't care for them or wanted them to suffer. Or it could be that as with Joseph's rather strange responses to his brothers, that he simply didn't know how to act. He had no game plan, because he didn't know. Perhaps he was indeed partly angry with them, and partly sorry; and partly wished their judgment, and partly their repentance. And in his character, mercy triumphed over judgment. This would give a window into the internal struggles of God and the Lord Jesus, before they finally come down on the side of mercy to us rather than the judgment we deserve.

GENESIS CHAPTER 42

Gen 42:1 *Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, Why do you look at one another?*- Their silence was because of their unspoken suspicion that Joseph was alive in Egypt and they must meet him and maybe bow down to him as he had once predicted. I suggested on Gen. 41:54 that the news of Pharaoh's amazing dreams and their interpretation by a Hebrew had spread around the neighbouring countries; and people believed they had come true to the extent that they went to Egypt to buy grain. And this would have triggered subconscious chords in the minds of the brothers; for they had effectively murdered their brother because of his dreams, which they considered impossible of fulfilment. They could not explain their inaction, sitting in silence looking at one another, as none would dare have revealed their innermost thoughts. If their cattle had died and the land was parched, they would have had little else to do apart from sit and look at one another.

The brothers look at one another in silence; later in this chapter we will read that they say to one another, "We are truly guilty about our brother Joseph" (:21). Connecting these two statements we surely learn that their silent looking at one another, not saying anything, but all reticent about returning to Egypt... was likewise because they had an unspoken conscience that there in Egypt they might just meet Joseph. The Hebrew in :21 is "They said each to his fellow". The idea is that every one of those men was convicted in their conscience, and they all burst out and said the same thing at the same time; the thing which was unspoken amongst them in :1

Gen 42:2 *He said, Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy for us from there, so that we may live, and not die*- Jacob "saw" the grain in Egypt (:1), but he "heard" about it. Hearing is seeing; the word becomes flesh. This is true of 'seeing' by the eye of faith as a result of hearing the word of the Gospel. The situation was desperate; they were really facing death by starvation. The sons surely had heard before Jacob that there was corn in Egypt, for he was not elderly; but he speaks to them as if they don't know this. They had acted as if they didn't realize; and thus their guilty consciences are revealed to us. Another alternative is that Jacob "saw" in vision- bear in mind he was virtually blind in his old age.

Gen 42:3 *Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt*- We wonder why they all went, especially as Judah had apparently separated himself from them (see on Gen. 38:1). Perhaps the famine had bound them together. Maybe they took with them all the wealth they had, and so they were not needed to stay and protect Jacob's encampment as there was nothing left to steal by robbers. Or perhaps Joseph had created a rule that corn would only be sold to heads of families personally, to avoid speculative purchase of corn for re-sale.

Gen 42:4 *But Jacob didn't send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with his brothers; for he said, Lest perhaps harm happen to him*- Jacob clearly suspected the brothers of foul play with Joseph, and he figured that the other son of the favoured Rachel, his favourite and youngest son, would likely suffer from them too. One theme of the Joseph story is that people subconsciously believe and understand home truths, and those subconscious beliefs are then brought out into the open by the hand of providence. This is how people "come to the truth" today- they are led to see that what they intuitively sensed and knew, both about God and themselves, was in fact true. No matter how unpalatable it is to the conscious mind.

Gen 42:5 *The sons of Israel came to buy among those who came, for the famine was in the land of Canaan*- They were made to realize that for all their separation from the Gentiles, they were "among" them in a common need for salvation. This was another step in their progressive and intended humiliation which would lead to repentance. Latter day Israel have to come to realize this. Or it could be that their unspoken, unarticulated conscience about Joseph led them to try to fade in with the other Canaanites, from whom they were supposed to be spiritually separate.

Gen 42:6 *Joseph was the governor over the land. It was he who sold to all the people of the land*- The situation would have required a major management team, headed by Joseph. He would surely have had to delegate much of the day to day selling of corn. Yet he guessed his brothers would come to him, and so he arranged things so that he would personally interview those who came from Canaan, perhaps stationing himself near the northern border from whence he knew his brothers would arrive. All along he had structured his life in accordance with the fulfilment of God's word which he had received as a teenager. And this has great power of example for those of us who likewise encountered the Gospel as teenagers.

Joseph's brothers came, and bowed themselves down to him with their faces to the earth- This was only a primary fulfilment of the dreams, as I have often noted. For both Jacob and a resurrected Rachel had to be present for them to fulfil, and the brothers had to be involved in prosperous agriculture rather than cattle ranching.

Gen 42:7 *Joseph saw his brothers, and he recognized them, but acted like a stranger to them, and spoke roughly with them. He said to them, Where did you come from? They said, From the land of Canaan to buy food*- The apparent roughness of God at times is here explained. As with Joseph, it is not because of anger with us; for behind those rough words was a love passing description. It is to elicit response in us, towards our greater blessing and final salvation; because in His love, He wants us only good in our

latter end. And on a more simple, human level, it could be that the only way Joseph could hide his emotion and passionate love toward them was to mask it with harsh words. Anything less would have blown his cover. Joseph acted like a stranger, with the rudeness which Middle Eastern peoples tended to have towards foreigners.

Gen 42:8 *Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him*- He was 30 when elevated from prison, and they had last seen him at 17. And there had been seven good years and now two bad years of famine, meaning they had not seen him for 22 years. He would have changed more than they had, would have had a shaved head, and he spoke through an interpreter and was likely arrayed in Egyptian clothing appropriate to his position.

The New Testament emphasizes that it was only at their second encounter with Joseph that he was recognized by them, and this points forward to Israel's recognition of their Messiah only at His *second* coming (Acts 7:13). Perhaps we can infer from this clear parallel that the brothers were intended to perceive Joseph at this first meeting, but their consciences didn't let them. In this case, again we have a probe into the realms of the deep subconscious. On one level, the brothers recognized Joseph, like the Jews of the first century ["This is the heir, come let us kill him" alludes to the words of the brothers as they saw Joseph approach them at 17 years old]. In their case it was only the passionate nudging of Joseph which led them to repentance.

Gen 42:9 *Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed about them*- This doesn't mean he had forgotten them; he remembered them in the same way as God 'remembers' promises; it's not that He has forgotten them out of mind. His whole plan with his brothers was based upon his realization that those dreams would come true in a primary sense even in this life, although the greater fulfilment was to be when his mother was resurrected and also bowed before him. At this point he may well have recalculated the interpretation of the dreams. They were not about his simply having power and seniority over his older brethren. His brothers came to him and bowed before him in that they were begging for mercy. Or maybe he 'got that' from the start, and had calculated his becoming grand vizier of Egypt and personally meeting all foreigners who wanted to buy food- exactly to bring about this fulfilment. That one day, his brothers would come to him begging for mercy and salvation. This is what they had not wanted to accept when he was 17 and first had the dreams. He was then the family priest, but they didn't want to accept him as that. But, the dream said that one day they would be desperately begging for his grace, mercy and salvation. And in this sense the dreams were coming true. But he wants them to seek not just material blessing from him, but spiritual blessing. Hence, having remembered the dreams, he goes on to accuse them of being spies / liars- because he wanted to bring them to repentance.

"About them" uses the term *lehem*, which can as well mean "for" as in Gen. 11:29. Perhaps Joseph now better understood that his youthful dreams were about him doing something "for" his brothers, saving them, showing them grace; and not simply meaning that he would have power over them. His dreams were "for them" in that they were pictured finally bowing before him, begging for and then in gratitude for his grace and salvation. We note that bowing can mean gratitude rather than mere servanthood. Thus Abraham bowed to the Hittites in gratitude for their agreement to sell him a burial place (Gen. 23:7,12).

And said to them, You are spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land- "Spies" can mean various things in the original. They were a group of ten men, perhaps with servants. Their response was that they were "one man's sons" (:11). Therefore this would have been in reply to the accusation that they were a group of men looking to invade Egypt or otherwise do harm. Joseph's accusation was not therefore made in anger, but to elicit from them news about their father and family. Egypt was most prone to attack on its northern border, over which Joseph's brothers would cross. So perhaps this was his excuse for stationing himself there, so that he could meet his brothers.

It was unlikely that a single family would be "spies". If they were acting on behalf of another nation, that might be reasonable. But seeing they were the sons of one old man who was separate to the other tribes, 'spying' is a strange accusation to make. The brothers would have thought about it. The double meaning of the Hebrew term for spying, meaning also 'liars', would have made them wonder, at least silently, whether his real accusation was simply that they were liars. It was their untruthfulness to Jacob which was the issue Joseph wanted to help them come to terms with. His false accusation that they were liars ["spies"] was to make them reflect that although they were innocent of this accusation at this point, they were not innocent of it historically.

"To see the nakedness..." is a phrase used in the Hebrew Bible in a distinctly sexual sense. The French Jewish Bible translation of Andre Chouraqui has: "Vous etes venu pour voir le sexe de la terre". A man saw the nakedness of another person through inappropriate sexual behaviour with their family members. We recall that both Reuben and Judah had behaved in a sexually abusive way to their own family members. Maybe through this false accusation, Joseph was seeking to elicit their acceptance of their sexual guilt over other matters. Or it could be that Joseph was unaware of the behaviours of Reuben and Judah, and his point rather was to falsely accuse them of sexual behaviour in Egypt- because that was what had happened to him. Their response was that they were innocent, and had only been forced to visit Egypt because of pressure of circumstance. And this of course had been precisely Joseph's experience. We too are led through the hand of providence to know the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, that this mind might be in us which was in Him throughout His sufferings.

Gen 42:10 *They said to him, No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food*- The purpose of the false accusations was to make them totally honest in their answers, desperate as they were to avoid prison and to obtain corn so as to keep alive. Joseph elicits a spirit of total honesty from them, in the hope that this will lead them to recognize their sin against him. "Your servants" was another primary fulfilment of the dream. God's leading of us to repentance likewise involves using circumstances, e.g. false accusations, to lead us to total honesty.

Gen 42:11 *We are all one man's sons; we are honest men. Your servants are not spies*- As noted on :9, the accusation of being spies was made on the basis of them being a significant group of men together; and Joseph's intention was thereby to elicit from them a statement about their connection to each other, and information about their father. The false accusations were made to elicit from them the statement that they were "honest / true men"- and as soon as the words were off their lips, they would have realized that in another context, they were not true men at all. This is why God allows false accusation- to elicit from us an awareness of where in fact we are really and truly at fault.

Gen 42:12 *He said to them, No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land!*- Joseph disagreed with their claim to be honest, because they had not recognized him, and they had repeated the old lie that Joseph was dead. Seeing or looking upon nakedness is the very phrase used of Ham in Gen. 9:22. To look upon nakedness was also a euphemism for incest; and this was what Reuben and Judah had both committed, Reuben with Jacob's concubine, and Judah with Tamar. And who knows which other of the brothers had done similar things. Perhaps this was a further attempt to prod their consciences. They were indeed not spies, looking upon the nakedness of *the land*; but they had looked upon nakedness.

Without understanding and appreciating all the psychological prodding and eliciting that is going on in Joseph's words, his behaviour would appear haphazard and bizarre. But it was far from that. Joseph's accusation was that they were not in fact brothers. The implication was that they did not appear to act as brothers act toward each other. This was to elicit their self examination on this point. His doubt of their story may well imply that if they were true men then they would surely not have left their old father alone. 'Do you really care for your father?' was the implication. Their answer would have been "Yes we do care for him, we love him very much"... but then, the memory of their previous deception of him about Joseph would have been elicited. God likewise probes our conscience at every point, to try to lead us to self knowledge and repentance.

Gen 42:13 *They said, We, your servants, are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is no more*- They were being careful to be truthful, and yet they had repeated the lie about Joseph's death so often that they had come to believe it. And this is the problem with lying; we deceive ourselves until we live in a false reality. Therefore, "speak the truth in your heart".

"We are", present tense, is surely another psychological slip that reflected their conscience that Joseph was still alive. We observe that they lied to their father Jacob about Joseph, and were believed; and God leads them to repentance over this matter by putting them in a position where they tell the truth, but are accused of lying. They lied and were believed; now they tell the truth and are disbelieved and accused of lying. God is the perfect psychologist, and worked on a human level through Joseph being a pretty good psychologist. This is in fact a psychological classic. Guilt over a past failure is elicited by being falsely accused in the same area of failure, in this case, honesty. This is one function of our experience of false accusation; we were falsely accused of some behaviour, but in fact we were guilty of that behaviour in another form many years ago. And thus we are lead to repentance. Again we see how nothing is wasted with God; even false accusation has a part to play in our spiritual path, if we allow it. This technique is used in interrogation; the suspect is accused of something the interrogators know is false, in order to elicit within the suspect an accute awareness and current consciousness of what he actually did do wrong. And that consciousness is then further probed by the interrogators. Joseph was working on behalf of God, but it is also true that he had developed a fine psychological awareness through his sufferings and wide life experience. His behaviour to the brothers reads as bizarre and haphazard- until we perceive that he is in fact purposefully seeking to elicit repentance and awareness of the past within them. He will finally cut short his process with them simply because of his love and grace toward them- he accepts them anyway, despite the fact they hadn't fully got to expressing repentance.

His interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams was "of God" and not of himself, and yet it is also possible that he figured out the interpretations himself. For they were not impossibly difficult to figure out, just as the dream of Nebuchadnezzar was fairly clear in its meaning even on face value. The Egyptian hieroglyph for a year was the picture of a cow. So the interpretation of seven years was logical. Drawings of seven fat cows are found on Egyptian tombs from the time; they represented prosperity. The magicians failed to tell these kings the meaning because it was bad news for the monarch, and in Pharaoh's case, evil cows arising from the Nile was a radical inversion of all he believed as a worshipper of the Nile as a source of only good.

Gen 42:14 *Joseph said to them, It is like I told you, saying, 'You are spies!'*- Perhaps just before this point in the narrative, Joseph asked them specifically the question we learn of in Gen. 44:19, when Judah reminds Joseph: "My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Do you have a father or brother?'". Maybe this was rhetorical. For the brothers had told Joseph of their own initiative that they had a father and a brother, Benjamin. Was Joseph saying, Do you really have a father and brother? Do you act like you do? So Joseph's question "Do you have a brother?" was designed to probe their subconscious conscience. Did they have a brother, Joseph? Did they still have him? Was he really dead, as they had persuaded themselves? Constantly, Joseph is seeking to nudge their conscience, to bring them to repentance. That is why he calls them spies, which is the same Hebrew word for "liars".

We also learn from Gen. 44:21 that Joseph at this point made a special promise about Benjamin: "*You said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him'".* It implies Joseph was going to do something with him, rather than just wanting to literally see him. The Hebrew could mean "I will keep my eye on him". And this was to elicit from the brothers the impression that this vizier of Egypt had a special interest in Benjamin. It was another nudge towards perceiving that this vizier was in fact Joseph, the only blood brother of Benjamin.

"It is like I told you" is AV "That is it"; they had lied about Joseph by saying "one is no more". Joseph therefore repeated his claim that they were lying- over years of faith in the fulfilment of his dreams, Joseph had carefully planned all this. His sufferings had made him very sensitive, and he was like the Lord Jesus, a great psychologist. And the brothers responded just as he thought they would, but they refused to allow him to elicit from them the stark truth: 'And one we effectively killed and his blood is upon us to this day'. The Hebrew word translated "spies" can also mean "slanderer" and it is translated like this in 2 Sam. 19:27 and Ps. 15:3. It was a word with a range of meanings, and Joseph repeatedly uses the word, hoping to elicit in them a recognition that they were indeed tale bearers, although they were not spies.

Joseph was implying that they are lying about the one brother whom they said was no more. In the context of the spying accusation, surely Joseph was implying that this missing brother had actually been sent ahead of them to spy out or see the land of Egypt and the famine there. Again he is seeking to gently and subtly to lead them to the right conclusion about Joseph. Perhaps he was too subtle, just as many today do not grasp the subtleties of God's many nudges towards repentance. For Paul says that in His goodness, God does lead us to repentance. Or tries to. The brothers, wide eyed and innocent, would have struggled to understand how they were lying. In prison and on the way back to Canaan, they would have had plenty of time to work through the implications of what Joseph had said to them. They would've talked and thought about

nothing else. Indeed they had a brother back at home, indeed their father was an old man, and they were all brothers. The point at which they were lying was therefore in saying that Joseph was dead. They were being asked to prove that Joseph was dead. And this was to prod and nudge them to wonder whether actually, this grand vizier with whom they were speaking had evidence that Joseph was in fact alive and not dead. And that was why he insisted they were lying.

Gen 42:15 *By this you shall be tested. By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go out from here, unless your youngest brother comes here*- This is effectively saying that they are liars. As noted on :14, "spies" can mean both spies and liars, slanderers. So Joseph is trying to get them to see his point- that "spies" can mean both spies and slanderers. And he wishes to 'test' them to try to get them to realize his *double entendre*.

Gen 42:16 *Send one of you, and let him get your brother, and you shall be bound*- Joseph later changes his game plan, so that instead of nine remaining in prison and one going for Benjamin, one remains in prison and nine return for Benjamin. To some extent, he was unsure of his game plan because of the emotion and relative suddenness of the situation. But it is also clear that their repentance and spiritual reformation was his intention, and all he asked of them, and all his changes of plan with them, were to that end. It could be that he guessed they hated Benjamin as they hated him; and he wanted to give them the opportunity to be alone with Benjamin and learn to treat him better than they had Joseph. The apparent change of plan might however have been purposeful, to indicate to them that change of plan was possible with those who have power, and God Himself changes His plans and position on things- in order to give us inspiration towards repentance, change of mind on our side.

The command to send just one of their brothers was a test as to whether they would imagine the feelings of their father. They had not done so when they led him to believe Joseph was dead. And so he again is trying to lead them to repentance over that.

"Bound" (also the word used in :19,24) is the Hebrew word used about Joseph being bound in the Egyptian prison (Gen. 39:20; 40:3,5). So the word is used three times about the binding of Joseph, and three times about the binding of Simeon on behalf of the brothers. In line with our view that Joseph is seeking to bring the brothers to repentance, we must not see this as Joseph seeking to 'do others as he was done'. Rather he was seeking to bring them to understand the consequences of their actions to him- so that they might repent. We too are led through suffering and experience to this understanding, so we might not only repent, but be prepared to live eternally with those whom we have hurt. And the Lord is seeking to teach those who hurt us the same lesson.

That your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you, or else by the life of Pharaoh surely you are spies- The idea was that they were to perceive that the Hebrew word for "spies" meant both liars, and spies. Joseph wanted them to confess that they had been liars, about his 'death'. John seems to allude to this idea of truth within us when he writes: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn. 1:8). Joseph wanted them to admit that in the brief biography they had presented, they had sinned. But they were still denying they had sin.

Gen 42:17 *He put them all together into custody for three days*- As they had cast Joseph into the pit (Gen. 37:22) and as he had been cast into prison because of false accusation (Gen. 39:20). The three days in prison perhaps recalled Joseph being three days in the pit- although such a time period isn't stated in the record, we can maybe infer he was there for three days because he is such a clear type of Jesus in the grave for three days. He did all this so that they could enter into His sufferings. Or perhaps their three days in prison corresponded with three years in prison for Joseph, although the period isn't mentioned. It is unusual for groups of offenders to be imprisoned together, in the same cell. But Joseph did this, because he wanted to overhear their conversations, and he hoped that their collective guilt would result in a collective confession to him; but their pride and self deception was still too strong for that to happen at that time.

Perhaps the three days point forward to a three year tribulation of Israel in the last days to bring them to accept Christ? We get the impression that Joseph changed his plans for them several times; he recalled them when already on their journey etc. Does this show that he hastened the day of revelation to them from purely emotional considerations- and will the Lord do the same with His Israel?

Gen 42:18 *Joseph said to them the third day, Do this, and live, for I fear God*- The Hebrew could mean "I *also* fear God", as if to encourage them to indeed fear God, and join the dots and perceive he was Joseph before he had to reveal it to them. H.P. Mansfield claims that the article is present in the original: "I fear *the* God", as if inviting them to get the hint that he like them worshipped only one God. "Live" could carry the suggestion that if they remained in prison, they would die; the death threat is still there in :20. For the significance of them facing death in Egypt, see on Gen. 43:8. He wanted them to understand what Egyptian prison was like, and to place before them death in Egypt if they were not honest about their family situation, or death from famine in Canaan.

Gen 42:19 *If you are honest men, then let one of your brothers be bound in your prison; but you go, carry grain for the famine of your houses*- Joseph changed the conditions- instead of all the brothers going to prison, only one of them would (cp. :16). He wanted

to develop within them appreciation of the idea of one brother suffering for and in the place of his brothers- to prepare them to realize what had been achieved through Joseph's sufferings. In addition to this, we should consider that their appearance before him was unexpected, and he was reeling under shock. He perhaps had no clear game plan in place. And he would have had a desire to simply forget his father's family and move on with life; on the other hand, he loved them and wanted their salvation; yet without doubt he would have had natural feelings of anger and a desire at least for them to appreciate the magnitude of what they had done.

"Honest men" is literally 'upright men', but the word carries the sense of 'something being so'. It occurs in :20 "They did so" and in :21 "*therefore* is this distress...". The idea could be that they were proving themselves 'upright'; but they still could not make the confession Joseph sought. In fact, they never did; his pity and grace was such that he gave up demanding it. God likewise so loves us that it seems He accepts our internal recognitions of sin, even without the articulation of it as confession in the terms He ideally seeks. We should likewise not be too demanding of confession of sin from others, but grace and pity should dominate our attitude.

Gen 42:20 *Bring your youngest brother to me; so will your words be verified, and you won't die. They did so*- See on :19. As noted on :18, Joseph was threatening them with death. But they could have just remained in Canaan; they would have reflected that Joseph spoke of death even in Canaan as somehow within his power. They would have concluded that he was speaking somehow from God. Why did Joseph insist on their bringing Benjamin when he knew it would cause his father so much stress that it might kill him? Was it a form of anger with his father, for having set him up as the favourite and thereby causing all the problem, or for disbelieving his dreams? Or as mentioned on :19, was it quite simply that he had no clear game plan in place and was reeling under the emotion of the situation? Or it could be that he correctly guessed that Benjamin was now the pampered, favourite son as he once had been. And he realized that for Benjamin to come to spiritual maturity, he had to become a man spiritually and separate from his father.

Gen 42:21 *They said one to another, We are certainly guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he begged us, and we wouldn't listen. Therefore this distress has come upon us*- See on :19 and on :1. The Hebrew is "They said each to his fellow". The idea is that every one of those men was convicted in their conscience, and they all burst out and said the same thing; the thing which was unspoken amongst them in :1. This was a major step forward in the process of repentance. But there was nothing done further, no attempt at a guilt offering, and no public confession. Joseph obviously thought that private acceptance of guilt was not enough; there needed to be something further. And that is a challenge to us. However,

Joseph never succeeded in getting such a confession from them. This is the nearest he got to it. His grace and pity led him to simply reveal himself to them. "Distress" and "anguish" translate the same word. They were being brought to experience Joseph's feelings in the pit. We too are led by a loving Lord to know His mind during His sufferings, and we are to allow that mind to be in us which was in Him then (Phil 2:4,5). "The anguish of his soul" and pleas for deliverance, ignored by the brothers, point forward to "The travail of his soul" (Is. 53:12 s.w.), ignored by Israel (Is. 53:1-4).

We were not told about Joseph's pleas for mercy when in the pit. But now we learn of them. This reflects how the brothers likewise had heard those pleas but were unaware of them and only now do those pleas come into their conscious awareness.

We note that their guilt was not about deceiving their father, not about hating their brother, not about selling him into a miserable life of slavery in a foreign land... but about their refusal to hear his cries for mercy. This was because they were within themselves crying out to God for mercy and grace. Although they don't do so out loud, nor collectively; but they all collectively recall and comment that they were deaf to Joseph's cries. So we deduce that they each said this, because each of them internally felt they were crying out to God and not being heard. So cleverly, the record invites us to view their hearts. And for all time the point is made, that if we ignore the cries of others, then our cries to God for grace will be apparently ignored. The passage of time must never be allowed to work a kind of quasi atonement, as if our past sins are dealt with by the passing of the years. The crises of our lives lead us to recall our past deafness to others' needs.

And yet in their cases, we marvel that there is simply the feeling of guilt, and observation that they must apparently suffer for their past sins. *There is no statement of repentance*. It can be discerned between the lines that they did repent in their hearts, but the lack of any statement such as "And each man verily repented of his sins against Joseph" is very obvious. One message of the Joseph story is that God accepts incomplete or unexpressed repentance. His grace and passion toward us as His family is very great, and is reflected in that of Joseph towards his brothers. Each time we read that Joseph cries, as he does when he hears these words (:24), the record intentionally leaves us to wonder why he cries. Perhaps in this case it was because they were reacting merely like caught criminals, regretting their actions and preparing to accept the consequences... but still not coming to repentance.

Gen 42:22 *Reuben answered them, saying, Didn't I tell you, saying, 'Don't sin against the child', and you wouldn't listen? Therefore also, behold, his blood is required*- Reuben is perhaps more persuaded than the rest of them that Joseph is dead- for he talks of "his blood" being required. He is quoting the law of Gen. 9:5, which says that blood will be required from both animal and man if they slay a man. The brothers had created the

story that an animal had killed Joseph; and they had been concerned at the time not to personally slay him. But now they realize that effectively, they had killed him by their decision; his blood was upon them. Even Reuben who had been against killing Joseph felt himself guilty for his blood. This is a huge challenge to us. We may carefully avoid the actual commission of sin, but the implications of our actions against others are tantamount to the same sin we thought we were technically avoiding. This is particularly true in the sin of excluding believers from Christian fellowship. The brothers were driven to realize that they were personally each one guilty of Joseph's blood. No shifting of the blame onto an animal or anonymous traders or Egyptians could take it away from them. Judah had suggested that by doing so they would "conceal his blood" (Gen. 37:26) and they had agreed with that. Now they realized that this was just a technical get out, and they were all guilty of his blood. We note the progress: "We are honest men" (:11) to "We are guilty". Joseph's probing of their statement to be "honest" therefore worked- "If you are honest men..." (:19). But Joseph maybe didn't know that. Because their confession of guilt was not said to him. And the wonder of the Joseph story is that the brothers never confess their sin and apologize. There is no famous final scene where the brothers confess, Joseph graciously forgives, and they walk off into the sunset arms around each other and live happily ever afterwards. No. That is the scene we expect, but it never comes. And yet the story cleverly shows that the brothers were in fact moved to repentance and self understanding regarding what they had done to Joseph. Here for all time we see that repentance means re-thinking, and it may or may not be reflected in specific words or actions reflective of regret. This is why we are to forgive without demanding evidence of repentance.

The brothers recognize their guilt and that "his blood is required"; they sense they must be punished for what they did to Joseph. The Joseph novella leads us to expect that indeed they will be punished. But there is no famous final scene of judgment. In fact, they aren't really punished. The classic moment of 'measure for measure' and 'crime and punishment' never really occurs. Although we are set up to expect it, and the brothers themselves expect it. I suggest this is because the repentance of the brothers in their hearts is accepted, and punishment is therefore unnecessary because it would not teach them anything further. Rather like 'Truth and Reconcilliation' approaches in Bosnia, parts of the USSR and South Africa have granted amnesty and no actual punishment to those who confessed their wrongdoing and abuses of others. The confession was accepted as obviating the need for punishment; and God was prepared to accept the unspoken confessions of the brothers in their hearts as good enough. Joseph appears to perceive their repentance, and therefore doesn't punish them.

Gen 42:23 *They didn’t know that Joseph understood them; for there was an interpreter*

between them- The Lord Jesus likewise keeps an apparent distance from us, when He understands exactly what we are saying and feeling.

Gen 42:24 *He turned himself away from them, and wept*- Joseph wept (this is recorded seven times in the record, also Gen. 43:29,30; 45:1,2,14,15; 46:29; 50:1,15-17), as did the Lord Jesus. Joseph is revealed as having passion and emotion arising from a very strong sense of love. His apparently hard exterior therefore hid this passionate love. Just as God's work in our lives can obscure His essential love from the eyes of the imperceptive. He must have found it hard to prolong the agony of not revealing himself to them immediately; he was motivated by a desire to make them see the enormity of their sin, for their spiritual good rather than his own vindication. This is a stunningly deep prophecy of the intensity of the Lord's feelings, as the mighty Son of God, towards wayward Israel in the last days. He was a man of sorrow in his mortal life, and will still have an element of this characteristic in the future.

Then he returned to them, and spoke to them, and took Simeon from among them, and bound him before their eyes- We wonder why Simeon was chosen; perhaps it was the outcome of his discussion with them when he returned "and spoke to them". Jewish tradition claims he was the one who was most aggressive to Joseph and had been the ringleader in trying to kill him in the pit. That would make sense; but again we must ever note that Joseph's actions were not so much punishment, as attempts to provoke their consciences. He had Simeon tied up before their eyes in order to restimulate their memories of how they had had Joseph bound.

Gen 42:25 *Then Joseph gave a command to fill their bags with grain, and to restore each man's money into his sack, and to give them food for the way. So it was done to them*- This was grace indeed, and he wanted them to perceive it, and perhaps return to him from the lodging place (:27) once they realized. But their consciences were still not ready. Likewise, Israel ought to have recognized the Lord Jesus at their first meeting; but they will only do so at their second meeting, because their hearts were hardened the first time, and were too proud to repent.

Gen 42:26 *They loaded their donkeys with their grain, and departed from there*- The camera is as it were close up on them. We see them strapping the bags to the animals, lost in their own thoughts. They would all surely have been thinking: "This Egypt is an absolutely awful place". But this was to make them realize that they had sold their brother into Egypt to be a slave there. They were being brought again to understand the consequences of their previous actions, over 20 years before.

Gen 42:27 *As one of them opened his sack to give his donkey food in the lodging place,*

he saw his money. Behold, it was in the mouth of his sack- They for some reason were dishonest with Jacob about this; for they made out that only one of them opened his sack in the lodging, and that Jacob and the rest of them were seeing their money in their sacks for the first time when they returned to him (:35). But as their repentance deepens and they are brought closer to being totally truthful, which is what repentance is about, they admit that each of them opened their sacks in the lodging and found their money (Gen. 43:21). It was anyway psychologically unlikely that one of them would open his sack and find his money, and the other brothers wouldn't even bother checking their sacks. See on :29 for another example of their lack of total honesty.

Gen 42:28 *He said to his brothers, My money is restored! Behold, it is in my sack! Their hearts failed them, and they turned trembling one to another, saying, What is this that God has done to us?*- They were being introduced to grace; but like many who encounter grace, they shy away from it, because it demands too deep a recognition of sin and unworthiness. We recall how they had looked at one another in the silence of a guilty conscience (:1). They realized that God was in this. They trembled as they experienced the depth of God's grace. They whose sins were found out had been given grace not judgment. We very often experience such practical grace at our lowest moments. You may be driving furiously or foolishly- and God saves you from an accident; you may be cursing your husband at top voice when unexpected news of blessing arrives on your phone. We likewise must reflect this by showing grace to those who are at this point undeserving of it.

In Gen. 43:22 we can infer that Joseph asked them: "Who put the money in your sacks?", and the brothers say they don't know, and Joseph tells them that it was God working through him. But they had remarked about the money in Gen. 42:28 "What is this that God has done to us?". The God they privately sensed but would not openly accept was being revealed to them- through Joseph. God put the money in their sacks, but Joseph put the money in their sacks. That was the point Joseph was trying to make, the realization he was seeking to elicit in them. He was trying to get them to admit what subconsciously they knew all along- that Joseph was alive in Egypt, God knew their sin, was working with them, and was leading them to repentance. In all this we see how God works- never forcing us, but strongly nudging us towards self realization, repentance and salvation. And all that involves accepting the truth of what we already subconsciously knew was true all along. Here we see them admitting that "God" had put the money in their sacks; but before Joseph they say they don't know who put the money in their sacks. And so Joseph then tries to join the dots for them- he tells them that it was God, through him, who put the money in their sacks. But he was telling them what they already secretly, intuitively knew.

Gen 42:29 *They came to Jacob their father, to the land of Canaan, and told him all that had happened to them, saying*- The force of the word "Saying..." is that they did not literally tell him everything, because they omit to say they had been imprisoned, and threatened with certain death. Again we see that although they were shaken up by what had happened, they were still far from total honesty. and that is required for total repentance. See on :27.

Gen 42:30 *The man, the lord of the land, spoke roughly with us, and took us for spies of the country*- They are willfully missing the point. Joseph had accused them of being "spies", using a word which could mean both spies and liars; see on :14. They chose to focus on the meaning "spies of the country".

Gen 42:31 *We said to him, 'We are honest men. We are no spies*- Jacob would have immediately realized that his sons had lied; they could hardly be called "honest men", given their suspected behaviour with Joseph, the massacre of Shechem and Judah's behaviour with Tamar- and probably much else which is not recorded.

Gen 42:32 *We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan'*- Again they repeat the lie about Joseph; they had told it so often that it was now perceived truth and reality for them.

Gen 42:33 *The man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'By this I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me, and take grain for the famine of your houses, and go your way*- Jacob's refusal to allow Benjamin to return with them was therefore tantamount to agreeing that they were not honest men. He also shows his obsession with Benjamin and disregard for Simeon who was left in prison.

Gen 42:34 *Bring your youngest brother to me. Then I will know that you are not spies, but that you are honest men. So I will deliver your brother to you, and you shall trade in the land'*- Joseph is not recorded as saying anything about future trading. Perhaps we have another example here of how the brothers had still not come to the total honesty which is required for true repentance; they were prepared to add in some things here and there, to effectively lie to their father as Jacob had done to Isaac, to make their message more palatable or attractive to Jacob.

Their claim to Jacob that Joseph had offered them trading rights in Egypt was untrue. What Joseph had said was that they would die unless they brought Benjamin with them (:20). This implied he had power over them even in Canaan. They omitted to tell Jacob

that they had all been kept in prison for three days. Joseph had accused them of being spies, whereas they tell Jacob that he had treated them *as* spies. Five times Joseph accused them of actually being spies (:9,12,14,15,20), but they severely moderate this in retelling the story to their father. And they omit to tell Jacob the critical truth that Joseph had told them that unless they brought Benjamin with them, “you shall not see my face again” (:23), they would get no grain and Simeon would remain lost and in prison. They were still not being honest with their father; we have here a mixture of untruths and withholding truth which all amounted to deception. Their story didn't hold much weight- why would Joseph keep one of them with him whilst at the same time offering them special trading rights in Egypt? And as noted on :36, Jacob basically disbelieves them. They claim that they were asked "Leave one brother with me" (:33) when in fact Joseph had said "One brother shall be imprisoned in your prison" (:19). Simeon was not "with me" [Joseph], he was in prison. So we see that they still had some travelling left to do in order to come to complete truthfulness and honesty with their father. Repentance is therefore a process. And we must bear that in mind not only concerning ourselves, but regarding those whose repentance we await and seek. Repentance or impenitence are not simply binary states, i.e. you are either repentant or impenitent. Like forgiveness between persons, repentance is a process. And in fact we never read of the brothers fessing up and telling Jacob what they had done to Joseph and asking his forgiveness. We are led by the structure of the Joseph story to expect this; but this expected climax never comes. And yet these men were still accepted as the founding fathers of Israel God's people.

Gen 42:35 *It happened as they emptied their sacks, that behold, each man’s bundle of money was in his sack. When they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were afraid*- This is recorded from the perspective they wished to give; this was the impression they gave Jacob, but they were still being deceitful; see on :27.

Gen 42:36 *Jacob, their father, said to them, You have bereaved me of my children! Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more, and you want to take Benjamin away. All these things are against me*- This implies Jacob knew they had killed Joseph. There is a theme in the records of unspoken knowledge; in 42:1 the brothers fear to go to Egypt because of their unspoken suspicion they might meet Joseph there.

Jacob clearly disbelieved their story that Simeon had been retained in connection with offering the family trading rights in Egypt. He assumes the brothers killed Simeon as they had Joseph. Again we see how people subconsciously know truth, in this case that Joseph had disappeared because of the brothers' machinations and not because of being killed by an animal. But they only express that truth under duress of circumstance. And the brothers were to go through the same. When Joseph reveals

himself, we are left to correctly assume that each brother was quietly thinking "Yes I had a strange feeling you were Joseph". And this is the intended result of God's leading us to repentance- that we accept what we subconsciously, intuitively knew was the Truth all along.

Gen 42:37 *Reuben spoke to his father, saying, Kill my two sons, if I don't bring him to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him to you again*- This is typical hot headed language. Jacob could hardly be comforted over the death of another son by then murdering two of his grandchildren. The whole series of events was intended to lead the brothers to the truthfulness which is required for repentance. Reuben would have reflected on this foolish usage of language and how there was no real truth to it of itself... and been provoked in his path toward truthfulness. But we can see some growth in responsibility here in Reuben. He offers his two sons as it were in place of Jacob's two sons, Joseph and Benjamin. He is saying that he feels responsible for the loss of Joseph, as he will feel responsible for the loss of Bemjamin. It is taking responsibility for our brethren which is a sign of maturity, and indeed it was in this that Joseph's maturity was displayed. Judah went further and offered his own life as a guarantee that Benjamin would return.

Gen 42:38 *He said, My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he only is left*- As Joseph had perhaps imagined, Benjamin was perceived by Jacob as his only remaining child. He was clearly the favourite, and by saying this, Jacob showed the disregard he had for the rest of his sons. He had still not learnt the need to not show favouritism.

If harm happens to him along the way in which you go, then you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol- Clearly enough, *sheol* refers to the grave, and not to a place of torment where only the wicked go. We also see here how Jacob's grief was from believing and imagining false narratives, when we will see that the very causes of grief were what were being used by God towards a glorious final resolution. Believing and imagining false narratives, over consumption by fear... all these things are used by God to bring us to the glorious final resolution of all things.

GENESIS CHAPTER 43

Gen 43:1 *The famine was severe in the land*- As explained on :8, Jacob's sons were facing death by starvation. And yet they had been threatened with death in Egypt if they returned and were not totally truthful about their family situation (Gen. 42:18,20 "*Bring your youngest brother to me; so will your words be verified, and you won't die"*). The same word for "severe" is used in the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams in Gen. 41:31;

the prophetic word came absolutely true. And Joseph would have been encouraged that likewise *his dreams would come true.*

Gen 43:2 *It happened, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said to them, Go again, buy us a little more food*- "A little" perhaps hints at their poverty; they were now facing death and their resources were nearly spent. See on :8. We note that they could only afford "a little" food as presents for Joseph (see on :11). They 'ate up' the grain just as the evil cows ate up the fat ones; this is who they were being likened to. Their actions against Joseph 22 years before were not forgotten by God. We can easily assume that time works a kind of pseudo atonement for sins of youth. But God is outside of our concept of time and has no fading memory; He is more sensitive to sin than that, and works so that we might recognize the impact of our actions and come to repentance even many years later. The Hebrew phrase for "eaten up" occurs again in Am. 7:2,3: "It happened that when they made an end of eating [up] the grass of the land, then I said, Lord Yahweh, forgive, I beseech You! How could Jacob stand? For he is so small. Yahweh relented concerning this. It shall not be, says Yahweh". Jacob and his sons had indeed been brought down very small, to the point of death by starvation; and were saved only by God's grace manifested through the amazing grace and forgiveness of Joseph.

Gen 43:3 *Judah spoke to him, saying, The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you'*- Joseph didn't actually say these words. So again we see that the movement of the brothers towards honesty is a case of three steps back and two forwards. Our own spiritual path is likewise never smoothly incremental. It's a jagged graph.

The Hebrew idea of solemn warning is used so often in the Pentateuch and later Old Testament, with the implication of Divine judgment. Am. 3:13 uses the same word concerning God's solemn testimony to "the house of Jacob", the family of Jacob, concerning the visiting of their past sins upon them; and always, judgment is in view. Joseph wanted them to think about the implications of having their brother with them. He referred not only to Benjamin but to himself. The same word is used in Gen. 37:2 of how Joseph had been "with" his brothers, and because of this he had seen their sins and reported to Jacob about them; and of how finally Joseph was "with" his brothers (Gen. 45:1,15). They would later have reflected how his demand was met- by his revelation of himself to them.

For months, and all the way back from Egypt to Canaan, the brothers would have mulled over every word of Joseph. "Your brother" must be with them before they saw his face... which of their two missing brothers did he mean? Surely Benjamin? But they would have wondered whether in fact he referred to Joseph, whom they claimed was

dead, but he insisted they were lying about that. How could they find Joseph in Egypt and present him to this vizier? The ambiguity was intended, in order to exercise their consciences about whether Joseph really was dead, and what their chances were of meeting him in Egypt.

Gen 43:4 *If you'll send our brother with us, we'll go down and buy you food*- They preferred death by starvation rather than being dishonest before Joseph. They were responding, slowly, to the nudges towards honesty. And yet we still never find a total confession of sin before Jacob nor Joseph. The brothers must have discussed how they could get over the problem of Jacob not agreeing to let Benjamin go with them. They would have discussed every option. The easiest way out of their problem would have been to return to Joseph without Benjamin and tell him that Benjamin had died and therefore couldn't come with them. But they resisted that temptation to do as they had done previously over Joseph; to create a lie about the death of their brother. And their truthfulness was doubtless elicited by a strange sense that Joseph knew all about them. The omniscience of God should have the same effect upon us.

Gen 43:5 *But if you'll not send him, we'll not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you'*- Seeing Joseph's face is paralleled with buying food and avoiding death by starvation (:4). The threat that they could not see Joseph's face without their brother with them clearly stuck in their minds (Gen. 43:3,5; 44:23,26). To see a person's face meant to be accepted by them; to not see their face meant rejection and the ending of relationship (Ex. 10:29; 2 Sam. 3:13; 14:24,28; Jer. 18:17). Everything was structured by Joseph so that they could not avoid this; for he would not delegate the work to others. Likewise personal encounter with the Lord Jesus and acceptance by Him, seeing His face, is the end point for each believing life. But it requires the absolute honesty without which repentance is impossible.

Gen 43:6 *Israel said, Why did you treat me so badly, telling the man that you had another brother?*- "Badly" is literally "evil". The brothers would have felt this was a false and unreasonable accusation; for since when was being honest 'doing evil'... The same word is used of the false accusation that they had 'done evil' in stealing Joseph's cup, which they had not done (Gen. 44:5). Joseph was the master psychologist. He knew that false accusation is likely to elicit in people a realization of their actual sins; for as we clamour to protest 'That's untrue! You're unreasonable in saying that!', there will arise an awareness that 'Although *that* is untrue, I am not innocent in other areas'. I have had exactly that experience and have seen others pass through it; this then is one of the reasons why God allows false accusation, misunderstanding and slander.

Gen 43:7 *They said, The man asked directly concerning ourselves, and concerning our relatives, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' We just answered his questions. Is there any way we could know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'*- They insisted that they had honestly answered the questions about their family and other brothers. But they had not done so, because they had lied about Joseph. But they still can't admit that. "We just answered his questions" is AV "We told him according to the tenor of these words". The exact phrase is used in Ex. 34:27: "After the tenor of these words" God made a covenant with Israel, and "solemnly testified" it, as Joseph had done (:3). This language of covenant relationship offered not only judgment if they were being dishonest; but also ongoing relationship if they were honest, such as "trading in the land". This offer of covenant relationship ought to have again made them wonder who exactly this man was with whom they had to deal. Joseph asked them to 'bring their brother down' to Egypt to remind them that this is what they had done to him, selling him to merchants who 'brought him down' to Egypt (Gen. 37:25; 39:1 s.w.). And the Lord likewise persistently works in our lives to restimulate memories of past issues, that we might repent and move further.

Gen 43:8 *Judah said to Israel, his father, Send the boy with me, and we'll get up and go, so that we may live, and not die, both we, and you, and also our little ones*- "And not die" shows they were facing death unless they went to Egypt. And yet Joseph had threatened them with death if they returned and were not completely honest with him about their family situation (see on Gen. 42:18,20). This choice of death or death was to make them be completely honest about their family situation, which meant admitting what they had done to Joseph. All men in fact face this choice- and the logic of choosing repentance is so strong. Hence John the Baptist put before people the choice of fire or fire- unless they repented.

"The boy" means just that; but Benjamin was about 26, and already had ten sons and presumably daughters too (Gen. 46:21). Perhaps "the boy", 'kiddo', was the term he was known by. But he was even so smothered by his father; maybe his prolific fruitfulness had been because of multiple relationships, or a desire to prove himself independent from his father. Maybe Joseph guessed the psychological damage that Jacob's doting favouritism would have on a young man, and therefore wanted Benjamin to separate from Jacob for a while and to pass through some brief time of testing so that he might spiritually mature. For Joseph had been the spoilt child, and had matured only through being taken away from that whole scene.

Gen 43:9 *I'll be collateral for him. From my hand will you require him. If I don't bring him to you, and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever*- "Blame" is literally

'the sin'. Judah was saying that if he did not let his younger brother return to Jacob, then this would be sin upon him forever. But the same word is used of how the brothers realized they had 'sinned' in this way regarding Joseph (Gen. 42:22). Judah was being brought to realize that what he and his brothers had done to Joseph was indeed sin; for they had not allowed him to return to Jacob. And that sin was upon him "forever"; only by God's utter grace could it be reversed. And it was.

"Collateral" means a pledge. Judah gives a pledge in Gen. 38:17 in connection with his immorality. It cannot be incidental that he later offers his life as a pledge to his father to guarantee the return of Benjamin (Gen. 43:8-10). We are surely meant to detect Judah's spiritual growth between these two "pledge" incidents. We note Judah offers to "bear the blame / sin" if Benjamin doesn't return. He has matured from seeking to hide his blame / sin in his behaviour with Tamar. Likewise the Judah who had caused his father so much grief over the loss of Joseph, becomes the Judah who is so careful to avoid causing his father such grief over Benjamin.

Gen 43:10 *For if we hadn't delayed, surely we would have returned a second time by now*- The brothers delay in their return, doubtless because of the struggle with their conscience; never spoken of together, but operating on each man individually. Will there be a 'delay' in Israel's latter day repentance, and therefore in the full manifestation of Christ? Every Jew in the last days will go through the silent struggle of conscience about Christ.

Gen 43:11 *Their father, Israel, said to them, If it must be so, then do this. Take from the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry down a present for the man, a little balm, a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts, and almonds*- "A little..." hints at their absolute poverty as they faced death by starvation. See on :2. "Balm" was what the merchants had been carrying, when they took Joseph into Egypt (Gen. 37:25). It was made from fragrant gum trees which grew in Canaan, called ladanum. The brothers were intended by the hand of providence to reflect that in going to Egypt with such gum balm, they were retracing the steps of Joseph and those merchants.

The Lord Jesus likewise works in our lives so that we share something of His sufferings, which were required by our sins.

They took their humble presents in the sacks [s.w. "bags"]; and it was there that Joseph had placed their money, and where Joseph's cup would be placed. The paucity of what they could give was purposefully dwarfed by Joseph's generosity, in the same place- their sacks. It was to emphasize this that finally Joseph tells them to all come and live in Egypt and leave their sacks behind in Canaan (AV "your stuff", Gen. 45:20, s.w. "bags" here and "sacks" in Gen. 42:25). At every turn, we see grace poured out.

Gen 43:12 *And take double money in your hand, and take back the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight*- "*And* take back..." suggests that the "double money" was not simply money for their grain and then the same again returned which had been placed in their sacks. The idea was that if things got tough for them, they could offer money for their release. But again, they were being taught that money and wealth cannot atone for sin against a brother; atonement is from God alone, by grace, in response to human repentance. Their money had been returned in their sacks; yet they failed to learn the lesson, that Joseph [cp. the Lord Jesus] doesn't need money, nor can silver [Heb.] achieve redemption from the abuse of our brethren. They thought they were being of integrity by returning the silver; but they were to learn that their supposed integrity was just on a far lower plane than what was required of them- a complete rejection of their own wealth and low level integrity, and rather a genuine repentance and acceptance of God's grace through Joseph's forgiveness. They were missing the point by thinking that the great grace in returning their money was simply "an oversight", a technical error. It obviously wasn't. They had bought enough food to feed ten large families for an extended period, probably taking many donkeys with them to carry it all. The sum returned was significant. But they would rather imagine a technical error than accept Divine grace.

Effectively, Joseph became the firstborn of the family in a spiritual sense. The coat of many colours was the coat of the firstborn, and it was jealousy about this which had led the brothers to want to murder him. Dt. 21:15-17 says that the firstborn was to receive the double portion; so perhaps the brothers would later reflect that providence had led them to accept Joseph as the firstborn by giving him the double money.

Gen 43:13 *Take your brother also, get up, and return to the man*- "Get up" may suggest a similar hesitancy as noted on Gen. 42:1. It was not that they were lazy; rather again so we see the hints of bad conscience paralyzing their action. They were to specifically "return *to the man*", not simply 'to Egypt'. And *shub,* "return", often carries the idea of repentance, a turning back.

Gen 43:14 *May God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release to you your other brother and Benjamin*- Jacob's perception of God was as very powerful, God Almighty, One who can give undeserved grace to men like Jacob's sinful sons. He uses a term he has not previously used: *El-Shaddai*, the Almighty El. Using new terms for God reveals a deepening of understanding of Him. We likewise will grow in our knowledge of Him through the trials of life. He felt that God's mightiness would be revealed through the mercy shown to them by Joseph; and indeed that came to pass. "Mercy" is effectively the same idea as grace, but the Hebrew word is the same used for "womb".

The idea is the mercy and love which comes from being family. Jacob's prayer was wonderfully answered; for "the man" was their loving brother Joseph.

If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved- The word is the usual one for miscarriage, as if Jacob felt that it was possible that God's plan of giving him a numerous seed was now likely to misfire and be aborted. This all sounds more like depressive fatalism than firm faith in the promises that his seed would eternally fill the earth. In Gen. 35:11 God encourages Jacob, fearful he would lose all his family to attacks from neighbouring tribes, to "be fruitful and multiply; a nation... *shall* be of thee, and kings *shall* come out of thy loins". If he played his part, the promises would be fulfilled. But at this time it seems Jacob's depression had led him to a fatalism which is not of faith. "Bereaved" is the word used by Jacob's mother in Gen. 27:45, when thanks to Jacob's deceit she was too feared bereavement from the loss of both her sons- Jacob at Esau's hand, and Esau at the hands of the avengers of blood. Her feelings were Jacob's fault; and now years later he was being made to see how she felt, to fear her fears. Such bereavement of children was seen as a Divine curse for disobedience (s.w. Ex. 23:26; Lev. 26:22; Dt. 32:25; Jer. 15:7). Yet faced with this, Jacob seems prepared to just accept it, rather than be moved to repentance for his deceit.

Gen 43:15 *The men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and got up, went down to Egypt*- As noted on :12, no amount of money or presents could resolve this. The "double money" was not a reference to returning the silver placed in their sacks (see on :12). Jacob ought to have learnt this from his attempt to placate the advancing Esau with presents; he had been saved by God's grace alone, and not by his gifts.

And stood before Joseph- We rather expect to read of them bowing before him. But they are recorded as standing. They probably did bow, but that is not mentioned. Perhaps the idea is that they had still not really bowed themselves before him as they needed to.

Gen 43:16 *When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal, and make ready; for the men will dine with me at noon*- Joseph celebrates their repentance with a meal together, at which they sit in their proper places, looking forward to the marriage supper of the lamb, with each in his proper place (Lk. 14:10; 22:30; Rev. 19:9). "Slay and make ready" is the basis of the prodigal son parable (Gen. 45:14,15 = Lk. 15:20); the father = Christ; the prodigal = repentant Jews, wanting to be servants and nothing else. Only the upper classes in Egypt ate meat; and there was a severe famine at the time. Grace was being lavished upon these men, dirty and exhausted after the grueling desert journey from Canaan. But the brothers had not repented in so many words; yet their feeble heart stirrings of

repentance were treated by Joseph as if they had. And this is one of the lessons of the story.

Gen 43:17 *The man did as Joseph commanded, and the man brought the men to Joseph's house*- "House" is really his personal home. He had a steward over it, just as he had been for Potiphar. To invite strangers into his personal home was really tantamount to saying that he treated them as family. It was yet another attempt to get them to join the dots and recognize him. It was only their lack of repentance that closed their eyes to perceiving him.

Gen 43:18 *The men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time, we're brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, attack us, and seize us as slaves, along with our donkeys*- The invitation into Joseph's personal home was a sign of loving acceptance; but they feared that expression of grace. If indeed Joseph was going to accuse them of theft, he would hardly invite them into his private home. But they were still thinking in material terms; hence "along with our donkeys", which were probably their last dimension of material wealth which remained to them. Constantly, their fears were that Joseph was against them. Those fears surely reflect how we quite rightly fear the just condemnation which we deserve; and yet the whole story comes to a glorious close with the utter triumph of Joseph's love and grace, on behalf of God, which clinches their salvation and eternal wellbeing.

Gen 43:19 *They came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they spoke to him at the door of the house*- They spoke apparently without an interpreter. Perhaps he too was from their extended family, another Hebrew slave whom Joseph had bought / redeemed and exalted just as he had been, in reflection of the grace shown him. They felt the need for a mediator between them and Joseph, and the story reflects how they still struggled to come close to him directly. This all speaks of our weakness of faith in the Lord's grace. They were unwilling to immediately accept Joseph's gracious invitation into his home, and paused at the door. This is so similar to our reticence to believe in the Lord's gracious welcome.

Gen 43:20 *And said, Oh my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food*- They are careful to recite the story truthfully and with attention to absolute accuracy. They were being prepared for the greatest truthfulness to themselves- the admission that they had cruelly abused their brother.

Gen 43:21 *When we came to the lodging place, we opened our sacks, and behold, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight. We have brought it back in our hand- Full weight*- The whole experience succeeded in eliciting hyper honesty from the brothers, which is what Joseph intended. They for some reason were dishonest with Jacob about this when they first returned to him; for they made out that only one of them opened his sack in the lodging, and that Jacob and the rest of them were seeing their money in their sacks for the first time when they returned to him (Gen. 42:27,35). But now as their repentance deepens and they are brought closer to being totally truthful, which is what repentance is about, they admit that each of them opened their sacks in the lodging and found their money. It was anyway psychologically unlikely that one of them would open his sack and find his money, and the other brothers wouldn't even bother checking their sacks.

They emphasize their technical, legal integrity- "full weight". This was to fade into insignificance when they were faced with the enormity of their sin and of Joseph's utter grace toward them.

Gen 43:22 *We have brought down other money in our hand to buy food. We don't know who put our money in our sacks*- They did know- it was someone acting on behalf of God. But they couldn't bring themselves to admit that. Joseph therefore verbalizes for them the answer they had unspoken in their consciences: "God" (:23). In fact it was God working through Joseph; if the steward received the money from Joseph but the money was returned to their sacks, then it must have been money from Joseph.

We can infer that Joseph asked them: "Who put the money in your sacks?", and the brothers say they don't know, and Joseph tells them that it was God working through him. But they had remarked about the money in Gen. 42:28 "What is this that God has done to us?". The God they privately sensed but would not openly accept was being revealed to them- through Joseph. God put the money in their sacks, but Joseph put the money in their sacks. That was the point Joseph was trying to make, the realization he was seeking to elicit in them. He was trying to get them to admit what subconsciously they knew all along- that Joseph was alive in Egypt, God knew their sin, was working with them, and was leading them to repentance. In all this we see how God works- never forcing us, but strongly nudging us towards self realization, repentance and salvation. And all that involves accepting the truth of what we already subconsciously knew was true all along. Here we see them admitting that "God" had put the money in their sacks; but before Joseph they say they don't know who put the money in their sacks. And so Joseph then tries to join the dots for them- he tells them that it was God, through him, who put the money in their sacks.

Gen 43:23 *He said, Peace be to you. Don't be afraid*- "Peace" has connotations of the

peace which comes from forgiveness. He was again trying to show to them that he alone of all human beings was in a possession to give them assurance of peace, with God and himself, and therefore freedom from fear; because he was Joseph, and had chosen to forgive them. But still they failed to join the dots. We recall how the brothers so hated Joseph that they could not speak *shalom* to him (Gen. 37:4). They were being assured of *shalom*, and the very Hebrew word was used which they had refused to use to Joseph. They would surely have reflected that they had not shown *shalom* to Joseph, but now they were having *shalom* spoken to them by grace. Again, this was a nudge towards recognizing they were dealing with Joseph, and would receive God's grace, as undeserved favour.

Your God, and the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks. I received your money- Joseph through his steward graciously recognizes that they have a relationship with God ["your God"] and that they were not simply living out the religion of their faith; "*and* the God of your father" highlights the separation. They were each personally responsible before their God. If Joseph had received / taken their payment and yet the money had appeared again in their sacks- then that, the steward reasoned, must have only been from their God. As noted on :22, it would have been Joseph personally who paid this money. In Gen. 43:22 Joseph asked them "Who put the money in your sacks?", the brothers say they don't know, and now Joseph tells them that it was God working through him. But they had remarked about the money in Gen. 42:28 "What is this that God has done to us?". The God they privately sensed but would not openly accept was being revealed to them- through Joseph. That was the point Joseph was trying to make, the realization he was seeking to elicit in them. He was trying to get them to admit what subconsciously they knew all along- that Joseph was alive in Egypt, God knew their sin, and was leading them to repentance. In all this we see how God works- never forcing us, but strongly nudging us towards self realization, repentance and salvation.

He brought Simeon out to them- If they had loved their brother [Simeon], they would have returned sooner. The experience was to teach them to love their brother, a characteristic lacking in them- for the fate of Simeon never seems to enter their reasoning.

Gen 43:24 *The man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet. He gave their donkeys fodder*- These were all signs of acceptance into a family; we recall the actions of Laban to Abraham's servant when he first arrived.

Gen 43:25 *They prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there*- "*For* Joseph's coming" is literally as AV "against". Their paltry present, of just "a little" (see on :11), is set "against" Joseph's coming to them with

a huge meal and then great grace, unspeakable in its largesse. All this speaks of the dwarfing of all human strength and attempts to atone, compared to the total grace of the Father and Son.

Gen 43:26 *When Joseph came home*- The scene is so reminiscent of Potiphar's house; there is a steward, and a nervous waiting for the master of the house to return and consider a false accusation and throw Joseph to death or imprisonment. Perhaps Joseph wanted them to know how he had felt; for that is also why he had put them in prison for three days, so that they could come to know all the experiences which they had been responsible for. We could of course reason that it was not their fault that Joseph was cast into prison; the fault was with Potiphar's wife. But they are being taught, as we are, the various long term dimensions of our sins. We may do wrong against a person in our youth, a girl may unkindly jilt a boy or vice versa, which leads them to addictions and a life of suffering. The misfortunes and sufferings are in a sense the fault of others; but the path was set by the person who first forced them to it. Only God judges righteously, perceiving the implications and corollaries of human actions. But in this case, it seems Joseph on God's behalf wanted the brothers to perceive that Joseph's time in prison and his nervous wait for Potiphar's return home... was all stuff brought upon Joseph by the brothers' actions. They would have internally justified it all, by saying they hadn't killed him, it was the group, the others, "not me", it was hard to not go along the path chosen by the group... And yet clearly God through Joseph accepted none of that. They were "verily guilty" as they confessed in prison. Although to blame them for Joseph's time in prison and suffering due to Potiphar's wife might seem extreme- the grace and mercy shown to them was extraordinary.

They brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves down to him to the earth- This was a primary fulfilment of Joseph's dream, where in the field they bowed to the earth, the soil- even though they were inside a house. They as tent dwellers would have been in awe of a house such as Joseph had. They were starving to death, and their present of "a little" of the few nuts and bits of gum they could extract from their scorched vegetation must have seemed so paltry compared to the opulence of Joseph. "Present" is a word used for offering; their bloodless sacrifice is compared to Joseph slaying an animal for them (:16). The situation of Cain and Abel is recalled; Cain murdered Abel and brought a bloodless sacrifice.

Gen 43:27 *He asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he yet alive?*- "Well" and "welfare" are both *shalom*, "peace", continue the assurance of :23; that Joseph wished them peace, with God and himself.

Gen 43:28 *They said, Your servant, our father, is well. He is still alive. They bowed down humbly*- This may have been to represent Jacob bowing to Joseph, with Jacob here called Joseph's servant. The double bowing (cp. :26) was a primary fulfilment of the double dreams Joseph had revealed, of their bowing to him. "Bowed down humbly" is literally 'bowed down to the earth / soil / ground', not to the 'floor'. It was as if they were on soil; whereas they were inside an opulent Egyptian home. This further emphasizes the similarity with Joseph's dream of his brothers in a field, on soil, bowing before him. But Rachel was not present; which is why I insist that this was but a primary fulfilment of the dream, which spoke ultimately of the resurrection and the Kingdom age.

Gen 43:29 *He lifted up his eyes, and saw Benjamin, his brother, his mother's son, and said, Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? He said, God be gracious to you, my son*- The reference to one God was again a prod; an encouragement to perceive that he and they worshipped the same one God. And again the concept of grace is introduced, which was so strange for the brothers to accept.

Gen 43:30 *Joseph hurried*- He didn't want to reveal himself yet, and he knew that his tears would mean they recognized him. He wanted them to make the recognition, rather than him having to tell them. They never got there; but still he accepted them by grace. There is in fact no record of their repentance, no statement made. Joseph left that as unspoken; and we likewise may long for those who abused us to express regret in words, but it sometimes doesn't come. All we can hope is that they will accept our forgiveness of them, as Joseph did; and if we can persuade them of that, then the relationship is restored.

For his heart yearned over his brother; and he sought a place to weep. He entered into his room, and wept there- The evil heart of mankind troubled the heart of God (Gen. 6:5,6). This "heart to heart" between God and man is amazing. As Joseph's heart was 'warm' for his younger brother Benjamin, so the same word is used about how the heart of God is 'warm' in yearning for His ungrateful people (Hos. 11:8). Kneel down and pray; pray long and / or hard enough till you 'get the feeling' of heart to heart contact with God Almighty. Exactly because God is God and not man, He will not punish His people according to what He had said He would do. His "repentings were kindled together" (Hos. 11:8 AV), alluding through the same Hebrew words to how Joseph's innermost being " yearned over his brother", in prophecy of how God would accept Israel in the last days.

We wonder why Joseph so yearned for his brother. Benjamin had been only four years old when Joseph disappeared, and Joseph was now 39 or 40. Ask a 40 year old if they

have passionate feelings about their kid brother who they last saw when he was only four years old... and you won't get many who have such strong emotions as the Hebrew text here suggests. The fact Joseph felt like this indicates a love for his brothers and his family; when most men who suffered as he did would have forgotten about them and moved on, developing their own family. So Joseph's passion for Benjamin is reflective of his passionate love for those who had so hurt and damaged him. It is a huge example to us, as well as a most encouraging window onto the love of the Lord Jesus for us.

Gen 43:31 *He washed his face, and came out. He controlled himself, and said, Serve the meal*- He "refrained himself" (AV). Both God and the Lord Jesus only delay, so that they might be the more gracious (Is. 30:18). Their passionate desire is to save and accept us anyway, without our expression of repentance; they only try to elicit it from us for our sakes, not because it satisfies their own personal desire for apology an the humiliation of those who did them wrong. For from the example of Joseph, it seems they have nothing of these things. The desire for repentance to be elicited and verbalized is purely for our eternal good and not to satisfy any need of theirs. Finally Joseph could not 'control himself' any longer (Gen. 45:1 s.w.). His desire to simply save them overrode his desire for their specific, verbalized repentance. And this should be our pattern; yet all too often, repentance is demanded before any love, care or forgiveness can be shown.

We clearly sense that Joseph wanted to just end the charade and reveal himself. He only brought about the further trial for the brothers because he wanted their spiritual growth. Or it could be that as with Esther's losing her nerve when she was supposed to ask the king for mercy towards the Jews, so with Joseph. In the sense that he, like Esther, had no very clearly defined game plan, and his emotions and humanity got in the way. And yet as with Esther, this was used by God to the advancement of His purpose, which was finally the repentance of the brothers. We may well enquire whether Joseph's intention was in fact achieved. Did they repent? There is never a word of formal repentance from them. We are left to conclude that surely they did get there, but deep within their hearts and perhaps only as they themselves faced their graveplanks. And this becomes helpful to us, in not as it were waiting for formal repentance from others.

Gen 43:32 *They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians, that ate with him, by themselves, because the Egyptians don't eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians*- Joseph was showing that that he was not an Egyptian, but he was also somehow separate from them his brethren. It was another enigma which he used to try to get them to join the dots and see him for who he was. Gen. 39:6 notes that Potiphar, who is specifically called an Egyptian, only concerned himself with his own food. This confirms what we later learn here, that Egyptians would not eat with Hebrews. The Biblical record meshes together perfectly.

The "abomination" of the Hebrews was that they were shepherds; "for all shepherds are an abomination to Egyptians" (Gen. 46:34) because of their association with the Hyksos / shepherd kings who had overrun Egypt a generation before. And this was why Joseph could not eat together with Hebrews, because they were an abomination to the Egyptians (Gen. 43:32). We find this confirmed in Ex. 8:22, where Moses tells Pharaoh that the Hebrews cannot do as he says and sacrifice in Egypt, because they would be attacked by the Egyptians when they saw the Hebrews offering bulls and calves to Yahweh. For these were symbols of Egyptian gods, and people who ate them were an abomination to them."Abomination" is a word which also means 'idols'. They ate abominations / idols, in that the animals they ate and sacrificed were seen as the gods of Egypt. For the Jacob family to be accepted into the best land of Egypt was therefore grace indeed. Just as is our salvation into God's Kingdom, brought about by Joseph-Jesus. For with reputation as cattle herders ["shepherds"] and bull sacrificers, the Jacob family were going to be last on the list for getting food, let alone being allowed to emigrate to Egypt, let alone to be given land in Goshen, the favoured area. It was all of grace, as it is with us, all the way through.

We note that the Egyptian abomination of Hebrew shepherds is alluded to in the command to Israel: "You should not abhor [treat as an abomination] an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land" (Dt. 23:8). It is normal between peoples and individual persons that they treat each other as they were treated by that person or people. Here Yahweh is teaching that His people were to break that cycle. To not abhor those who abhor you. And this is really what the spirit of the Lord Jesus is about, breaking the cycles of human dysfunction and misbehaviour.

Joseph is such a detailed type of the Lord that one wonders whether his eating together with the brothers looks ahead to the breaking of bread meeting. The distance between Joseph and the brothers was on one hand, huge. The cultural differences, differing perceptions of food, social caste, ethnicity. There is the obvious distance between the Lord and us, a distance as great as that between Heaven and earth. But He looks across that at us, with a heart bursting with love, even if we don't quite perceive it. And He knows us, to our great surprise and wonder, just as He showed the brothers that He knew them by seating them in their birth order.

Joseph appeared neither Egyptian nor Hebrew. Just as the Lord appears to us. But His heart was clearly with the Hebrews and in the moment of glorious revelation, he revealed himself as totally their brother. The same will be at the Lord's return.

Benjamin was 16 years younger than Joseph. According to Genesis 46, he had ten sons when the family moved to Egypt. If by 23, he had 10 sons, he likely had had 10 daughters as well. They would have been from a number of women. So we get the impression that

he, the favoured spoilt son of the favourite wife Rachel, with a very wealthy father, became a playboy from a young age. Joseph knew this, or guessed it. For he too had once held the same status with Jacob. What he did to Benjamin was therefore to lead that young man to spiritual maturity. And yet Joseph did it whilst having assured him of his special love, giving him five times larger portions of food. And Benjamin was open to this leading. The names of his ten sons often reflect his obsession with his absent older brother, whom Jacob had clearly described to him in heroic terms. The rabbis offer the following definitions of their names in Gen. 46:21: Ahi, he was my brother; Bela, the one who disappeared, Rosh, my elder or leader; Becher, the firstborn of his mother (as Joseph was); Ashbel, sent by God to captivity; Gera, dweller in a foreign land; Ard, he went down amongst the nations.

Gen 43:33 *They sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright*- Reuben had had the birthright removed from him even before Joseph left Canaan; but perhaps Joseph didn't recognize that, as he didn't consider birthrights to be significant. Or it could be read the other way; Judah, or whoever had been given the birthright, was placed by Joseph as the firstborn. Whatever, Joseph was seeking to demonstrate that although he ate with them at a distance, as the Lord does from us at His table, He is all the same very much with us and knows our situations intimately, both collectively and intimately. And in the case of Reuben's sin that led to losing the birthright, he as it were forgave it.

And the youngest according to his youth, and the men marvelled one with another- The Hebrew for "marvelled" is only ever used of people 'marvelling' in response to God's rebuke or judgment of them (Job 26:11; Ps. 48:5; Is. 13:8; 29:9; Jer. 4:9; Hab. 1:5). But they had not received Divine judgment, but the grace of being accepted at Joseph's table. It was this grace poured out which functioned in the same way as Divine rebuke or judgment. And this has so often been observed; that showing grace to an offender reforms them in a similar but more profound way than rebuke or judgment would. Hence Paul says that coming to Corinth with a rod of punishment in his hand was the same as coming to them with a gentle, forgiving spirit of grace (see on 1 Cor. 4:21). This marvelling one with another recalls how in Gen. 42:1 they silently looked at each other rather than risk going to Egypt; and how when imprisoned the first time in Egypt, they all spoke to each other at the same time, confessing guilt over Joseph.

Gen 43:34 *He sent portions to them from before him, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. They drank, and were merry with him*- The desperate desire of Joseph for them to relax with him and accept his forgiveness led him to make them drunk so as to ease their relationship (43:34 AVmg.). This otherwise unethical act

reveals the earnestness of his desire for them to be relaxed with him and open themselves to him. The Lord will have the same basic desire with us at the judgment. It was usual for the host or master of the house to have portions five times those of the guests; even if he didn't eat all the food, it was a sign of his superiority. Joseph therefore wished to demonstrate that the youngest was as the master; he wanted them to realize that he had radically inverted all values.

One reason Joseph did this to the brothers may have been in order to test whether they would get jealous about a daughter of Rachel getting more blessing than them. And they apparently got through that test. All Joseph did to the brothers was to test and teach them and lead them to repentance.

GENESIS CHAPTER 44

Gen 44:1 *He commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money in his sack's mouth*- Again, Joseph [like the Lord Jesus] used every opportunity to shower them with grace; simply because he loved them, and yet also with the hope that as Paul puts it, the goodness of God would lead to repentance (Rom. 2:4). There was obviously a set price for grain, but he gave them more than what they had paid for, seeking to teach them that his grace was not proportionate to their works or what materially they could give him. They had tried to shrug off Joseph's previous grace to them concerning the money in the sacks' mouths by imagining it was "an oversight". But the fact it happened a second time was meant to underline to them Joseph's grace. Joseph showers them with grace and love before falsely accusing Benjamin over the cup. The Lord likewise operates with us, assuring us of His love at the same time as testing us.

Gen 44:2 *Put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, with his grain money. He did according to the word that Joseph had spoken*- "Silver" and "money" are the same word in Hebrew. Perhaps Joseph wanted to teach Benjamin and all of them about the fact that silver is so often the path to spiritual ruin. The brothers had sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver, and there was probably far more than twenty pieces of silver in the sacks. I suggested on Gen. 37:26 that the attraction of silver was a significant factor in the decision to sell Joseph into slavery. He was repaying evil with good, in the same terms as it had been paid out to him, as it were. Silver was thus demonstrated by Joseph to be utterly immaterial compared to Divine grace, and the issues of life and death. For without Joseph's wisdom and generosity, silver of itself could not save them from death by starvation.

It seemed that despite having been given their money back, and extra grain, they had abused Joseph's grace by stealing his cup. But as noted earlier, the false accusation of

abusing his grace would have elicited the response: 'No we didn't... in this matter. But have we done so in the past? Will we do so in future?'.

Gen 44:3 *As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys*- The Divine camera enables us to imagine them, leaving with donkeys laden down with a heavier load than intended ["as much as they can carry", :1], made heavier by the silver; we see the men and their donkeys silhouetted against the rising sin.

Gen 44:4 *When they had gone out of the city, and were not yet far off, Joseph said to his steward, Up, follow after the men. When you overtake them, ask them, 'Why have you rewarded evil for good?'*- See on :6. They would naturally feel 'But we didn't reward this man evil for good'. Indeed they had not, in the immediate context. But they had done evil to Joseph (Gen. 50:15,17,20 "You meant it for evil"). The purpose of false accusations is to provoke self examination and perhaps to reveal to us that in other contexts, those accusations against us are true in their essence. For as soon as they started to protest that they had not done evil to Joseph... they surely would realize deep in their subconscious that indeed they had done so. We can infer that Joseph had only done them "good" before they did him "evil". And the good he had done them was to attempt to be their spiritual leader, although he was only 17.

Gen 44:5 *Isn't this that from which my lord drinks, and by which he indeed divines?*- Joseph's steward was aware that Joseph knew a lot about these men. He set them to eat in order of their birth, etc. Joseph had to give some credible explanation to his steward as to how he knew. So perhaps he just gave the impression that he had this knowledge through his cup which he used as a divining cup. But the use of such divination was strongly condemned by God (Lev. 19:26; Dt. 10:10 s.w.). So here we have another example of where Joseph appeared as an Egyptian when in his heart he was very different. Just as we appear on some external counts to be indistnguishable from the world, when our hearts are elsewhere. The brothers surely knew that the cup had been planted, and they were being falsely accused of doing "evil" in return for good. Likewise they would have probably disbelieved that this cup was the source of Joseph's knowledge about them. They didn't believe in "divination". So the question would have been provoked within them: "From where, then, does this man know all about us?". They were being led closer to the recognition that this man was Joseph their brother. God doesn't force us to repentance, but neither does He leave us totally to our own device. He nudges us, with a gentleness of the perfect force- not too hard so as to gaslight or railroad us, nor too soft so as to be unperceived. The nudging towards repentance can involve very round about methods, as we see here. And this explains our impression at times that life is very random and bizarre. It isn't, because what we see as so bizarre is in fact a leading or nudging of us to repentance.

They likely realized that all the myths of divination through cups were bunk; and yet this man with whom they had to do could indeed "divine" them, setting them according to their ages. So they would have realized that somehow their attitude to this cup incident was going to be how Joseph 'divined' them; but it was their response to it which was going to make the answer. Would they rally around their brother Benjamin, and be prepared to suffer for and with him, this son of Rachel [as Joseph was]- or would they seek to justify themselves and leave him to his fate? Would they care about their father's grief, or not? Would the false accusation make them realize that although they had not stolen Joseph's cup whilst enjoying his huge grace to them over the meal table, they had in another context all rewarded evil for good?

And so the incident points forward to the table of the Lord Jesus, the grace of which we too have all in some way abused. Our spirit / attitude is the candle of the Lord, with which He searches us. Our thoughts when confronted by the cross reveal us to Him who died on it. Likewise Joseph (one of the most detailed types of the Lord) knew / discerned his brethren by his cup (Gen. 44:5). 1 Cor. 11:31,32 further suggests that our self-judgment at the breaking of bread is in fact the Lord's judgment of us; just as Joseph's discernment of them was really their discernment of themselves.

The divining may be a reference to his interpreting the butler's dream involving the cup; see on Gen. 40:11. The Hebrew for "divines" means literally 'to make trial'; their taking of the cup was their trial / judgment. Thus we drink either blessing or condemnation to ourselves by taking the cup. The word used by the LXX for "divines" in Gen. 44:5 occurs in the NT account of the breaking of bread service: 'everyone should *examine* himself, and then eat the bread and drink from the cup' (1 Cor. 11:28). The Lord examines us, as we examine ourselves. There is a mutuality here- the spirit of man is truly the candle of the Lord (Prov. 20:27). He searches us through our own self-examination. He knows all things, but there may still be methods that He uses to gather than information. Our hearts are revealed to God through our own self-examination. And is it mere co-incidence that the Hebrew words for "divination" and "snake" are virtually identical [*nahash*]? The snake lifted up on the pole [cp. the crucified Jesus] is the means of trial / divination. Through the cross, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed (Lk. 2:35), just as they will be at the last day. Thus the breaking of bread ceremony is a means towards the sort of realistic self-examination which we find so hard to achieve in normal life.

The implication could be that they thought Joseph had information about them because of this magic cup, and they had therefore stolen it. Because they thought this would stop him knowing about them. This was to probe their conscience. They of course denied the theft. But their conscience would have prodded them- they were indeed aware that Joseph strangely knew all about them, and they were indeed uncomfortable with that fact, and would do all in their power to keep him from knowing more about them. All this was again a nudge towards their acceptance of the simple truth; the vizier

was indeed Joseph and he knew all about them. The implication was also that Joseph would have already divined through the cup that they were going to steal it. The message was: 'He knows your past and future. Any attempt to avoid that is desperate and can never work. Just accept He knows all about you'. And this is what every man is faced with who seeks to deny the Lord's total knowledge of him. And as we take His cup at the communion service, we are powerfully reminded of this and led towards self examination, knowing and seeing ourselves as He sees us.

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You have done evil in so doing’- They are falsely accused of doing evil. The accusation was false, but their psychological reaction was intended to lead them to realise that they had in fact done another evil, to Joseph (50:20).

Gen 44:6 *He overtook them, and he spoke these words to them*- Jacob's sons had been pursued and overtaken once before; the same word is used of Laban doing so to the Jacob family (Gen. 31:25). And Laban had likewise accused them of rewarding him evil for good, and he had made an accusation against them- that they had stolen his idols. That accusation was true, but it was turned into a false accusation by God's grace saving them from being "overtaken" and Rachel hiding the idols and lying to her father. And they would have been intended to make the connection; that they then had been saved by grace, they who were liars. And now they had been "overtaken" again, and a false accusation was made, that they had rewarded good with evil. But their consciences would have been pricked; for they had indeed done evil, and they would only be saved from this 'overtaking' by Divine grace. All these things were carefully planned to elicit their repentance. How many of the prods they felt and responded to, we do not know; but somewhere in their deep subconscious, surely something was stirred.

Gen 44:7 *They said to him, Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants that they should do such a thing!*- As I have often mentioned, the Divine purpose of the experience of false accusation is in order to elicit from us the recognition that although we didn't do what we were accused of, we have in essence done the same in other areas. Whilst they had not stolen the cup, it was not so far from them to reward evil for good. But the brothers begin to show signs that they will not abandon Benjamin; for the pronouns vary: "*They* said... *My* Lord... *your servants*... that *they*...". So they are beginning to have a very different attitude to that which they had toward Joseph years earlier.

Gen 44:8 *Behold, the money, which we found in our sacks' mouths, we brought again to you out of the land of Canaan. How then should we steal silver or gold out of your lord's house?*- They begin however by parading their own righteousness and integrity. Yet the cup incident made them realize their guilt and made them acceptive of the judgment they deserved. And it made them quit their attempts at parading their own righteousness, no matter how valid it was in the immediate context. The cup made them realize their real status, and not just use empty words. Behold the contradiction in Gen. 44:9: "With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my Lord's bondmen / servants". The Hebrew words translated "servants" and "bondmen" are the same. Their mere formal recognition that they were Joseph's servants was to be translated into reality. Thus they say that Joseph had "found out the iniquity of thy servants; behold, we *are* my Lord's servants". Describing themselves as His servants had been a mere formalism; now they wanted it in a meaningful reality. And the Lord's cup can do the same to us. The way they were "searched" (Gen. 44:12) from the oldest to the youngest was surely the background for how the guilty men in Jn. 8 pined away in guilt from the Lord Jesus, from the eldest to the youngest. The whole experience would have elicited self-knowledge within them. The same word is found in Zech. 1:12, describing how God Himself would search out the sin of Jerusalem.

Joseph was trying to tell them: 'What you did to the cup, you did to me. That cup is a symbol of me'. And inevitably the mind flies to how the Lord solemnly took the cup and said that this was Him. Our attitude to those emblems is our attitude to Him. We have perhaps over-reacted against the Roman Catholic view that the wine turns into the very blood of Jesus. It doesn't, of course, but all the same the Lord did say that the wine *is* His blood, the bread *is* His body. Those emblems are effectively Him to us. They are symbols, but not mere symbols. If we take them with indifference, with minds focused on externalities, then this is our essential attitude to Him personally. This is why the memorial meeting ought to have an appropriate intensity about it- for it is a personal meeting with Jesus. "Here O my Lord, I see thee face to face". If it is indeed this, then the

cup will be the means of eliciting within us our own realization of sin and subsequently, of our salvation in Jesus.

Gen 44:9 *With whoever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondservants*- Their emotional words reflect a lack of sensitivity to their father Jacob's feelings. They ought at least to have excluded Benjamin from their promises. There is a strange repeat here of the situation with Rachel, the mother of Benjamin and Joseph. Her husband Jacob, their father, had rashly said that whoever had stolen Laban's idols should due. Now they make the same mistake. And Benjamin is found guilty of stealing and hiding the idolatrous valuable cup. His mother had done the same, but been saved by grace. We wonder whether Joseph was trying to get his brother to see how their mother had sinned, and yet been saved by grace.

Here, being dead is paralleled with being a slave- that is the force of "die... we also will be bondservants". And there appears a parallel between being a bond slave and dying in :17. Indeed, Romans 6 draws the same parallel- death to sin is part of being a slave of Christ. The very fact we are baptized means we should not continue in sin, seeing we are dead to it (Rom. 6:2). This is one of the most basic implications of a first principle which we live in ignorance of most of our days. Baptism is a change of masters- but we are still bond slaves, not of sin, but of God. The implications of this figure may not be immediately apparent to the modern mind. We are totally committed to the Master- this is who we are, bond slaves.

Gen 44:10 *He said, Now also let it be according to your words: he with whom it is found will be my bondservant; and you will be blameless*- They should have sensed the grace shown in turning down their offer. Nobody would die, nor would they all become slaves. Yet the steward says that this is "according to your words". But his offer was *not* according to their words. The grace in it all is that their own self condemnation was turned around to something far more generous, and put back in their own mouths. They were intended to marvel at the grace, and to see that although there was going to be judgment, there was an extraordinary grace with the judge. We note too that this steward appears to have full authority to speak for Joseph, note "my bondservant". They would be blameless if only one of them had done it; the fact they plead a common, joint guilt ["the iniquity of your servants", :16] is therefore to be taken as not simply unity with their brother, but an expression of some other guilt, namely concerning Joseph.

The punishment for stealing the goblet of a man like Joseph was death, and the brothers offered this as the just desert. In the midst of their confusion, they are offered grace. They will not all be punished, as would be normal in such circumstances as they appeared jointly responsible. And the punishment for the guilty would not be death but servitude. They like us are being asked to see that the darkest clouds of circumstance

are lined with amazing grace. If we perceive it. And they were being hereby encouraged to throw themselves upon that grace.

Gen 44:11 *Then they hurried, and each man took his sack down to the ground, and each man opened his sack*- Their speed was to demonstrate their eagerness to show themselves innocent. As they opened their sacks, they would have again found their money in the sack mouth. So as they prepared to face judgment, they did so knowing that there was an amazing grace in the man with whom they had to do.

Gen 44:12 *He searched, beginning with the eldest, and ending at the youngest. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack*- As noted on :12, Benjamin would have seen the cup nestled amongst his returned money. It was a powerful visual symbol of how judgment and guilt was to be covered with the message of grace and passionate love toward him, and all of them. Again they would have noticed that Joseph and his steward knew their ages (as when he sat them by birth order at the table); for the search was made from eldest to youngest. We recall how the Lord Jesus likewise convicted the Jews in John 8 from the eldest to the youngest. So the specter of judgment hanging over them was again ameliorated by the awareness that their judge knew them intimately.

Gen 44:13 *Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey, and returned to the city*- "Each man..." signals that they all felt united with Benjamin; they didn't leave him to his fate. They had indeed moved on a long way from their attitude to Joseph. The repetition of circumstance in our lives is not only to teach us, but to make sure that we learnt the lesson- for what teacher doesn't give pupils exercises to practice the theory they've learnt? It seems that Joseph, acting on God's behalf and as a type of Christ, manipulated circumstances so that his brothers would have *deja vu* experiences. Thus he sets things up to tempt them with freedom if they again betray their younger brother (Benjamin) and are thoughtless to their father's pain. The united, frank and open response of the brothers (:16,17) showed how they had indeed learnt their lesson.

Their tearing of clothes is what Jacob did because of their treatment of Joseph (Gen. 37:34). So it is not so much a case of measure for measure, but rather their being led by circumstance to appreciate what they had put their father through.

Gen 44:14 *Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there*- Judah now takes the lead amongst the brothers. He comes over as responsible and genuine in his care for Benjamin.

They fell on the ground before him- Joseph's dream was having multiple primary fulfilments as they all bow to him. The fact the dreams are not presented as having one

clear fulfilment [for they bow before him on several occasions] shows that all the recorded bowing of the brothers was only primary fulfilment; and in any case, Rachel was not present as required. And we wonder whether this bowing was anyway the fulfilment of the 'bowing before Joseph' of his dreams. Because to bow before someone has the sense of gratitude and thankfulness in Gen. 23:7,12, where Abraham bows to the sons of Heth in gratitude for a burial place for his wife. Perhaps that is the final fulfilment- bowing before Joseph, not in fear and subservience, but in gratitude. And it seems that is yet to come.

Gen 44:15 *Joseph said to them, What deed is this that you have done?*- "What deed is this?" was to elicit their memory of the deed done to Joseph. He addresses them in the plural- trying to elicit from them the recognition that they had all returned evil for good with respect to himself. The Hebrew for "deed" is not the word that would be used if Joseph simply meant 'What have you done?' or 'What thing have you done?'. It's the same word translated "occupation" or 'trade' in Gen. 46:33; 47:3. The idea is of trading, and he is trying to elicit from the memory of their trading of him for 20 pieces of silver. The "you" is "you" plural. He accuses them as a group of theft. And they had as a group stolen Joseph (Gen. 40:15).

The whole story of Joseph is one of the clearest types of Jesus in the Old Testament. The way His brethren come before His throne and are graciously accepted is one of the most gripping foretastes we have of the final judgment. The rather strange way Joseph behaves towards them was surely to elicit within them a true repentance. He sought to bring them to self-knowledge through His cup. Joseph stresses to the brethren that it is through his cup that he “divines" to find out their sin. He also emphasizes that by stealing the cup they had “done evil" (Gen. 44:4,5). And yet they didn’t actually steal the cup. The “evil" which they had done was to sell him into Egypt (Gen. 50:20). They had “stolen" him (Gen. 40:15) in the same way they had “stolen" the cup. This is why he says that “you" (you plural, not singular, as it would have been if he was referring merely to Benjamin’s supposed theft) had stolen it (Gen. 44:15). And the brethren in their consciences understood what Joseph was getting at- for instead of insisting that they hadn’t stolen the cup, they admit: “What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" (Gen. 44:16 AV). Clearly their minds were on their treatment of Joseph, the sin which they had thought would not be found out. And this was why they were *all* willing to bear the punishment of becoming bondmen, rather than reasoning that since Benjamin had apparently committed the crime, well he alone must be punished.

Don’t you know that such a man as I can indeed divine?- The idea was 'I know that you have committed a great, evil deed'- concerning Joseph. The divining may be a reference

to his interpreting the butler's dream involving the cup; see on Gen. 40:11. But "divine" is translated "I have learned by experience" in Gen. 30:27. Joseph is saying that he has seen them, knows them, has experienced them. This is about the clearest statement so far that 'I am Joseph'. They never got to quite the point Joseph wanted, for in the end he has to spell it out for them, although they were surely 'there' in their subconscious.

"Such a man as I" may allude to his title Zaaphnath Paaneah, which can mean 'The knower of that which is secret'. This was the message all along, that Joseph like the Lord, knows all about us. And we are to come to that same realisation, to know even as we are known. Paul says that day is yet future, but we are led towards it now.

Gen 44:16 *Judah said, What will we tell my lord? What will we speak?-*

Joseph's brothers' words are exactly those of Daniel in Dan. 10:15-17, where in another death and resurrection experience, he feels just the same as he lays prostrate before the Angel. Our attitude to the Lord in the last day will be our attitude to Him at the breaking of bread- just as our "boldness" in prayer now will be our "boldness" in the day of judgment. In the same way as the brothers had to be reassured by Joseph of his loving acceptance, so the Lord will have to 'make us' sit down with Him, and encourage us to enter into His joy. There will be some sort of disbelief at the extent of His grace in all those who are truly acceptable with Him ("When saw we thee...?"). The brothers grieved and were angry with themselves in the judgment presence of Joseph (Gen. 45:5)- they went through the very feelings of the rejected (cp. "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in self-hatred). And yet they were graciously accepted, until like Daniel they can eventually freely talk with their saviour Lord (Gen. 45:15). And so the sheep will feel rejected at the judgment, they will condemn themselves- in order to be saved ultimately. The same words occur in Neh. 8:10,11, when a repentant Israel standing before the judgment *bema* (LXX) are given the same assurance.

This spirit influenced David when he likewise says: "What can I say to you? For you Lord know your servant" (2 Sam. 7:20). Our awareness of our sinfulness at the day of judgment will doubtless have a like effect upon us. The moral desperation of the brethren ("how shall we clear ourselves?") will then be seen in us. Speechlessness is a characteristic of the rejected (Mt. 22:12); the brothers slunk away from Joseph's physical presence (45:4), as the rejected will (1 Jn. 2:28 Gk.). This all suggests that those accepted at the judgment seat will go through all the emotions of the rejected; they will realize that rejection is what they deserve. Those who judge (condemn) themselves now in their self-examination will not be condemned then.

In the Hebrew, the "What can we [do]?" is clearer. It is repeated three times: "What can we say... what can we speak... what can we say to justify ourselves?". This is everyman before the Lord Jesus, unable to justify ourselves, as Paul stresses in Romans. What can we say or do? Nothing, but cast ourselves upon His grace. Judah's recognition of their position is the more commendable because it was based upon his inner conscience of their sin with Joseph. For he stood falsely accused before Joseph, and innocent of stealing the cup. This absolute contrition was therefore based upon repentance over the sin with Joseph, and not because of any sin regarding the cup, which they were falsely accused of. We can be sure Benjamin protested his innocence, but Judah doesn't go down the path of as it were demanding a retrial. Rather, he acts as genuinely guilty- because he knows that they are guilty of major sin against Joseph. This can help us cope with midjudgment; indeed we have been falsely accused and misjudged, but we are in fact utterly guilty of other sin before God and worthy only of death.

Or how will we clear ourselves?- This is the word usually translated "righteous". How can a man be just / right with God? This is the question of all the faithful, from the book of Job to Paul in Romans. Job uses precisely the same Hebrew phrase, translated "How shall a man be just [with God]?" (Job 9:2; 15:14; 25:4). These are the only other occurrences of the phrase, and so clearly Job was influenced by Judah's words. No words, no silver, no works. We each come to this point. We just have to accept that we have sinned and cast ourselves upon the Lord, being willing to die or be His eternal servants. This ideally is the attitude we should have at baptism and then throughout our lives.

God has found out the iniquity of your servants- They had agreed that with whomsoever the cup was "found", he should die (s.w. :9). And it had been "found" with Benjamin. But Judah says that all of them had sinned and their sin had been "found". He therefore has in mind their sin against Joseph. There is a direct parallel with their admission of this sin in Gen. 42:21 "We are verily guilty concerning our brother" Joseph. God and not Joseph nor his steward had found out this singular "iniquity" of them all; so Judah refers to the iniquity with Joseph and not of stealing the cup. So Judah is speaking on two levels; he is saying what Joseph apparently wants to hear, that they are guilty. But Judah knew that actually they as a group were not guilty of stealing Benjamin's cup, as Benjamin had apparently acted alone in stealing it. But he makes the confession of guilt because of his now deep awareness of "the iniquity" of the brothers regaring Joseph earlier. They had “stolen" him (Gen. 40:15) in the same way they had “stolen" the cup. They were guilty of theft- but of Joseph, not of the cup. And Judah accepts this and therefore chooses not to argue back with Joseph that they were innocent of the accusation about stealing the cup. And this was why they were *all* willing to bear the punishment of becoming bondmen, rather than reasoning that since Benjamin had apparently committed the crime, well he alone must be punished. The cup was “found" and they realized that God had “found out" their joint iniquity (Gen. 44:10,12,16). The cup was

perceived by them as their “iniquity" with Joseph. They had used the very same Hebrew words years before, in telling Jacob of Joseph’s garment: “This have we found..." (Gen. 37:32). So we see here that there was some repentance and spiritual growth in Judah and the brothers. It is shown for all time that reconcilliation can be based upon the pure grace of one party, even if the other parties can never bring themselves to express repentance and apology in so many words to the offended party. But, there was deep within them a recognition of their sin with Joseph. This may possibly be in some contexts a pattern for how we deal with false accusation; to let it go, because we are guilty of the essence of the sin of which we are falsely accused.

Behold, we are my lord’s bondservants, both we, and he also in whose hand the cup is found- Judah doesn't plead innocent about stealing the cup, but agrees that Joseph has rightly perceived that they have a great hidden sin. Judah speaks of them as "servants" in the plural who have sinned, rather than in the singular, which he would've done if he only had Benjamin's behaviour in view. As noted on :10, the position was that they would all be held "blameless" if only one of them had stolen the cup. This joint plea was therefore a confession of some other joint sin- that concerning Joseph. This is why Judah says that despite the offer of only Benjamin being a slave, they would all accept this judgment.

The cup was “found" and they realized that God had “found out" their joint iniquity (Gen. 44:10,12,16). The cup was perceived by them as their “iniquity" with Joseph. They had used the very same Hebrew words years before, in telling Jacob of Joseph’s garment: “This have we found..." (Gen. 37:32).

They who had sold their brother into slavery in Egypt were now offering to become slaves in Egypt. Joseph's plan had worked, in that they were willing to experience what they had subjected him to. But still there never comes the specific statement of repentance and apology which we the story leads us to expect at the end.

Gen 44:17 *He said, Far be it from me that I should do so*- Evidence has been found that there was an Egyptian law which stated that if one of a group of men stole something from the ruling class, then the whole group were to be likewise punished. Judah has stated that they would all be slaves because of their "sin", which Judah understood as referring to their sin against Joseph and Jacob. Joseph reads his mind, and assures him that he will not "do so", even though that is Egyptian law. All he wants is that Benjamin remain with him. Later, the brothers would have rehearsed every word of Joseph, and understood he was speaking with the utmost grace and love. But at the time, his words and actions appeared so harsh. And so it shall be at the last day, when the Lord is no longer understood as a hard man at all, but we shall know that He was always bursting with passionate love and grace and desire for us. We can make that realisation even now.

Joseph alludes to God's words and Abraham's plea regarding Sodom, that the righteous will not be destroyed with the wicked (Gen. 18:25). See on :18. Joseph is saying that they are now righteous. They have just said that there is no way they can be cleared or righteous (see on :16), but through this allusion, Joseph on God's behalf declares them righteous. This is an Old Testament version of Paul's teaching of imputed righteousness, by grace.

The man in whose hand the cup is found, he will be my bondservant; but as for you, go up in peace to your father- "Peace" carries the idea of peace with God. Joseph is saying that they are forgiven. Despite their statement that there is no way they can now be righteous and their confession of collective sin- with the sin against Joseph in their minds. Why then does Joseph want to keep Benjamin? Perhaps because Benjamin was the one who had not sinned against Joseph, and yet needed to be taught the same lessons of imputed righteousness. Or maybe Joseph wanted to see their response; he has said they are forgiven and at peace. Yet will they now abandon their brother? Have they learnt in practice what loyalty to your brother is all about? Will there be works appropriate to their faith in Joseph's forgiveness? And there will be.

Gen 44:18 *Then Judah came near to him*- The same word used of Abraham coming near to God to speak, continuing the allusion noted on :17.

And said, Oh, my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord’s ears, and don’t let your anger burn against your servant; for you are even as Pharaoh- Judah's recorded words in this chapter begin as broken sentences, and now become more lengthy and eloquent. This is psychologically as we would expect; we can be sure that we are reading the actual words spoken, thousands of years ago. It's hard to know whether Judah feels Joseph's anger is already burning, or is asking that this not be the case. If the former, then we have the wonderful picture of men thinking that Joseph like God is burning with anger against them, when in fact He is full of passionate, saving love toward us. And many will learn that wonderful lesson at the day of judgment. But if Judah means ' Do not be provoked to anger by what I am going to beg of you', then we have yet another connection with Abraham's words in pleading for Sodom (Gen. 18:30).

"Don't let your anger burn" could imply that as the Hebrew says, Joseph's face was glowing with wrath. But that was in fact only a mask. Behind that apparent wrath, there was a heart bursting with love, tenderness and blanket forgiveness even when no repentance was proferred. And that, finally, at the end of all things, is how we shall understand our present apparent experience of God's wrath.

Gen 44:19 *My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father, or a brother?’*- The question "Do you have a brother?" was intended to elicit their memories of what they had done to Joseph. Although Joseph had kindly accepted their confession of sin in :16

as good enough for him to forgive them, it was not really complete. Because they had failed to openly confess their sin with Joseph. And here we have a powerful lesson in not demanding repentance according to our terms before we forgive, nor judging the quality of others' forgiveness. For it seems God's eagerness to forgive and save means that whilst He seeks total repentance, He apparently settles for less, as Joseph did.

Judah mentions his father a total of fourteen times in his speech. Perhaps this was because he correctly sensed in Joseph a fondness for this old man of whom they had previously spoken. And perhaps on a deeply subconscious level, he knew he was talking with Joseph and that the feelings of their father would be the critical point at which Joseph might be persuaded.

Gen 44:20 *We said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother; and his father loves him'*- Benjamin was in his 20s and had ten sons at this point, and presumably daughters too (Gen. 46:21). Judah cites their previous words to Joseph, with Benjamin standing there- perhaps now he is admitting that they had exaggerated Benjamin's youth. And yet the lie about Joseph, that he had been killed, was so ingrained in Judah that now in this moment of ultimate truth he still repeats it: "He alone is left of his mother". This is the problem with lying- the lie really becomes perceived truth if it is repeated long enough, and takes a lodgment in our entire worldview and self-understanding. Even at this point, Judah could not admit what surely his subconscious was telling him- that Joseph was standing in front of him. And we see that Judah was still not totally truthful- he paints the picture of a family in perpetual mourning for the loss of a younger brother, lovingly united in care for their elderly, ever grieving and now hungry old father. That is so psychologically credible; the most dysfunctional of families can keep repeating positive narratives about themselves until they believe them to be true. So even here, Judah is still not completely truthful. And we never actually see the brothers confessing in detail what happened, neither to Jacob nor Joseph. And yet they were still accepted by Joseph even though their repentance was 'only' deeply internal, and not to the extent he hoped for. We have to accept the repentance of others when it is of a similar low quality; because so much of our repentance toward God is likewise of low quality. We again note that repentance or impenitence is not a binary state; like forgiveness, it has many shades and hues. They didn't get to the depth of repentance they ought to have done, but Joseph just so loves them that he cuts short the entire attempt to educate them, and reveals himself to them. Just as the Lord will do at His return to an immature brotherhood.

Gen 44:21 *You said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him'*- This Hebrew phrase to set eyes upon is used in Am. 9:4 ("for evil") and Jer. 24:6

("for good"). It implies Joseph was going to do something with him, rather than just wanting to literally see him. The Hebrew could mean "I will keep my eye on him". And this was to elicit from the brothers the impression that this vizier of Egypt had a special interest in Benjamin. It was another nudge towards perceiving that this vizier was in fact Joseph, the only blood brother of Benjamin.

We note that in Judah's long speech here [long in the sense that few speeches of this length are recorded in Genesis], he is constantly quoting the words of others- of Joseph earlier, of his father, of his brothers to their father etc. Of the entire speech in :18-29, Judah says 42 words of his own and 84 words reporting the words of others. This is a window onto the extent to which they had carefully mulled over every word spoken and remembered it all. This was just as Joseph had intended- because that reflection on those words, over a period of time, was intended to elicit truthfulness and repentance and self understanding. Joseph, on God's behalf, was indeed the master psychologist.

Gen 44:22 *We said to my lord, 'The boy can't leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die'*- As noted on :20, Benjamin was a man in his 20s with ten sons. Jacob was clearly psychologically obsessed with Benjamin; his love for Rachel and Joseph was all channeled into this man.

Gen 44:23 *You said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will see my face no more'*- Joseph could believe the reported obsession of Jacob with Benjamin, and perhaps that was why he wanted Benjamin and Jacob to individuate from each other. For he had suffered the same problem with Jacob, and now realized that in God's plan, he had had to separate from Jacob in order to stand on his own feet before God. Joseph had threatened that if they saw his face again without their brother, then they would die. This is exactly how Pharaoh later threatened Moses (Ex. 10:28). Moses had made this threat "even as Pharaoh" (:18). Moses would have seen the connection, and realized that God's providence would likewise make this threat of no final reality. This is the advantage of familiarity with the text of Scripture; we see that our situations are not unique and have Biblical precedent, which encourages our faith and helps us realize that we are not alone and no situation is unprecedented.

Gen 44:24 *It happened when we came up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord*- The continual emphasis upon Jacob as Joseph's servant and "lord" was all a primary fulfilment of Joseph's dreams.

Gen 44:25 *Our father said, 'Go again, buy us a little food'*- Judah is careful to report the

conversations exactly as they were. Truthfulness was being elicited, but they still had not quite confessed as they needed to their sin with Joseph, the lie of their lives.

Gen 44:26 *We said, 'We can't go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down: for we may not see the man's face, unless our youngest brother is with us'*- Although as noted on :25 Judah is being strictly accurate in reporting the conversations, he omits the death threat Joseph had twice made to them. He obviously didn't want to remind Joseph of that; he therefore still was not being totally open, and still hoping that by dint of his own word choice he might secure a slightly better deal for them all.

Gen 44:27 *Your servant, my father, said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons*- Again, Judah is effectively bowing before Joseph in the name of Jacob, just as Joseph's dreams had required, by talking of "Your servant, my father".

Gen 44:28 *And the one went out from me*- True enough to any psychological reconstruction, Jacob remembered the last time he had seen Joseph, walking out of the family encampment with Jacob watching his receding figure as he went towards Dothan. The same words are used of how as a younger man, Jacob had gone out from *his* father Isaac (Gen. 27:30), never to see him for many years, apparently lost in Mesopotamia. The patterns in the life of Jacob are amazing, and they are too in our lives, if we perceive them.

And I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I haven't seen him since- This could be taken as meaning 'This is what I thought at the time, I was sure of it; although it's true that since then, I never saw him again'. As noted on Gen. 37:33, the story of Joseph's death begged many questions and Jacob would never have been satisfied as to what actually happened. At this point in Judah's speech, the brothers would all have internally hung their heads. Judah really ought to have said something like: 'This is what your servant our father thought, but actually it was because we lied to him and deceived him; although we didn't steal your cup, we committed a greater sin that this experience with you has reminded us of- we nearly killed our brother, and then sold him down here into Egypt as a slave. We are therefore sure that God has found out this sin and are willing to take whatever punishment He, through you, thinks appropriate'. But Judah didn't say that. He ought to have done, and he had been set up now to say it- but he doesn't. And still Joseph loves them and accepts them. Our forgveness of others and personal repentance is likewise nearly always a case of "Yes... but...", and the quality of it is not always great.

Gen 44:29 *If you take this one also from me, and harm happens to him, you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol'*- The brothers taking this one also from Jacob suggests that he suspected they had killed Joseph, or were responsible for his disappearance. Judah faithfully reports Jacob's words; and again, as suggested on :28, he now had the chance to say in so many words what they had done. But he doesn't.

We recall that Judah had been terrified at the prospect of losing his own son Shelah, and that was why he wouldn't let him marry Tamar, whom he considered a *femme fatale*. But although Judah was spiritually weak at that time, he learned the lesson; and he therefore doesn't want his father to again go through the loss of a son, in this case Benjamin. So we do see great growth in Judah at this point, far beyond the self centered man of 22 years ago in Gen. 38. Then, he had separated or "gone down from" his brethren; now he leads them and is willing to effectively die for one of them.

Gen 44:30 *Now therefore when I come to your servant my father, and the boy is not with us; since his life is bound up in the boy's life*- The idea was that if Benjamin did not return, then Jacob would lose his life because he would assume that a son who had not returned, even if he was a slave and alive in Egypt, was effectively dead. This ought to have made the brothers realize that by selling Joseph into Egypt, so that he did not return to Jacob, they had effectively taken Joseph's life from him. They had murdered him, and their careful legalistic plan to not spill his blood themselves was not effective in taking away their guilt for his blood.

Gen 44:31 *It will happen, when he sees that the boy is no more, that he will die. Your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant, our father, with sorrow to Sheol*- See on :30. For a son to remain alive in Egypt as a slave was still tantamount, in Jacob's perception, to the son dying. The brothers had therefore effectively killed Joseph by selling him as a living slave into Egypt. This therefore was why Joseph raised the whole idea of Benjamin remaining as a slave in Egypt. He wanted the brothers to realize that this was effectively murder, a killing of Benjamin. And that is what they had done to Joseph. It is hard to find any other explanation as to what Joseph's intentions were by telling the brothers that Benjamin must remain as a slave in Egypt, and they were to return to their father. They didn't want that outcome, because, as Judah now explains, it would be effectively the death of Benjamin.

The jealousy of the brothers against Joseph was based around the fact that he was the favoured son of the favoured wife, Rachel. They earlier cared nothing for the pain of their father over the apparent loss of Joseph. But now we see that Joseph's efforts to retrain them have paid off. Because they are driven to play the card of their father's feelings as a desperate last ditch attempt to appeal for Joseph's understanding and mercy. And in fairness to the brothers, their love for their father is greater now than it was when they

deceived him over the apparent gruesome death of his favourite son Joseph... their half brother. In their own way, they are presented as having repented in their hearts, and are desperately concerned for the feelings of their father, even though he apparently has not long left to live. And yet the point of the story is that they never say sorry in so many words. The entire Joseph novella leads us on to expect some famous final scene where they confess their sins, and Jacob and Joseph graciously forgive them and they live happily ever after. But that scene, expected as it is by us, never comes. Instead we have these more subtle implications that they did in fact repent of what they had done, and they now really did love their old father. But they never said so in so many words. It is our wisdom to realize that we have people in our lives who are similar. And we are to perceive the unwisdom of treating repentance as a binary yes / no status, witnessed by external words and actions. For repentance is a re-thinking, it is a state of the heart. And that is why it is for us to forgive rather than seeking to judge whether or not a person is penitent. For only God sees the heart and He alone can judge penitence.

Gen 44:32 *For your servant became collateral for the boy to my father, saying, 'If I don't bring him to you, then I will bear the blame to my father forever'*- As explained on :30,31, to be a slave in Egypt was effectively death. Judah was willing to accept this 'death' for the sake of Benjamin his brother; and perhaps he was motivated by the realization that he deserved it anyway for having sold Joseph into this death. This was why all the brothers were willing to be slaves in Egypt. We note that Benjamin was also a son of Rachel, the favoured wife; and Judah as Leah's son had been jealous of Rachel's sons. But now he is willing to become a slave, even to die, for the sake of a son of Rachel. And yet Judah never in so many words repents nor apologizes to Joseph for his jealousy. Instead we have these more subtle implications that he did in fact repent of it; see on :31. So Joseph's very complex and roundabout test of the brothers revealed that now, they were willing to suffer for their brother and their father.

Judah gives a pledge in Gen. 38:17 in connection with his immorality. It cannot be incidental that he later offers his life as a pledge to his father to guarantee the return of Benjamin (Gen. 43:8-10). We are surely meant to detect Judah's spiritual growth between these two "pledge" incidents. We note Judah offers to "bear the blame / sin" if Benjamin doesn't return (Gen. 43:9). He has matured from seeking to hide his blame / sin in his behaviour with Tamar. Likewise the Judah who had caused his father so much grief over the loss of Joseph, becomes the Judah who is so careful to avoid causing his father such grief over Benjamin.

Gen 44:33 *Now therefore, please let your servant stay instead of the boy, a bondservant to my lord; and let the boy go up with his brothers*- As noted on Gen. 38:1, Judah was somewhat separated from the other brothers and lived apart from them. But he is willing

to accept a living death for the sake of one of his brothers. He was thereby coming closer to the spirit of Joseph, the one separate from his brothers who would sacrifice all to save them. But as when Moses later offered to eternally die instead of Israel, God doesn't accept substitutionary atonement in this sense. And here too, Joseph doesn't accept it.

Judah's spiritual growth is evident. He recognized he had made Joseph a slave in Egypt, and he was willing now to suffer the same fate, from love for his younger brother and a desire not to make his father suffer again as he had over Joseph. As discussed on Gen. 38, this transformation all began with his repentance concerning his bad attitude and sins concerning Tamar. We see too how Judah came very close to the spirit of the later atonement in Christ. He, the innocent [regarding the stealing of Joseph's cup], was willing to suffer for the sake of the guilty [Benjamin], for the sake of the Father's feelings. This willingness to suffer for the sake of others was perhaps what most impressed Joseph. For his life had been all about suffering for the sake of his brethren. Judah is also tacitly accepting his father's preference for the sons of Rachel. He knew that for Jacob, the loss of Judah would be less painful than the loss of Benjamin. And so Judah was willing to spare his father that pain, even though it meant his effective death in prison.

Gen 44:34 *For how will I go up to my father, if the boy isn't with me? Lest I see the evil that will come on my father*- Again we see real spiritual progress from the time when Judah and the others didn't care for the evil that they had brought upon their father. At any time, they could've sat down with him and confessed and put him out of some of his misery. But they hadn't. Perhaps now Judah was vowing that if he ever saw his father again, he would tell him the truth about the Joseph incident. And so at this point, Joseph decides that they had all got as far as they were going to get in terms of confession and repentance, and calls an end to the process.

The brothers were now faced with the choice of once again returning to their father Jacob, bearing the news of the loss of one of his sons. They had done this 23 year previously; but now their conscience has developed. It was now something which Judah would rather die than do. So there is indeed a growth of care for Jacob, and a deepening of conscience; although it stops short at the full blooded, specific confession of sin to Jacob and Joseph which the novella sets us up to expect. And the powerful lesson is that some people don't get to that level of repentance they might or ought or we feel they should. But this is not to say they are impenitant or conscienceless.

GENESIS CHAPTER 45

Gen 45:1 *Then Joseph couldn't refrain himself before all those who stood before him, and he cried, Cause everyone to go out from me! No one else stood with him, while Joseph made himself known to his brothers*- "Then Joseph couldn't refrain himself..." implies he planned to drag out the process of spiritually refining his brothers, but his love for them caused him to cut it short- "For the elects sake the days shall be shortened" by Christ (Mt. 24:22).The same Hebrew word is used in Is. 42:14 about how God can no longer refrain Himself in the last days. We see Joseph's defence of his brothers in his desire that nobody else be present at this time; he suspected there may be confession and apology regarding what they had done to him, and he didn't want the world to know about it. This is the love that seeks to cover and save, whilst facing up to the issues.

"Refrain" is the word used of Joseph refraining himself before his brothers at their first meeting. The Hebrew means to force oneself, to force against one's own nature and will (s.w. 1 Sam. 13:12 "I forced myself and offered a burnt offering"). And this is how it is with the apparently harder side of God. Just as Joseph's actions towards his brothers were apparently harsh, so with God's harder side- the death of children, all the suffering in our lives, the cruel nature of life. But when God is finally revealed, we shall see that in fact this was His forcing Himself against His own nature. For His nature is "love". We get a glimpse of this at times, but only a fleeting glimpse. All too soon eclipsed by present realities and sufferings. We see it again when we truly reflect upon the cross, the gift of His Son for us. All the rest of our necessary suffering, incomprehensible and random as it appears to us, is in fact God pushing against His own nature. Finally like Joseph He will not refrain Himself any longer: "I have long time held My peace... and refrained Myself. Now will I cry out like a travailing woman" (Is. 42:14). And we urge Him towards this: "Will You refrain Yourself, O Lord?" (Is. 64:12), asking Him whether His love is restrained (Is. 63:15). We have a choice- to consider God a "hard man" as the one talent man of the parable does. Or to see that His apparent hardness is only the same mask as Joseph wore to his brothers, talking another language, interlacing grace and love with apparently hard and unreasonable behaviour. But all that is to lead us to the final conclusion when God removes the mask and we understand what we now cannot: God is love and salvation itself. Those who see only the hard mask are failing to perceive the frequent glimpses behind it, which Joseph so often afforded the brothers [giving them their money back, dining them, not demanding they all die nor be punished for their theft of his cup etc.]. In this life, we behold both the goodness and severity of God. But that is what Paul says "we *behold*". And we see only in a darkened mirror, but then face to face. The message of the Joseph story is that actually behind what we see, God is pure goodness and love alone. But He forces Himself to act as Joseph did, in ways which appear random and cruel to us- in order to achieve the aim of His love, which is our eternal salvation.

Joseph as a type of Christ means that his brothers also have significance. The brethren meeting Joseph at the end has many echoes of the judgment seat of Christ. The whole purpose of the painful process which led up to that meeting was for the benefit of the brethren, to make them realize the enormity of their sin and the greatness of Joseph's grace. Likewise the judgment is for our benefit; the outcome is known to God beforehand. Does the (emphasized) emotionalism of Joseph at this time indicate anything about the Lord's attitude then?

We observe that one moment, the brothers were condemned, or at least Benjamin was. But that sentence was very suddenly commuted to amazing blessing. The suddeness of the change of 'fortune' was of course what Joseph had experienced; one moment imprisoned, the next, the second most powerful man on planet earth. He was perhaps seeking again to help them enter into his experiences, just as the Lord tries to get us to enter into His. That we might "know" Him, understand Him, enter relationship with Him.

Joseph's self revelation was through his meal with the brothers and then the drama with his cup. It looks forward to how the Lord Jesus revealed himself in the breaking of bread: "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Lk. 24:30-32). This is matched in how the hearts of Joseph's brothers "burned within them" when they were sat down at his table in order of birth (Gen. 43:33).

Gen 45:2 *He wept aloud. The Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard*- The pressure release must have been huge. The implication could be that Pharaoh lived within Pharaoh's court, and his household heard the noise. This would mean that the opulence of everything would have been overpowering for the tent dwelling cattle herding brothers. That this powerful man could show such grace to them… was so hard to believe. And they are in exactly our position.

Gen 45:3 *Joseph said to his brothers, I am Joseph! Does my father still live?*- Joseph had twice asked them this. He asks again; perhaps indicating that whilst he accepted them and forgave them, he did so by grace and not because he thought they were now totally truthful or totally repentant.

His brothers couldn't answer him; for they were terrified at his presence- Literally, at his face, a face full of tearful passionate love and forgiveness. This reveals the deep human tendency to not believe in grace. They expected punishment, and were thinking only of how they could now cut the best deal for themselves. They make no confession, and Joseph doesn't need to verbalize his forgiveness because that is now so apparent.

Gen 45:4 *Joseph said to his brothers, Come near to me, please. They came near. He said, I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt*- Joseph's brothers slink away from him, and he has to encourage them: "Come near to me, please". They absolutely knew that they ought to be punished and killed by him, and they thought he would do it. They had moved away from him as if they felt they were condemned. This will be the feature of all those finally accepted by the Lord; they will know they are rightly condemned, and yet they are to be saved eternally. Even years later, Joseph wept in frustration at their lack of full acceptance of his total forgiveness (Gen. 50:17). These scenes are so evidently typical of the future judgment seat of Joseph / Jesus. There is even the suggestion in Rev. 7:15 that after the judgment process, the Lord will come down off His throne and mix with us, after the pattern of Joseph. Ps. 36:8 says that God will "make us" partake of the blessings of the Kingdom of God. It reminds me of how the Lord Jesus said that in His Kingdom, He will "make us" sit down at a table, and He will come and serve us (Lk. 12:37), knowing full well that he who sits at meat is greater than he who serves (Lk. 22:27). It isn't so difficult to imagine this scene: the Lord of glory wanting us to sit down to a meal, and then *He* comes and serves us. He *will* have to "make us" sit down and let ourselves be served. Perhaps "*Come*, you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom" (Mt. 25:34) likewise suggests a hesitancy of the faithful to enter the Kingdom, seeing they have had such doubt about salvation. Perhaps this is typified here by Joseph's revelation to his brethren; they slink away from him, and he has to encourage them: "Come near to me".

Gen 45:5 *Now don't be grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life*- The only other time this Hebrew phrase for "grieved and angry" occurs is again about the brothers, when they are grieved and angry for what was done to their sister Dinah (Gen. 34:7). But now they are grieved and angry for what had been done to their brother Joseph, and they are grieved with themselves as the perpetrators. They were seeing themselves from outside of themselves, angry with the side of them that had done such wrong to their brother. They were as bad as the Shechemites whom they had judged so harshly. This was indeed a move toward spiritual maturity.

The "life" that was preserved was primarily the lives of Israel- them and their families- so that the Abrahamic covenant with them might be fulfilled and they would not die out. The "life" that was preserved was primarily the lives of Israel- them and their families- so that the Abrahamic covenant with them might be fulfilled and they would not die out (:7). "Preserve life" is parallel with "preserve a remnant" (:7). The remnant, the minority of humanity whom God deals with, is the "life" He sees and has relationship with on earth.

Sin, both our own and the sins of others against us, is actually used by God in a wonderful way. Not that this of course justifies sin. But it is a fact that through our experience of the sin-repentance-forgiveness process, we grow hugely. Here we have the answer to those who cannot forgive themselves for past sins. God works out His plan of salvation actually through man's disobedience rather than his obedience. As Paul puts it again, we are concluded in unbelief, that God may have mercy (Rom. 11:32). It was and is the spirit of Joseph. And again, speaking about the sin of Israel in rejecting Christ: "Their trespass means riches for the [Gentile] world" (Rom. 11:12). The whole plan with the brothers resulted in the world's salvation. Or yet again, think of how Abraham's lie about Sarah and unfaithfulness to his marriage covenant with her became a source of God's blessing and the curing of Abimelech's wife from infertility (Gen. 20:17- I read her infertility as a state that existed prior to the incident with Abraham). The righteousness of God becomes available to us exactly because we have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23,24).

Judah's words and his brothers' feelings are exactly those of Daniel in Dan. 10:15-17, where in another death and resurrection experience, he feels just the same as he lays prostrate before the Angel. Our attitude to the Lord in the last day will be our attitude to Him at the breaking of bread- just as our "boldness" in prayer now will be our "boldness" in the day of judgment. In the same way as the brothers had to be reassured by Joseph of his loving acceptance, so the Lord will have to 'make us' sit down with Him, and encourage us to enter into His joy. There will be some sort of disbelief at the extent of His grace in all those who are truly acceptable with Him ("When saw we thee...?"). The brothers grieved and were angry with themselves in the judgment presence of Joseph (Gen. 45:5)- they went through the very feelings of the rejected (cp. "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in self-hatred). And yet they were graciously accepted, until like Daniel they can eventually freely talk with their saviour Lord (Gen. 45:15). And so the sheep will feel rejected at the judgment, they will condemn themselves- in order to be saved ultimately. The same words occur in Neh. 8:10,11, when a repentant Israel standing before the judgment *bema* (LXX) are given the same assurance.

It is significant that Joseph never formally pronounces forgiveness, but shows by his actions that he has forgiven. Likewise, the brothers never make a statement of repentance, nor even "sorry". But we are possibly left to deduce that they were sorry. We may have here an example of how human relationships and psychological interactions are often on the level of the unspoken. The whole story is so psychologically credible. So many petty domestic upsets go this way- there is no "sorry" in so many words, nor is there the grant of forgiveness in words. But all is to some extent "good" and the relationship continues.

Gen 45:6 *For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are yet five years, in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest*- Again we see Joseph's firm

faith that prophetic dreams come true. Joseph stood before Pharaoh at 30 years old, so he was now 39. He had reached a spiritual maturity which few ever reach in their lives.

Joseph tells the Egyptians, "Here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land", and give a fifth of the harvest to Pharaoh (Gen. 47:23). But he comments in Gen. 45:6 that throughout the seven year famine, there would be neither ploughing nor harvest. We could read Gen. 47:23 as an agreement for the longer term future; but that appears disallowed by "Here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land". We could therefore conclude that Joseph knew God well enough to know that the seven year period of famine was negotiable; perhaps he was praying in faith that the days might be shortened. The Bible is full of such Divine accommodation to human prayers.

Gen 45:7 *God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance*- The "great deliverance" is alluded to in Heb. 2:3 "that great salvation". Israel saved, all the surrounding world also blessed with deliverance from the famine- Ditto for the last days; the nations around Israel blessed materially to overcome the problems of the latter day judgments. These judgments are to make Israel repent, but in that time of trouble the whole world suffers. The "life" of :5 that was preserved was primarily the lives of Israel- them and their families- so that the Abrahamic covenant with them might be fulfilled and they would not die out. Joseph so often sees things in terms of the implications of the promises to the fathers, just as we should- for they are the basis of the new covenant we are also in. The Jacob family were nearly dying of starvation after only two years of the seven year famine; and they had money and transport to go to Egypt and buy food. Many others in Canaan must have died. For subsistence farmers cannot survive more than one failed harvest, let alone seven. God's plan was that they should be preserved as the remnant in the *eretz*, the land promised to Abraham. His intention therefore was that they should return from Egypt to Canaan once the famine ended. See on :10; Gen. 46:4,27; 47:1,4,15,18,20,27; 48:16,21. This was why the brothers stated that they only wanted to "sojourn" temporarily in Egypt during the famine (see on Gen. 47:4). But they remained in the soft life of Egypt, when they could have become the sole inheritors of Canaan. And so God's saving purpose was delayed by 430 years until they were forced to leave Egypt. The situation is directly analogous with Judah in captivity in Babylon, called to return, but preferring to remain there. They were "the remnant that escaped" (Ezra 9:8; Is. 10:20; Ez. 14:22; cp. Is. 37:31), where "escaped" is the same word here translated "deliverance". This explains why the remnant who returned are called "the remnant of Jacob" in allusion to his historical situation (Mic. 5:7,8), using the same word as here for "remnant". "The remnant of Israel [Jacob] shall not [on repentance] speak lies [any more]" (Zeph. 3:13). The "remnant of Israel and... survivors of the house of Jacob" (Is. 10:20) clearly refer to this experience of a remnant being survivors: "to preserve for you a remnant... to make sure that you and your descendants survive" (GNB). Joseph's

mixed up brothers, saved by his pure grace, therefore represent all the true remnant who shall be saved.

Gen 45:8 *So now it wasn't you who sent me here, but God*- 'Not this but that' in Semitic [and other] languages means 'Not *so much* this, as that'. Paul's statement that he had been sent not to baptize but to preach must be read like this. We have here for all time the wonderful proof that God works through human sin and dysfunction to His greater glory, rather than turning away in disgust from it and leaving us to our own devices and their consequences.

Joseph is clear that "You sold me into Egypt" (:4), but he repeatedly explains that "You sold me [but in fact] God sent me" into Egypt. You sold me, but God sent me. This is the key to coping with life, to perceive that what happens to us on one level is used by God on another. Likewise in Gen. 50:19,20: "You planned evil for me, but God planned it for good". We note too that reconciliation involves our own full recognition of the evil done to us by others, and not negotiating it down.

And He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt- Lord of all Pharaoh's house- Joseph's experience of something similar in Potiphar's "house" and the prison house meant that he wouldn't have become proud because of it, and would've experienced it all thinking 'And this too, knowing my life, will likely soon come to an end. Worldly advantage comes and goes...'.

Joseph was 'father' to Pharaoh, and it has been commented that "There is no title "father to Pharaoh" in Egyptian; and the closest parallel *it-ncr*, "god's father", is something of an embarrassment... being an appellative granted... to the progenitor of a dynasty"- Donald Redford, *The Biblical Story of Joseph* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970) p. 191. Thus the title "Father" used about the Lord Jesus shouldn't lead us to think that Jesus "is" God the Father. "Father" is used in Is. 9:6 ["everlasting father"] in a manner consistent with other Old Testament usage to denote a leader, a great one- but not God Himself in person.

Joseph's dreams had predicted that he was to "have dominion" (Gen. 37:8), and here the Hebrew word is used of how Joseph ruled over all Egypt and those who came to buy corn from him such as his brothers (Gen. 45:8,26). His words here are therefore not proud, but pointing out how his dreams had come true.

Gen 45:9 *Hurry, and go up to my father, and tell him, 'This is what your son Joseph says, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me. Don't wait*- The usage of "father" is in contrast to how he was "father to Pharaoh" (:8); but he considered Jacob his true father and senior to him. Joseph's love and respect for Jacob was immense; even though he had only lived with him until 17 years old, and Jacob's favouritism towards

him had not really helped him in his early life. The twice expressed urgency (and again in :13) was not only because Joseph feared his father could die at any moment; but perhaps also because he sensed that the wonder of what had happened could wear off, and the brothers might cease to believe it. For believing in such wonderful grace is actually difficult. We would rather procrastinate, than accept it for what it is and act zealously on the implications of it.

Gen 45:10 *You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you will be near to me, you, your children, your children's children, your flocks, your herds, and all that you have*- "Near to me" connects with how Jacob had needed to urge his brothers to come near to him (:4). He wanted to live permanently with them with that same close relationship he had in that first moment when he revealed himself, in the magnificence of his grace and saving love toward them. And so there will be no decline in intensity after we too meet our Lord at judgment day, in the greatness of all His passion toward us. We shall live eternally in the spirit of that moment. There will be no entropy, no fading of intensity. Everlasting joy shall be upon our heads. Goshen, "land of rain", was the only area of Egypt as it then was which experienced rain, rather than depending upon the flooding of the Nile for irrigation. It was near the border with Canaan, which confirms the suggestion made on :7 that they were intended to live there until the famine was over, and then return to Canaan.

Gen 45:11 *There I will nourish you; for there are yet five years of famine; lest you come to poverty, you, and your household, and all that you have'*- Joseph seems to have sensed that they might prefer not to believe his interpretation of dreams, and think that surely next year there will be a harvest... and therefore remain in Canaan, away from him and the challenge of living with his grace. There really is something within us which shies away from grace. Even by the time of Gen. 50:21, the brothers still feared that Joseph might not continue to "nourish" them. Faith in grace must continue; it is not the realization of a moment. To abide in grace is not so easy. Their tendency would be to return to Canaan, indeed awed by their brother's grace, but just get back on with their lives, living admittedly somewhat better than they had previously, but just doing their own thing. To engage continually with his grace would demand so much from them. And so he repeats that the famine is going to last another five years (:6). The Hebrew translated "poverty" really has the idea of being possessed by another, or being disinherited (s.w. Ex. 34:24; Lev. 25:46; Num. 14:12; 21:32; 32:21,39; 33:52-55; Dt. 2:12,21-24 etc.). All those passages speak of Israel dispossessing the land of Canaan; if Israel's sons now tried to remain in Canaan, then they would be dispossessed and would fall out of the covenant promises. Again Joseph is reasoning in terms of the promises to the fathers. They would not be able to inherit the land as promised if they returned there without Joseph; they had to live in Egypt (the world) nourished by Joseph's bread of life, engaged continually with him and confronted by his grace, so that

finally they could eternally inherit the land. This all speaks to us; for we likewise have the same promises made to us. We too might foolishly seek to grab "the land" for ourselves without the necessary confrontation with the Lord's grace and care for us, all of which provokes in us a continual awareness that we are far from worthy of such grace and have sinned grievously.

Gen 45:12 *Behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaks to you*- He now spoke without an interpreter (cp. Gen. 42:23). His accent and language were proof enough that he was indeed their brother; although he had not spoken Hebrew all his adult life, for the last 22 years. But his heart had always been with them, and so he remembered it. It was by his words and speech that he was known to them; and this is true of the convicting power of the Lord's word to us.

Gen 45:13 *You shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. You shall hurry and bring my father down here*- Again the stress is on acting quickly, as twice in :9. This was not only because Joseph feared his father could die at any moment; but perhaps also because he sensed that the wonder of what had happened could wear off, and the brothers might cease to believe it. For believing in such wonderful grace is actually difficult. We would rather procrastinate, than accept it for what it is and act zealously on the implications of it.

There is no statement from the brothers. No confession of sin, no begging for forgiveness. Clearly the forgiveness had been granted. But as I noted throughout Gen. 44, they didn't fully get to where they ought to have. The long speech from Joseph reminds us of the father of the prodigal, who was so consumed with his own joy at the prodigal's return that the sinner has hardly a chance to say anything.

Gen 45:14 *He fell on his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck*- Only Benjamin is recorded as weeping on Joseph's neck (cp. :15). He was the one who had not sinned against Joseph; the other brothers seem to still be struggling to really believe in Joseph's grace, because prolific weeping would be the natural outcome of the pressure release which would have come from accepting that really, the past was scribbled, and they could be at peace- as Joseph had assured them as early as Gen. 44:17.

Gen 45:15 *He kissed all his brothers, and wept on them. After that his brothers talked with him*- Perhaps at this point they did confess sin, but if they did, it was only after Joseph had so strongly assured them of his total acceptance of them.

Gen 45:16 *The report of it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brothers have come. It pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants*- Again evidence that Joseph's house was nearby, or part of the palace complex. "Report" translates the same word as "aloud" in :2. The sound of joyful weeping was heard, and the reason was soon given- Joseph's brothers had come. I suggested earlier that Potiphar was somehow around in Joseph's life. He and his family would have recalled buying Joseph and may well have been aware of his background history from the merchants, even if Joseph had not told them his story. So it is likely that it was known that they had done him evil, and now he was rewarding them with good. And Pharaoh was eager to be part of that grace.

Gen 45:17 *Pharaoh said to Joseph, Tell your brothers, 'Do this. Load your animals, and go, travel to the land of Canaan*- Pharaoh wants Joseph to tell the brothers what Joseph has already told them. Here we see the similarity between Pharaoh's thinking and that of Joseph. Their relationship enables us to understand how the Lord Jesus can function as God, taking His own initiatives, and yet thinking the same as God; whilst not being God Himself in a Trinitarian sense.

Gen 45:18 *Take your father and your households, and come to me, and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land'*- As noted on :17, this was exactly what Joseph had already told them. Dt. 6:11 promised the returning Israelites, who were the first audience of Genesis, that they would be given the good things (s.w.) of the land of Canaan; and the returning exiles were promised the same (Ezra 9:12). This again was all of grace; they would have felt awkward, as cattle farmers, eating what they had not worked to produce. It spoke of the grace of God's Kingdom.

Gen 45:19 *Now you are commanded: do this. Take wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come*- There was not to be any reason for remaining in Canaan; wagons, which were perhaps unknown in Canaan and the highest transport technology in the world, were sent to Canaan. Absolutely no barrier was to be allowed to stand in the way of their entering a prefigurement of God's Kingdom. This all speaks of the passion of the Father and Son for our salvation, despite our sins.

Gen 45:20 *Also, don't concern yourselves about your belongings, for the good of all of the land of Egypt is yours*- The grace received meant that all petty materialism, all grasping on to what little they had and were fond of, was now dwarfed by the nature and extent of what they were to be given. The news that Joseph was alive and glorified was received rather like that of the Lord's resurrection: initial disbelief, but then the family of Jacob who believed it rose up and left all they had to go to be with Joseph; Israel in AD70

and the last days are likewise bidden leave their stuff and go to be with Christ (cp. Lk. 17:31). "Concern" is literally 'to eye with pity'; they were not to take pity on their belongings, not allowing sentimentality and the human desire to just stick with the old and familiar to stop them from inheriting the grace of this new kingdom. So many people prefer to stay with the old and familiar, even if it means death. Again and again in the whole story we see the struggle to accept grace. Although Joseph urged them not to bring their belongings (Gen. 45:20), the record emphasizes that they did bring them (Gen. 46:1,6,7). The record stresses how Jacob and his sons all struggled to believe the good news of Joseph, they resisted grace, just as we do.

Gen 45:21 *The sons of Israel did so*- As just noted on :20, there was a strong tendency to remain in Canaan. So they are to be commended for accepting the challenge.

Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way- As noted on :19, there was absolutely no excuse for them to not now accept the gracious salvation prepared for them. Food for the journey, wagons, clothes, everything was provided. As it is for us. We see again how circumstances repeated; the brothers had earlier brought an untrue report about Joseph to their father, with the blood stained coat as evidence. Now they bring another report to him about Joseph, again with evidence- the wagons. They were being led to repentance and truthfulness by this higher hand of God structuring their situations. And we experience the same.

Gen 45:22 *He gave each one of them changes of clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of clothing*- The wilderness generation were likewise provided with the wealth of Egypt, clothing and food for their journey in the opposite direction- to inherit Canaan. They must have seen the similarities.

The gift of clothing was to replace the clothing they had torn in grief. Joseph is eager to assure them that his forgiveness has restored things. They had stolen and ripped his garment, but he now gives them garments. And yet, like us with the Lord Jesus, they struggled to believe assurance upon assurance.

The 300 shekels may allude to 30 shekels being the price of a slave as taught in the law of Moses. They had sold Joseph cheaply for 20. The ten brothers needed to redeem their brother, making a total of 300 shekels. But Joseph paid this for them. Just as we will note on :23 that he effectively did their repentance for them to Jacob, by sending him the gifts of penitence.

Gen 45:23 *He sent the following to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and provision for his father by the way*- This was to give a foretaste of the life in Egypt; just as we have a foretaste of the Kingdom life now. Jacob would have been met, as it were, by successions of caravans. The droves of gifts, then his sons, and then the wagons. It was all rather similar to what he had sent to Esau his brother. Yet again, Jacob was being enabled to enter into the feelings of others, and to feel how they felt at what he had done to them. And if we discern it, this happens to us too.

Joseph sent a massive gift carried by many donkeys. This was in order to remind his father of how he had sent a gift in a similar manner to his brother Esau. Jacob would have seen the similarity. Immediately he would have perceived that this was a request for grace, forgiveness and reconciliation. Who had sinned against Jacob? Not Joseph, but the brothers. The gift was therefore as if Joseph was doing the brothers' repentance for them. Just as the Lord at times goes more than the extra mile in bringing us to repentance. We also get this sense when Joseph glosses over their sin by saying it had all been used by God.

Gen 45:24 *So he sent his brothers away, and they departed. He said to them, See that you don't quarrel on the way*- The brethren went forth on this journey to effectively inherit this new Kingdom by grace with the admonition not to fall out with each other by the way. The wonder of the grace received and that which was ahead of them should have made petty differences disappear. But although Joseph had forgiven them and knew they were to some extent repentant, he clearly perceived that they were not very spiritual, although he had accepted them. The self-sacrificial spirit of one for all, all for one which they had displayed before him… was, he realized, the devotion of a moment. On the long hard journey through the desert, that was likely to fade. All that is within us seems to struggle against grace. Twice Joseph pleads with his brothers not to be angry, after he had so graciously accepted them (Gen. 45:5, 24 Heb.). He imagines that they will be tempted to become angry (Heb.) as they travelled the long way home, reflecting inevitably upon the grace of Joseph. Their anger and bad conscience with themselves personally was likely to become transferred onto each other. Joseph was indeed the master psychologist. Joseph understood that having received such grace, the brothers were actually likely to become angry with each other, who had received it. The Lord foresaw this in His parable about the workers who become angry at His grace to those who worked little; and also in His matchless story about the elder brother who became angry at his younger brother's acceptance. In many families, the child grows up with the feeling that enjoyment is only legitimate if it is somehow merited, and is a reward for some form of 'work'. And the child within, in the person of the convert to Christ in later life, then tends to view the Kingdom as a 'reward' which likewise somehow has to be

merited. And yet we cry out with Paul, that the good which we would do, we somehow can't achieve. And so faith in being in the Kingdom becomes weak. And so instead we must try to recall our response as children, or view the response in children around us, to the receipt of unearned pleasures or gifts. These are the ones most joyfully received and appreciated and remembered. And this is how it is with salvation, the only thing which in our hearts any of us is truly worried about in any ultimate sense. A salvation that is so great, so free, given by a loving Father who rejoices in His children's happiness and squeals of delight.

Gen 45:25 T*hey went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan, to Jacob their father*- There is no mention that they explained to Jacob how they had lied to him, and what they had done to Joseph. This fits with how there is no record of any confession and apology to Joseph after he has revealed himself to them. Again we get the impression that although they were forgiven and accepted, and there were indeed some positive spiritual changes in their attitudes, they were far from being as repentant and spiritually minded as they might have been, and as Joseph had sought to elicit from them. This is comfort to all of us who feel that our response to the Lord's grace is too small and our transformation not as it might have been.

Gen 45:26 *They told him, saying, Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt. His heart fainted, for he didn't believe them*- There is no record of them admitting their wrongdoing and deception; see on :25. It seems Joseph's heart stopped beating, and he fainted, only to revive when he sees the wagons arrive (:27). As they watched him lying there, perhaps for days until the wagons came, they would naturally have feared that he would die without seeing Joseph. And they would have realized that this was all their fault. The lie of their lives, the sin of their soul, had effectively killed their father, whom they clearly loved and cared for. His bad medical reaction may have been used by the Father to try to provoke in them an open confession of their sin; but still we never read of it. Did all Joseph's efforts to bring the brothers to repentance actually succeed? We conclude that yes, but only in their deepest hearts. Words of repentance and contrition are never really recorded, and even what they say to Joseph after Jacob dies in Gen. 50 appears motivated by fear of consequence rather than contrition. We reflect that Jacob met his brother Esau after 20 years, and achieved a similar kind of reconcilliation between brothers; yes it was reconcilliation on one level, but not really on another. And now again in the Jacob family, brothers have been separated 20 years but their reconcilliation was never total. And they all went to their graveplanks in that state; and yet are all set to rise again in glory at the last day. And so it is with so many believing families.

Gen 45:27 *They told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them*- But again we note that they did not tell him what they had said, nor do we read of any confession or apology from them. The silence, repeatedly, at every point in the narrative when we would expect this... is quite deafening. We could translate this: "They told him all the words which Joseph had instructed them to say". In this case, we see his sensitivity in sparing making them tell their father what they had done to him earlier.

When he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob, their father, revived- It has been suggested that wagons / chariots were unknown in Canaan; and for desert dwellers like Jacob's family, there were no good roads for them to travel over. And there is the possibility that the manufacture of wheels was not well developed in Canaan. The sudden appearance of Egyptian wagons was what persuaded Jacob; in terms of technology, it was perhaps similar to an airplane landing in a jungle amongst people who have never got close to one, even if they had seen them flying far overhead and heard of them.

Gen 45:28 *Israel said, It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die*- "It is enough" shows the triumph of the value of relationships over wealth- a lesson our world is ever failing to learn. The gifts and opulence were nothing compared to the simple fact that Joseph was still alive.

GENESIS CHAPTER 46

Gen 46:1 *Israel travelled with all that he had*- This could be read as disobedience to the commandment of Gen. 45:20 not to take their belongings with them because they would be given everything in Egypt. The power of petty materialism, clinging on to the old and familiar, is very strong, and with Jacob it got no easier with age. See on :6. Again and again in the whole story we see the struggle to accept grace. Although Joseph urged them not to bring their belongings (Gen. 45:20), the record emphasizes that they did bring them (Gen. 46:1,6,7). The record stresses how Jacob and his sons all struggled to believe the good news of Joseph, they resisted grace, just as we do.

And came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father, Isaac- If these were in gratitude, then they were offered on the basis of faith in the word of Joseph. For he had not yet seen him himself. Jacob is still thinking in terms of God as being his father's God; only in his final blessing of his sons does he freely speak of this God as his personal God. We see therefore that the drive to spiritual maturity can take a lifetime, even a life as long as Jacob's. Those brought up believing in their parents' God may take a lifetime to make it real for themselves.

Gen 46:2 *God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob! He said, Here I am*- Jacob's old name was used because this was still how Jacob perceived

himself- a liar, a twister, a grabber, rather than a ruler with God. And although the inspired commentary mentions his name Israel from God's perspective, he was addressed as Jacob. And with us likewise, God wishes us to believe in and identify with the new name and identity which He by grace has given us. And yet He so seeks relationship with us that He relates to us in more immature terms if that is still where we are, rather like the Lord using the language of demons in order to communicate with people. It's similar to Joseph's acceptance of his brethren despite them not quite getting there in terms of the repentance and spirituality which his plan had potentially enabled.

Gen 46:3- see on Gen. 31:54.

He said, I am God- This is in response to Jacob's "Here I am" (:2). We see here something of the mutuality between God and man. The human "I am here" is met with the Divine "I am".

The God of your father- Jacob is still thinking in terms of God as being his father's God; only in his final blessing of his sons does he freely speak of this God as his personal God. And yet as noted on :2, God relates to people in the immature terms and at the immature positions they are at. He could have said "I am your personal God, the God of Jacob", but He instead goes along with Jacob's immature perceptions. Or perhaps the idea is that Jacob had offered sacrifices to the God of his father, and God is trying to insist that He, the God of Jacob's father, was also Jacob's God.

Fear not to go down into Egypt, for there I will make of you a great nation- This continues a theme noted throughout Gen. 45- the wonderful good news was almost too good to believe and accept. The brothers were warned not to give in to the temptation to try to remain in Canaan, but to come to Egypt. It seems Jacob too struggled with the degree of grace and even feared it. This is why people disbelieve the good news of the Gospel of grace. It's in a way too good to believe.

Yet Jacob's nervousness of going down into Egypt was doubtless also due to his recollection of Abraham and Isaac's tales of spiritual woe concerning it. The double repetition of a name ["Jacob, Jacob"] is usually a rebuke; but for what? Possibly for still being influenced in his spirituality by the specter of his forefathers, rather than personally reflecting on the implications of God's word to Abraham, that his seed would have to live in a Gentile land for a period before they could be led into the promised land (Gen. 15:13). He is here assured that the prophetic purpose contained in the Abrahamic covenant was going to come true in the end- even if Jacob left the promised land. But the large seed Jacob would ultimately sire (and the genealogy in this chapter shows it had already had primary fulfilment) would inherit the promised land; they would have to come up out of Egypt. It was apparent that Jacob would not live to see this in his life, and so again he was driven to the hope of bodily resurrection.

Gen 46:4 *I will go down with you into Egypt. I will also surely bring you up again*- It was an Angel who led Israel back from Egypt, and so it was an Angel who was speaking to Jacob at this point, assuring him that he would go with Jacob into Egypt. But the words may be true of Jacob on a personal level; he was to be taken into Egypt and back up out of it by the Angel. There could also be a hint here at resurrection, a bringing up again, so that the dream of Jacob and Rachel bowing before Joseph could finally be fulfilled. See on:30.

Joseph will close your eyes- The suggestion could be that Jacob would be brought back up again from Egypt to Canaan, and then he would close his eyes in death with Joseph next to him. But this didn't happen- because Israel chose to remain in Egypt, and suffered for it. See on Gen. 45:7; 47:4,15. So often potentials are enabled, but are not realized because of human dysfunction and conservatism. The possibility of restoration from Babylon and the building of a temple complex as outlined in such detail in Ez. 40-48 would be another example. This suggested explanation would give an appropriate flow to the argument- the death of Jacob would then be associated with the Angel leading him back to Canaan, rather than introducing Jacob's death out of context. The LXX here has "Joseph shall put his hands on thine eyes", which was a form of blessing. This would be confirmation of the dream in which Jacob bowed before his son.

Gen 46:5 *Jacob rose up from Beersheba, and the sons of Israel carried Jacob, their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him*- The impression is that it was Jacob who wanted to make a sacrifice at Beersheba, and when dad was done with his religious ritual, the rest of the family got him back in the wagon. This would be another indication of weakness in the brothers of Joseph, and evidence of their salvation and forgiveness by his grace alone. Perhaps there is significance in the idea that the wagons were sent to "carry him", but the rest of his family were carried in them; as if they were saved as Noah's family were, by association with the faithful, rather than necessarily being themselves very faithful. This impression is confirmed in :7 [see note there].

Their wives and little children, not just their sons but their daughters too, came into Egypt; further reason for thinking that the 66 or 70 counted as going down into Egypt refers to the heads of clans, large families, rather than being an exhaustive list of everyone who went down.

Gen 46:6 *They took their livestock, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt--Jacob, and all his seed with him*- As noted on :1, they took "their goods" with them, in disobedience to the commandment of Gen. 45:20 not

to take their belongings with them because they would be given everything in Egypt. They desperately wanted to cling on to what they "had gotten", rather than accept the grace of all things being given to them.

Gen 46:7 *His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and he brought all his seed with him into Egypt*- The mention of Jacob's daughters and granddaughters going with them confirms my comment on :26, that the list of 70 or 66 people here is not a total list but rather of those who later founded large family clans within their tribes. As noted on :5, the family were brought by Jacob into Egypt, they were saved by association with him, as Rahab's family were, rather than by their own faithfulness to the covenant. The large company were "all his seed" which had indeed become multitudinous, showing yet again that the promises which form the basis of the new covenant have a primary fulfilment.

Gen 46:8 *These are the names of the children of Israel, who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn*- We wonder why Reuben is still mentioned as the firstborn when it had been given to Joseph (1 Chron. 5:1), who wore the robe of the firstborn, the coat of many colours, which provoked so much jealousy. Perhaps this had been cancelled when Joseph disappeared. I have suggested at several points in this chapter that the list we now have is not of all who came into Egypt (see on :26,27) but of those who became heads of large family clans within the tribes.

Gen 46:9 *The sons of Reuben: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi*- Hanoch [s.w. Enoch] was named after the son of Cain (Gen. 4:17) and means "initiated", rather hinting at unspirituality and paganism. At the time of Gen. 42:37, Reuben only had two sons. He may have produced two sons straight afterwards if he had other women in his life; but probably as noted on :18 and :21, there were unborn children included in this list because they were counted as still being "in the loins of" their ancestors.

Gen 46:10 *The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman*- "The sons of Simeon were Nemuel and Jamin... and Shaul" (1 Chron. 4:24); but Gen. 46:10 shows that Shaul was Simeon's son by a wrong, casual relationship. Yet this is not recorded in Chronicles, even though so many other weaknesses are. Surely this is to demonstrate how if God imputes righteousness for a repented of sin, there really is no record of this kept by Him. This and other such lessons from Chronicles only come from digging under the surface. The fact Simeon's relationship with a local Canaanite is mentioned may be because this was the exception rather than the rule amongst Jacob's sons. In this case, we are left to conclude that they like Isaac and Jacob had taken their wives from the monotheists

amongst Abraham's distant relatives in Mesopotamia, and the women had been expected to follow Rebekah's example and leave their land and come and live in the land of promise. "Shaul" means 'asked for' and so it could be that Simeon had some particular desire for that son, and for all his failures at Shechem, he had asked God for a child and received it, although through a less than ideal relationship.

It seems fair to assume that all the brothers married Canaanite women. So perhaps this is a reference to some child from a passing sexual encounter with a Canaanite woman, possibly implying she was a prostitute. See on :12. Or it could be that the brothers had all married women from Mesopotamia, repeating the weakness of Isaac and Jacob in refusing to break with Abraham's land of origin. But was that right? Abraham's seed were to separate from Abraham's homeland. Which meant that they should have taken local wives and converted them to Yahweh's ways. Instead, they took wives from pagan Mesopotamia, idolatrous women like Rachel.

Gen 46:11 *The sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari*- "Gershon" means 'expelled', maybe meaning that like Reuben he was expelled from the role of firstborn [he is mentioned first as if he was the firstborn]. This is a theme of the Genesis record. "Merari" means "bitter"; from these rather unpromising beginnings were to arise those who gave their lives to the service of God and His people. And we see similar transformation in the lives of so many.

Gen 46:12 *The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah; but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan*- "Shelah" means 'requested'; as observed with Shaul on :10, prayers for the child's existence were answered through a less than ideal relationship.

Here we have another impression of the kind of weakness discussed on :10, as Judah's sons Er and Onan are mentioned when they were already dead. Yet they are mentioned whilst writing a list of those who went down into Egypt. Seeing they were dead in Canaan (Num. 26:19 is specific about Er and Onan dying in Canaan), why mention them? I suggest it is all to build up an impression that this embryo people of God were indeed sinners saved by grace, at the initiative of God through Joseph. This all supports the argument that Israel needed to go into Egypt and multiply there as a singular people. As otherwise, their tendency to intermarriage and relations with Canaanites would mean they would never become a distinct people.

The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul- "Hamul" means 'The one who was spared', which rather suggests he too had sinned like Er and Onan, but was spared by grace. Again, we hardly get a very positive spiritual impression of Jacob's family. They were saved by grace. There is a chronological query as to whether Judah was old enough to have had these two grandchildren whilst still in Canaan. I have suggested on :18 and :21

that there were unborn children included in this list because they were counted as still being "in the loins of" their ancestors.

Gen 46:13 *The sons of Issachar: Tola, Puvah, Iob, and Shimron*- "Iob" is LXX "Jashub", as in Num. 26:24.

Gen 46:14 *The sons of Zebulun: Sered, Elon, and Jahleel*- "Elon" means "oak", and this surely had idolatrous connections. Yet his brother Jahleel means "waiting upon God". So we have here an example of where spirituality can still flourish despite the culture, family and society of origin being unspiritual. Because spirituality is unique and the outcome of our personal relationship with God; we are not doomed to unspirituality because of our background or environment.

Gen 46:15 *These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan Aram, with his daughter Dinah. All the souls of his sons and his daughters were thirty-three*- 33 excluding Dinah, which raises the question as to why she is mentioned here at all. Maybe because she went on to have some special significance in the family, despite her sins and faults of youth at Shechem. Perhaps she took over as the matriarch of the family after the deaths of Rachel and Leah.

Gen 46:16 *The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli*- "Arodi" is "wild ass man", a similar idea to the description of Ishmael in Gen. 16:12, who chose to go away from covenant relationship with God. We simply do not get a great impression of the family; and that is the point.

Gen 46:17 *The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and Serah their sister. The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel*- The mention of women in this list is unusual, and I have suggested that the names are of those who became heads of family clans within the tribes. So the mention of Serah would mean that she became a head of family; although rare or unknown in the world around them, this was not totally unheard of in the Jacob family and we see in this the respect of women amongst them.

Gen 46:18 *These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah, his daughter, and these she bore to Jacob, even sixteen souls*- Zilpah did not bear 16 children, but rather the grandchildren are counted to her, on the basis that a person is seen as existing "in the loins of their father" even if they have no actual existence at that point; see on :21.

Gen 46:19 *The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife: Joseph and Benjamin*- Again we have the fact that Joseph is mentioned in this list of those who came down with Jacob into Egypt, when Joseph was already there in Egypt. See on :20,21,26.

Gen 46:20 *To Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him*- The LXX adds: "There were sons born to Manasses, whom the Syrian concubine bore to him, even Machir. And Machir begat Galaad. And the sons of Ephraim the brother of Manasses, Sutalaam and Taam. And the sons of Sutalaam, Edom". This explains the LXX figure of 75 in :27 which Stephen quotes in Acts 7:14, so the LXX addition may be correct. However, we are left with the problem of how sons born in Egypt could be counted amongst those who came with Jacob into Egypt. I will suggest on :21 and :26 that we are not reading a literal list of everyone who came, but rather a list of those who developed into clans within the tribes. And some were counted as "in" those who came down into Egypt. This is what it is to be "in" a person; the person is counted as more than themselves personally. And this is the background for the idea of being "in" Christ by baptism into Him. We are counted as Him, and He as us.

Gen 46:21 *The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard*- As noted on Gen. 44, Benjamin was hardly a child when the brothers came to buy corn. He was in his 20s, and according to the Hebrew text he had ten sons already, and presumably some daughters; perhaps suggesting that his father's favouritism and obsession with him had not been helpful morally, and had resulted in him having multiple relationships from a young age. However, the LXX lists only three sons, and makes the rest of the list the sons of Bela. And yet Benjamin would not have been old enough to have been a grandfather. So it could be that he had married a woman who had children of her own who became Benjamin's, or that he somehow adopted these children. There would have been a very large extended family around Jacob, and maybe these children were simply under the care of Benjamin. However, the genealogy in Num. 26:40 appears to support the LXX text here, with Ard and Naaman given as grandsons of Benjamin and not sons. We must remember that genealogies, numbers and dates are not used in Semitic languages in the strictly literalistic way in which they are in European languages. Heb. 7:10 can therefore argue that Melchizedek blessed Levi because he blessed Abraham, and Levi was a descendant of Abraham, "yet in the loins of his father". And this establishes Melchizedek as greater than Levi, and in turn, the priests descended from him. That argument may appear very stretched and even technically inaccurate to European ears. But it had absolute validity in Hebrew thought. And so the grandchildren of Benjamin, yet unborn, could be listed as being in existence when Benjamin went into Egypt, and even be numbered amongst the group at

that time. This is why the grandchildren of the maids are counted as if they are the direct children of the maids; see on :9 and :18. We likewise read that Jacob brought his twelve sons out of Mesopotamia, including Benjamin (Gen. 35:24,26). But Benjamin was born later, in Canaan. But on this basis of being counted as "in the loins of" an ancestor, Benjamin could also be presented as having come out of Mesopotamia. If this kind of thing were better appreciated by Bible readers, it would be better understood that there was no personal pre-existence of the Lord Jesus in actuality, although He is spoken of as existing prior to His birth.

The simple truth is that Benjamin, the "little one" (Gen. 44:20), has more descendants listed to his name than any of the brothers. Is. 60:22 clearly alludes to this- "a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation". It is the theme of the patriarchal family; the firstborns are deposed, the elder serves the younger, the weak become strong, the little one becomes mighty.

Benjamin was 16 years younger than Joseph. Benjamin had ten sons when the family moved to Egypt. If by 23, he had 10 sons, he likely had had 10 daughters as well. They would have been from a number of women. So we get the impression that he, the favoured spoilt son of the favourite wife Rachel, with a very wealthy father, became a playboy from a young age. Joseph knew this, or guessed it. For he too had once held the same status with Jacob. What he did to Benjamin was therefore to lead that young man to spiritual maturity. And yet Joseph did it whilst having assured him of his special love, giving him five times larger portions of food. And Benjamin was open to this leading.

The names of his ten sons often reflect his obsession with his absent older brother, whom Jacob had clearly described to him in heroic terms. The rabbis offer the following definitions of their names in Gen. 46:21: "Ahi, he was my brother; Bela, the one who disappeared, Rosh, my elder or leader; Becher, the firstborn of his mother (as Joseph was); Ashbel, sent by God to captivity; Gera, dweller in a foreign land; Ard, he went down amongst the nations". This obsession with his unknown, mysteriously disappeared older brother is absolutely psychologically credible. And for me, the psychological credibility of the Biblical record is one of the greatest reasons I believe it to be what it claims to be- the word of God.

Gen 46:22 *These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob: all the souls were fourteen*- Yet this includes Ephraim, Manasseh and Joseph, who were already in Egypt. This supports my suggestion on :26 that we do not have here a list of every individual who came from Canaan to Egypt, but rather a list of the family clans which would later develop.

Gen 46:23 *The son of Dan: Hushim*- "Hushim" means "hasty", not a particularly spiritual

characteristic. As noted earlier, Hebrew names are not necessarily birth names, but the names by which people came to be known, reflective of their personalities or experiences. However he is called "Shusham" in Num. 26:42, "humble". So maybe his over hasty actions humbled him in due course.

Gen 46:24 *The sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem*- "Jezer" means "image", "Guni" means "painted with colours", both suggestive of idolatry, bearing in mind as noted on :23 that Hebrew names are how the person came to be known according to his personal history.

Gen 46:25 *These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel, his daughter, and these she bore to Jacob: all the souls were seven*- The Biblical record is very careful to draw a distinction between Jacob's proper wives, and Bilhah and Leah, even though they were understood as his wives even by Rachel and Leah, as well as society (Gen. 30:4,9). Jacob cared for them, had children by them, and had a lifelong relationship with them. But still the inspired record sees a difference between that, and marriage. We need to bear that in mind as we consider what Biblical marriage means in our world.

Gen 46:26 *All the souls who came with Jacob into Egypt, who were his direct descendants, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were sixty-six*- The manuscripts differ, from 66 to 70 to 75. Some of this can be accounted for by various inclusive or exclusive reckonings of the wives, or the LXX adding in some children of Manasseh to the list in :20, which Stephen quotes in Acts 7:14. However, "all the souls" is clearly not a literal reference to 'all the people' because nearly all of the people mentioned are males, and we know from:7 that Jacob's daughters and granddaughters came with them too. We therefore conclude that those listed are those who went on to have independent families, which in turn became clans within the tribes of Israel.

"His direct descendants" is literally as AV "who came out of his loins", or his thigh. This is the same word used of how Jacob was touched and wounded in his thigh the night he wrestled with the Angel, and therefore he limped on his thigh (Gen. 32:25,31,32). And here we have the consistent paradox developed in this whole record- out of weakness and inferiority comes blessedness. The blessing of a large seed were fulfilled through many children as it were coming out of his injured loin- a reminder for the rest of his life of God's grace and his weakness. All the attempts to count up the direct descendants of Jacob and make them match 66 are in my view failing to see the more essential point- that they all came from his injured, delicate thigh.

Gen 46:27 *The sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt, were two souls. All the*

souls of the house of Jacob, who came into Egypt, were seventy- See on :20; if the LXX addition in :20 is accepted then we have 75; Stephen in Acts 7:14 and the LXX say 75. This could also be because the 75 includes the wives of Jacob's sons. Judah's wife was dead (Gen. 38:12). Joseph was already in Egypt, making 65 who went into Egypt "besides Jacob's sons' wives" (:26). This plus ten wives would make 75. Again we note that these children of Joseph were not those who came with Jacob into Egypt- for they were born in Egypt. But they appear to be counted within the various figures of 66,70 or 75. Because of the principle of being "in" someone meaning that that person's actions and status were counted to all "in" him. Which is how we are to understand being "in Christ".

The figure of 70 is not, it seems to me, strictly literal. It is to match the 70 Gentile nations of the *eretz* listed in Gen. 10; their bounds were set according to the number of Israel's children (Dt. 32:8). The potential plan at this time was that they would all die out during the famine, and be replaced by the 70 clans of Jacob's family; who having been miraculously preserved from death in Egypt would then re-enter Canaan and possess it. See on Gen. 45:7,10.

Gen 46:28 *He sent Judah before him to Joseph, to show the way before him to Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen*- We wonder why this was necessary, seeing that Judah and the brothers had twice made this journey. Why the need to as it were send a herald before him? It rather recalls how Jacob had sent such messengers before him to make peace with Esau. We wonder if Jacob feared meeting Joseph, seeing he had disbelieved his dreams, and insisted he would never bow down to him. Indeed almost his last words to Joseph had been of rebuke concerning his dreams. This unnecessary fear of Joseph is quite a theme of the record; it reflects the difficulty we have in believing in grace, forgiveness and salvation. This is the essential, subconscious reason why people do not believe the Gospel of grace; not because of any real intellectual barriers. Such barriers are but excuses, a making respectable of our inner lack of faith and barrier against grace, our pride in refusing to resign our trust in our strength and works as a basis for salvation.

Gen 46:29 *Joseph prepared his chariot, and went up to meet Israel, his father, in Goshen. He presented himself to him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while*- We note that Jacob doesn't weep on Joseph's neck, just as the brothers also didn't when Joseph wept upon them. And again we sense the difficulty in believing Joseph's grace. For Jacob's last words to Joseph had been of rebuke for his dreams. But Jacob is never recorded as apologizing to Joseph for this, nor does he bow to Joseph in fulfilment of the dreams as we might like to see; as with the brothers, his repentance is implicit but not explicit, and therefore of a rather low grade. At the end, Jacob as it were had come to repentance. Joseph falls on his neck and weeps for him, just as the Father

does to the repentant prodigal. Jacob's neck had once been covered with animal skin in the deceit of his father Isaac (Gen. 27:16), and Esau too had wept on that same neck, the neck which had been used to deceive and rob Esau (Gen. 33:4). And now Joseph weeps upon it too, after Jacob has again sent an ambassage ahead of him to Joseph as he did to Esau (see on :28). These otherwise strange connections with Jacob's neck would have served to show him that through his acceptance of the spiritual seniority of his great son Joseph, he had indeed been forgiven of all this miserable past.

Gen 46:30 *Israel said to Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen your face*- Jacob's desire to die at that point is rather a denial of the possibility presented in :4 [see note there] that Jacob could survive the famine in Egypt and then return to Canaan to die. Jacob was focused upon Joseph and now he had seen him, he felt prepared to die in peace, rather than from a broken heart as he had imagined he would earlier. His attitudes to death were governed by the status of Joseph. If Joseph was dead or consumed by a wild animal, he would die broken hearted; but if Joseph were alive, as he demonstrably was, he would die in peace. Whether or not his other sons fessed up to him about their sins was not relevant to him, compared to his focus upon the 'resurrection' of Joseph. And our hang ups over whether others have or have not fully repented and set the record straight is utterly obscured by the joy of knowing and seeing the risen Lord Jesus. Jacob at this point and in this sense represents us all. He feels that "I never thought I would see your face, and behold, God has let me see your seed also" (Gen. 48:11). Paul seems to allude here by saying that God does for *us* exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think; making Jacob representative of every believer.

That you are still alive- It may be that Jacob considered Joseph to be the special Messianic seed (which he was, in type), and this would explain his profound joy on seeing Joseph alive *and his children*, for this would have meant that the promises concerning the seed, as he understood them, had been proved true (46:30; Gen. 48:11). See on Heb. 11:21. There are many *echoes* of Christ which seem to have no specific purpose apart from to confirm us in our enthusiasm to constantly see the spirit of Christ in this record (here with Lk. 2:29,30).

The brothers had told Jacob that Joseph was "still alive", but he disbelieved them until he had seen Joseph himself. He clearly doubted their integrity. Joseph likewise had been told by the brothers that their father was still alive, but when he makes himself known to them, he immediately asks as to whether his father *really* is still alive. Likewise Jacob clearly suspects them of potential foul play with Benjamin, and accuses them of having bereaved him of Joseph. They were known for their lack of integrity- as the massacre at Shechem revealed. This all leads to the significance of our suggestion on :34 that the brothers now devoted themselves to absolute truthfulness. Although at the end, they seem to falsely claim that Jacob had asked Joseph to forgive them and not punish them.

Their struggle to be honest was not, therefore, totally won. Basic honesty, with ourselves and others, is a natural outflow of feeling ultimately secure in the knowledge of God's love and our future salvation.

Gen 46:31 *Joseph said to his brothers, and to his father's house, I will go up, and speak with Pharaoh, and will tell him*- "Tell" is better 'to disclose / tell him frankly and openly'; and the information in view was that of :32, that the family were the shepherds whom Egypt despised.

'My brothers, and my father's house, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me- "Come [to me]" is the same word used by Jacob in objecting to the interpretation of Joseph's dream as meaning that he must "come" to his son and bow before him (Gen. 37:10). There is no record of Jacob bowing to Joseph, although indeed he does "come" to him; perhaps here Jacob didn't do quite as he should have done. Or maybe Joseph's weeping on his neck made it impossible for him to immediately do so. See on Gen. 47:5.

Gen 46:32 *These men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have'*- As noted on :31, Joseph was advocating absolute honesty about the awkward situation in front of Pharaoh. The shepherds had a reputation for dishonesty and being of the lowest caste, according to Egyptologists. But Joseph thinks that total honesty to Pharaoah personally about this is best. And that was the policy he had sought to elicit from his brothers, through all his questions to them about their family. The Egyptians considered goats and sheep to be divine animals and unfit for sacrifice; hence Moses later says that the Hebrews can't sacrifice sheep within Egypt lest the Egyptians will stone them. Shepherds were an "abomination" to them, a word often used about idolatry. The sheep were seen as symbols of the idols which Egypt worshipped. Yet Jacob's large family were coming with herds of these very things, appearing for all the world some reincarnation of the Hyksos shepherd kings who had entered Egypt by the same route in a previous generation. Shepherds were in any case culturally despised by Egyptians. Again, the Pharaoh was being asked to invert all his former prejudices and religious beliefs, and accept these newcomers. And he does so, to his credit, and even asks these despised people from the lowest Egyptian caste to be the managers of his cattle. It seems Joseph privately told Pharaoh that his brothers were shepherds, but at the formal audience with Pharaoh, where other Egyptians would be present, Joseph advises them to describe themselves more vaguely as 'cattle men'.

Gen 46:33 *It will happen, when Pharaoh summons you, and will say, 'What is your occupation?'*- Just as Joseph had fired questions at his brothers when they first came to Egypt, so it would be normal for the king to ask them such questions. The similarity between this and their earlier interviews with Joseph was to give them a chance to demonstrate that they had indeed learnt the lesson- of the need for absolute

truthfulness, however much it might seem to risk upsetting our material and secular intentions.

Gen 46:34 *That you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we, and our fathers:' that you may dwell in the land of Goshen-* Joseph can see that out of apparent evil, again, good would come. If they were truthful- and the very existence of their flocks of sheep and goats would mean that truth would out in the end anyway- then they would be allowed to live in Goshen, which was somehow separate from the rest of Egypt.

We naturally enquire why the brothers chose to honestly tell Pharaoh that they were herdsmen rather than shepherds. Could it be that they were now so totally devoted to the doctrine of absolute honesty that they chose to disobey him and just tell the truth, rather than play with words as Joseph had suggested they do? Total honesty with ourselves, "speaking the truth in your heart", with others and with God is a litmus test of true spirituality. The Lord Jesus placed radical, total honesty high up in His Kingdom message in Mt. 5:37: "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one". Perhaps the Divine execution of Ananias and Sapphira was in order to emphasize the need for total honesty in spiritual matters. It is this radical honesty which will be so unusual in our world that we thereby commend *God's* truth to others: "But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2-4). Paul seems to argue that indeed "every man is a liar" and only putting on the new man in Christ will empower us to be honest: "Put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:24,25). Such honesty only comes from having put on Christ, who is the ultimate truth: "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Col. 3:9,10). This is why lying is grouped together with what may appear to be more major sins in Rev. 21:8: "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone". This is why Yahhweh said He would condemn Jerusalem in Jeremiah's time, because He could not find even one person who spoke and lived "truth" (Jer. 5:1). It is a total commitment to the principle of absolute honestly which will guide our life path: "The integrity of the upright guides them" (Prov. 11:3). It is that principle which will automatically mean we come out with truthful words. Hence the otherwise apparently 'obvious' statement of Prov. 12:17, "A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies". Someone who is committed to the principle of total honesty will come out with true

words. This is what it is, to be a Christian. It is to be real, to be honest about our own position before God, our utter desperation, and to believe, to be true, to the ultimate truth- that we really will be saved. We really are forgiven. This is the ultimate truth to live by.

For every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians- This may have been a reaction against the Hyksos invaders, or shepherd kings, who had come like Jacob from the north and done much damage to Egypt in the previous generation. But shepherds were in any case culturally despised by Egyptians. Seeing one tended to be born and raised in or for a certain occupation, this was a significant factor in how society defined people in the ancient world. People were stereotyped according to occupation. Remember how the sailors asked of Jonah: "What is your occupation? And whence do you come? What is your country? Of what people are you?" (Jonah 1:8). Hence it is recorded that *every* shepherd was despised by the Egyptians. Silversmiths and tent makers (leather workers?) tended to club together in community (Acts 18:3; 19:24-27). In the first century Mediterranean, shepherds were especially despised- and again, this stereotype was overturned by shepherds being chosen to receive news of the birth of God's Son and being the first to come and offer homage; Jesus describing Himself as the good shepherd, in a society where no shepherd could be "good"; and the leaders of the early church being described as spiritual "shepherds". Pharaoh came to learn this; for he is eventually keen to make these despised "shepherds" the pastors of his own flocks.

The "abomination" of the Hebrews was that they were shepherds; "for all shepherds are an abomination to Egyptians" (Gen. 46:34). And this was why Joseph could not eat together with Hebrews, because they were an abomination to the Egyptians (Gen. 43:32). We find this confirmed in Ex. 8:22, where Moses tells Pharaoh that the Hebrews cannot do as he says and sacrifice in Egypt, because they would be attacked by the Egyptians when they saw the Hebrews offering bulls and calves to Yahweh. For these were symbols of Egyptian gods, and people who ate them were an abomination to them."Abomination" is a word which also means 'idols'. They ate abominations / idols, in that the animals they ate and sacrificed were seen as the gods of Egypt. For the Jacob family to be accepted into the best land of Egypt was therefore grace indeed. Just as is our salvation into God's Kingdom, brought about by Joseph-Jesus. For with reputation as cattle herders ["shepherds"] and bull sacrificers, the Jacob family were going to be last on the list for getting food, let alone being allowed to emigrate to Egypt, let alone to be given land in Goshen, the favoured area. It was all of grace, as it is with us, all the way through.

We note that the Egyptian abomination of Hebrew shepherds is alluded to in the command to Israel: "You should not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a stranger in his land" (Dt. 23:8). It is normal between peoples and individual persons that they treat

each other as they were treated by that person or people. Here Yahweh is teaching that His people were to break that cycle. To not abhor those who abhor you. And this is really what the spirit of the Lord Jesus is about, breaking the cycles of human dysfunction and misbehaviour.

The brothers were later made herdsmen over Pharaoh's cattle in Goshen because this was the priestly land, where such cattle were bred and kept only for sacrifice; and the brothers, having experience with those animals, were put in charge of them.

GENESIS CHAPTER 47

Gen 47:1 *Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brothers, with their flocks, their herds, and all that they own, have come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in the land of Goshen*- Joseph was clearly setting things up so that Israel remained just over the border of Canaan, in Goshen. This worked well for everyone. They were shepherds with herds of sheep, which were abomination to the Egyptians; so it was a good thing that they were located in a limited area. This would also keep them more spiritually separate from Egypt, if they just lived alone. Joseph would have supported the idea of Israel returning to Canaan as soon as the famine was over, having been amazingly blessed by God during the famine years with fertility and increase (see on Gen. 45:7). God's plan was that they should be preserved as the remnant in the *eretz*, the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 45:7). His intention therefore was that they should return from Egypt to Canaan once the famine ended. See on :10; Gen. 46:4,27; 47:1,4,15,18,20,27; 48:16,21. This was why the brothers stated that they only wanted to "sojourn" temporarily in Egypt during the famine (see on Gen. 47:4). But they remained in the soft life of Egypt, when they could have become the sole inheritors of Canaan. And so God's saving purpose was delayed by 430 years until they were forced to leave Egypt.

As Goshen was just across the border, this was the best place for them to be. And it happened, under God's providence, that Goshen was the best land in Egypt.

Gen 47:2 *From among his brothers he took five men, and presented them to Pharaoh*- We think of the Lord Jesus presenting us faultless before the presence of God's glory (Jude 24). But "presented" can be translated 'left with' (Gen. 33:15; Ex. 10:24), and carries the idea of establishing or setting up. Egypt was governed by a politburo of five ministers. So it could be that Pharaoh wanted to replace his five top ministers with Joseph's brothers- men who were shepherds, of the lowest caste, and foreigners. Pharaoh was indeed inverting all the expectations and norms of Egypt, realizing that it was by doing so that they had all been saved. This makes good sense of why Joseph took five of his brothers; otherwise the number seems arbitrary, and we wonder why the

other brothers were not also presented. I suggest this verse is a summary of what happened, and now :3-6 will explain how it came about, leading to the point in :6 when Pharaoh asks: "If you know any able men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock". This is what led to the situation of the five viziers or leaders of Egypt being Joseph's brothers.

Gen 47:3 *Pharaoh said to his brothers, What is your occupation? They said to Pharaoh, Your servants are shepherds, both we, and our fathers*- They had been warned by Joseph to be totally honest in saying who they were, just as he had tried to teach them this lesson when they first came to Egypt. He had warned them that shepherds are abominable to Egyptians, and yet encouraged them to accept they were in one sense the lowest of the low, to not hide the fact nor place some more acceptable gloss upon it; see on Gen. 46:32-34. And they were hugely blessed for this by Pharaoh exalting them; see on :2 and :6.

We naturally enquire why the brothers chose to honestly tell Pharaoh that they were herdsmen rather than shepherds. Could it be that they were now so totally devoted to the doctrine of absolute honesty that they chose to disobey him and just tell the truth, rather than play with words as Joseph had suggested they do? We must remember that they were men fully used to twisting things and being dishonest.

Gen 47:4 *They said to Pharaoh, We have come to live as foreigners in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks. For the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen*- They applied to "sojourn", "to live as foreigners", temporarily. This was in line with God's intended plan that Israel stay in Egypt until the famine was over, and then return to Canaan along with Jacob, who would die there (see on Gen. 46:4) and experience further fulfilment of the promises to Abraham there. I explained on Gen. 45:7 that this plan was set up to come true potentially, but as with Judah in Babylon, they preferred the soft life of Egypt, the kingdom now, and remained in Egypt, with Jacob dying there rather than back in Canaan as intended. Even if their words here in :4 mean that they wanted to live permanently in Goshen, which bordered Canaan and was arguably part of the *eretz* promised to Abraham, we note that they saw even permanent dwelling as 'sojourning', living "as foreigners", just passing through- which should be the spirit of our lives, even if we live in the same house or location all our days.

Gen 47:5 *Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, Your father and your brothers have come to you*- This may appear to be stating the obvious. But the significance is in the phrase "come to you". I noted on Gen. 46:31 that "Come [to me]" is the same word used by Jacob in objecting to the interpretation of Joseph's dream as meaning that he must

"come" to his son and bow before him (Gen. 37:10). Perhaps Joseph had shared his dreams with Pharaoh, who now perceived their wonderful fulfilment, and may well have come very close to Israel's God himself. Pharaoh had been told of Joseph's dreams and is saying that they have now been fulfilled. Pharaoh was surely a believer by now in Israel's God. We see how the most unlikely of men are called and can respond. Not many mighty are called, but a few are.

We note the brothers came to Joseph, but they had been invited to come to Pharaoh. Just as the Lord Jesus works on God's behalf.

Gen 47:6 *The land of Egypt is before you. Make your father and your brothers dwell in the best of the land. Let them dwell in the land of Goshen. If you know any able men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock*- I suggested on :2 that :3-6 are an explanation of how the situation in :2 came about, that five of the brothers became senior officials in Egypt. The climax of :3-6 is therefore this invitation to Joseph's brothers to become managers of Pharaoh's own cattle. The interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams was a radical affront to the Egyptian belief system, as I noted many times on Gen. 40 and 41. But Pharaoh had the humility to accept this. And he is being tested again here; his whole culture was geared to despise shepherds, to consider sheep and goats as unworthy even to be sacrificed, and to stereotype shepherds as the lowest of the low. There is no lack of evidence for this provided by Egyptologists. But faced with an influx of people who would have reminded him and his people of the hated Hyksos shepherd kings, he welcomes them, and their flocks, and gives them the best of his land. And his humility and rejection of stereotypes is displayed yet more profoundly in that he invites those whom he once despised to be in charge of his own cattle, which presumably meant replacing his local staff with these despised Hebrew shepherds.

The brothers were made herdsmen over Pharaoh's cattle in Goshen because this was the priestly land, where such cattle were bred and kept only for sacrifice; and the brothers, having experience with those animals, were put in charge of them. See on Gen. 46:34.

Gen 47:7 *Joseph brought in Jacob, his father, and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh*- He does so again in :10. Pharaoh had learnt from his own double dream that a think happening twice meant that God really intended it. Again, the promises had a primary fulfilment, in that Abraham's seed were a blessing to the Gentile world.

It was a principle of the times that the lesser was blessed by the greater, a principle repeated in Heb. 7:7. But here, the most powerful man on earth is blessed by Jacob, the head of a very small tribe of 70 people. It has been observed: "the irony is impossible to

miss. The hope for the world comes from Israel and not from Egypt. Blessing comes from a decrepit and broken Israel and not from a dominant and strong Egypt". I suggest Jacob only did this on the basis that he felt as the seed of Abraham, he was now being a blessing to the Gentile nations. We too, insignificant as we are in secular terms, have the Abrahamic covenant, and on account of this we are to bless the mighty of this world.

Gen 47:8 *Pharaoh said to Jacob, How many are the days of the years of your life?*- The idea is that every day had been significant. It was a question of how many days had been lived; and so it is for us too, even though there are periods of life when it seems every day is the same old scene.

Gen 47:9 *Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers*- At 130, Jacob seems to have felt that the fact he had not lived as long as his father and grandfather had, indicated that he had not received so much blessing as they had; he saw length of years *in this life* as being significant, rather than allowing the prospect of future eternity make present longevity fade into insignificance. And yet in his final 17 years, he grew quickly; he was not spiritually idle in those last 17 years of retirement. For at the very end he could say that his blessings had exceeded "the blessings of my progenitors" (Gen. 49:26).

Jacob presents as ungrateful for his long life. Instead of just answering the question about his age, he seems to be saying that he looked very old only because of his awfully hard life. There is no sense in him that much of that hardness had been from his own bad decision making. He complained that he had not lived as long as his father Isaac who died at 180. Jacob was to die 33 years younger than Isaac, and his speech here contains 33 words in Hebrew. It's as if he was punished for saying this, a year off his lifespan for every complaining, ungrateful word he spoke. He had received his children Dinah and Joseph back from apparent death, had been saved by grace from Laban and Esau, and his favourite wife Rachel saved by grace from death for stealing the teraphim. And he had been given the Abrahamic blessings. We see here how looking at the glass half empty is displeasing to the God who has blessed us with so much so that our cup overflows with blessing. We take the cup of blessing at the communion service to remind and warn us against the cup half empty worldview. Which is the Spirit of our ever dissatisfied and complaining age. "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the

fulness of God" (Eph.3:14-19). And we are in fact overflowing, not just half full. This cuts right across the idea that some are simply wired to be half full or half empty. It is the Spirit which makes us 'full' in mentality. We have all things and abound. "I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance" (Jn. 10:10). "You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies [a projected allusion to the breaking of bread service?]. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever" (Ps. 23:5,6).

In the days of their pilgrimage- At the close of his life, Jacob was still emotionally attached, consciously and unconsciously, to his father and grandfather (consider the way he unconsciously imitates his father by feeling he is about to die years before he does, Gen. 47:9 cp. 28 cp. 27:2 cp. 35:28). But he had made their faith his own. We note that Isaac still had a "pilgrimage" although he was the only one of the patriarchs who was born in the land of promise and spent the vast majority of his life there and died in it. Even if a man never travels more than 10 miles from his birthplace, life with the Lord is still a pilgrimage, a journey.

Jacob speaks of his life as a "pilgrimage", using the same word used about Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 17:8; 28:4; 36:7; 37:1). Thus he showed his connection with them; they became *in spiritual not just emotional terms* the centre of his thinking. See on Gen. 49:31. Jacob speaking of how his life had been a "pilgrimage" shows that he realized that this life was only a series of temporary abodes. The same word is translated "stranger" with reference to the patriarchs' separation from the tribes around them (Gen. 17:8; 28:4; 36:7; 37:1). Jacob's attitude that the things of this life were only temporary, that we are only passing through, is identified in Heb. 11:10-16 as an indicator that Jacob shared the faith of Abraham and Isaac. The commentary of Heb. 11:14 upon this word of Jacob's is clear: "Now they who say such things declare plainly that they seek a country—that they long for a better country".

Gen 47:10 *Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from the presence of Pharaoh*- Again, the promises had a primary fulfilment, in that Abraham's seed were a blessing to the Gentile world. We must be on the look out for such primary fulfilments in our lives too.

Gen 47:11 *Joseph placed his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Raamses, as Pharaoh had commanded*- Raamses was built later, by the Hebrews when they were enslaved (Ex. 1:11). But Moses is reporting this history well after the event, and is seeking to explain to Israel the historical background to their experiences in Egypt. It was "the best of the land", the same word used when God had earlier promised Jacob that quite simply, "I

will do you *good*", literally, 'the best' (Gen. 32:12). As Jacob lay friendless and ashamed with a stone for his pillow in the desert scrub near Bethel that lonely night, he would have had no idea how extensively this promise was going to be fulfilled even in his lifetime. He was going to live in Goshen, the best of the land of opulent Egypt, at a time when the rest of Canaan and Egypt was on their knees facing starvation. Truly God knows the plans He has for us, to bless us and do us good at our latter end.

Joseph gave his brothers freehold possessions of land in the best of Egypt, which could be passed on after death. Whereas the Egyptians lost their land. Perhaps this is one of Joseph's few mistakes. His family should have left Egypt when the famine finished. But he set them up in such a strong position that they remained. And inevitably this caused jealousy from the landless Egyptians in the longer term, resulting in the Egyptians wanting to enslave the Hebrews just as Joseph the Hebrew had enslaved them and taken their land from them.

Gen 47:12 *Joseph nourished his father, his brothers, and all of his father's household, with bread, according to their families*- I suggested throughout Gen. 46 that the list of those who came with Jacob are in fact those who were heads of families. This was how they were organized, and "bread" would have been given to them on a family basis. The idea of nourishing suggests that Joseph was a fatherly figure to the rest of his family, although they were older than him. This was all implied in his dreams.

Gen 47:13 *There was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine*- The fact Joseph gave them bread (:12) therefore points up the fact he was literally their saviour. Without his grace, the seed of Abraham would have died out in their current form, and God would have made the promises to Abraham come true through the seed of Joseph. Joseph must have thought about this possibility but rejected it; for after all, his brothers were worthy to die for what they had done, and were in any case not wholly committed to Yahweh. Moses was placed in a similar position, when God wished to destroy Israel and make of him a new nation, and thereby fulfil the Abrahamic promises through him as the channel chosen. But Moses had learnt the grace of Joseph, and refused this scenario. God accepted Joseph's grace toward his brothers, and therefore promised them that "I will there make of you a great nation" (Gen. 46:3). He says the same words to Moses: "I [will] consume them, and make of you [Moses] a great nation" (Ex. 32:10; Num. 14:12; Dt. 9:14). And Moses is effectively asking God to treat Israel with the same grace Joseph had done, and make of *them* and not him personally "a great nation". This was just as Joseph had wished and enabled to happen, rather than the great nation being made just from him.

Joseph's policies with regard to the famine would have not been without their critics. The obvious objection of the Egyptian people would have been: 'This is our grain. We stored it. If we give or sell it to foreigners, there will be none left for us! Who knows how many years this famine will continue!'. Joseph was operating according to a policy which expected there to be seven years of famine, and then a planting of seed, and then a harvest. But this was structured according to faith in the dreams, in God's prophetic word. Like us, he was surrounded by secular people who only saw the immediate and reasoned from selfish motives.

Gen 47:14 *Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house*- "Money" is literally "silver". Egyptians had bought Joseph for pieces of silver, and now all the silver in the land was being given to Joseph, who with integrity gave it to Pharaoh, who turned his own personal house into the bank vault. Joseph "gathered" it up, the word for gleaning grain after the harvest (s.w. Lev. 19:9; 23:22). They got the grain, and all their money was just as the gleaning of it. The play of ideas is to demonstrate how little money was worth compared to corn. It was merely the few dropped grains compared to the full harvest. All those in Canaan gave Joseph their money, as well as all the Egyptians, until nobody in Canaan had any money left, it "failed" or 'was ended' (:16). And Joseph then gave it to Pharaoh. Jacob and his sons had worried about money, and I suggested that there was a strong financial motive in wanting to sell Joseph into Egypt. But now, in this situation which clearly points forward to the things of the Lord Jesus, money was no longer significant; all that was important was the bread of life given by Joseph. Even Pharaoh could do little with the silver, because nobody had much left to sell any more.

Gen 47:15 *When the money was all spent in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph, and said, Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For our money fails*- As explained on :14, in this situation, money lost its meaning, and they had none left now (:16). What was all important for the Canaanites was the bread of life given by Joseph. They would have heard the story, surely; the descendants of the Shechemites whose men had been massacred, the Canaanites who were aware of how Judah slept with their prostitutes... would now coming bowing to Joseph, throwing themselves upon his grace in order to live. For the bread of life was all important now, and not money. They were desperate; they felt they would die in his presence if he didn't give them food. Their money was finished (:16) and had lost meaning anyway. The whole situation was potentially set up for the Canaanites to praise Israel's God for the grace and saving wisdom of his wonderful son. If Israel had returned to Canaan once the famine ended, they could have set up something similar to the Kingdom of God on earth. See on :18 and Gen. 45:7.

Gen 47:16 *Joseph said, Give me your livestock; and I will give you food for your livestock, if your money is gone*- The animals may have remained with the people; the idea was that they had no legal title to them any more. "Give me your livestock" is an example of Joseph speaking on behalf of Pharaoh, very intensely manifesting him, and functioning as him. This is all valid insight into the relationship between the Father and Son.

Gen 47:17 *They brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, and for the flocks, and for the herds, and for the donkeys; and he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock for that year*- There was a progressive surrender of self and all wealth to Joseph and Pharaoh, just as there is for all those who accept the bread of life from the Lord Jesus. Even if they as it were maintained the usage of the things they had, such as their land, animals and bodies, they recognized that they owned nothing now, all was Joseph's. And this is exactly the picture of how we should be before the Lord Jesus.

Gen 47:18 *When that year was ended, they came to him the second year, and said to him, We will not hide from my lord how our money is all spent, and the herds of livestock are my lord's. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands*- Remember that the people in view are those of Canaan as well as Egypt. They were totally open before him, hiding nothing, which is how Joseph had wished his brothers to be before him. They openly admitted their desperation. And this is what is so necessary for us too if we are to partake in that great deliverance / salvation which is in the Lord. The Canaanites were willing to give their lands to Joseph, and to give him their bodies as slaves. If Israel had returned to Canaan after the famine as God intended (see on Gen. 45:7), the whole land could have been theirs. But they were too short term in their vision, and preferred the soft life of Egypt which they had become familiar with. This is the awful power of conservatism in human nature.

Gen 47:19 *Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants to Pharaoh. Give us seed, that we may live, and not die, and that the land won't be desolate*- Death before Joseph's eyes meant that if he didn't feed them, then they would die there and then. Joseph had been trained for this by having his brothers equally desperate before him, knowing they were facing the death sentence, desperate for his grace. Likewise he had been trained by the experiences of running things in Potiphar's household and then in the prison, in order to manage the affairs of all Egypt and Canaan. "That we may live and not die" was precisely the attitude of Israel in Canaan as they faced the implications of the famine (Gen. 42:2; 43:8). Now all the peoples of Canaan and Egypt were being led through that

same process, to the end that potentially they too might throw themselves upon Israel's God. The only occurrence of the Hebrew phrase here translated "the land [soil]... desolate" is in Ez. 12:19, where the land / soil of Israel is to be desolate "because of the violence of all them that dwell in it". In God's complex ecology, the land of Canaan was made desolate because of the violence of the brothers against their brother, against Shechem and perhaps others too. Ezekiel's word for "violence" is that used about what the brothers did to Shechem (Gen. 49:5).

Their request for seed to sow ["give us seed"] could reflect their total belief in Joseph's prophecy that the famine would last seven years.

Gen 47:20 *So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe on them, and the land became Pharaoh's*- The desperate people coming before Joseph were from Canaan as well as Egypt (:14,15). Yet here we read that Joseph only bought the land of Egypt for Pharaoh. Did he accept the offer of the Canaanites for himself? This would have meant that he as Abraham's seed ended up effectively inheriting the land of Canaan. This is why Israel ought to have returned from Egypt after the famine to the land which the Canaanites had already deeded over to Joseph; see on Gen. 45:7. All this was great encouragement for the wilderness generation to focus upon going into Canaan with faith, believing that likewise it had all been providentially arranged for them to inherit it.

Gen 47:21 *As for the people, he moved them to the cities from one end of the border of Egypt even to the other end of it*- These cities were the store cities where Joseph had stored the grain. The population was moved to be in those areas so that they could be fed. They had to abandon their land for the sake of being near the bread of life.

Gen 47:22 *Only he didn't buy the land of the priests, for the priests had a portion from Pharaoh, and ate their portion which Pharaoh gave them. That is why they didn't sell their land*- The fact Joseph was married to the daughter of a priest may have been relevant to this decision. The people were given their portion of food by Joseph, and yet he acts on Pharaoh's behalf, functioning as him. And we have here an insight into the way the Lord Jesus functions as God without being God Himself in a Trinitarian sense. See on :23.

Gen 47:23 *Then Joseph said to the people, Behold, I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh. Behold, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land*- Joseph like the Lord Jesus bought / redeemed the people *so that* they might go forth and sow the seed (cp. the Gospel; Gen. 47:23 cp. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:19). If we are properly responding to

our great salvation, we will be playing our part in bringing forth the next generation of harvest. As noted on :22, Joseph does everything "for Pharaoh", functioning as him without being him personally; exactly as the Lord Jesus is functionally as God, without being God. Function and essential nature or identity are different ideas. Joseph and now all Egypt were confident that the dreams of Pharaoh really were of God and would come true; therefore in this last year of the famine, when the stored grain was depleted, they did what was counter-instinctive because of their faith in the prophetic word: they sowed seed in the parched ground which had not seen water for seven years. This would have been the harder to do knowing that their grain stocks were seriously depleted.

Joseph tells the Egyptians, "Here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land", and give a fifth of the harvest to Pharaoh (Gen. 47:23). But he comments in Gen. 45:6 that throughout the seven year famine, there would be neither ploughing nor harvest. We could read Gen. 47:23 as an agreement for the longer term future; but that appears disallowed by "Here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land". We could therefore conclude that Joseph knew God well enough to know that the seven year period of famine was negotiable; perhaps he was praying in faith that the days might be shortened. The Bible is full of such Divine accommodation to human prayers.

Gen 47:24 *It will happen at the harvests, that you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four parts will be your own, for seed of the field, for your food, for them of your households, and for food for your little ones*- A fifth is a double tithe. It was usual to give a tenth to the ruler, but the Egyptians were to be doubly generous to Pharaoh over the subsequent generations, in memory of how he through Joseph had saved their lives. And this should be a motivation for our generosity too. Joseph speaks again with calm confidence that "harvests" would be coming regularly. The Egyptians likely felt that the end of their world had come, and probably came up with all kinds of paganic explanations for this within their cosmology; and as in every primitive society, there would have been all manner of conspiracy theories as to who was to blame for the catastrophe, and what rituals should be performed to end it. But the Divine prophetic word took them far above such speculations. Harvests would surely come; and Joseph was so sure of this that he even commands them how to manage their domestic affairs once the harvests come, explaining how they were to use a fifth of their harvest for future planting, etc.

Gen 47:25 *They said, You have saved our lives! Let us find favour in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants*- To be servants of such a King was felt to be grace or favour. Their desire to be servants was motivated by the reality of personal salvation. Because he had saved their lives, they eagerly agreed to be servants. Our response to the great salvation / deliverance in the Lord Jesus is to be the same; motivation for true servanthood arises from gratitude for salvation, and not because we think so lowly of ourselves that we consider servanthood is all we are worthy of.

Critics like to claim that Joseph manipulated the Egyptians to lose firstly all their money, then all their animals, then their properties, and then they were sold into slavery and agreed to be taxed heavily going forward. But having lost all things, the people were happy and deeply grateful to Joseph. This is the significance of "You have saved our lives!" and their willing entry into servitude. And so it is with all under the authority of the Lord Jesus. We progressively "suffer the loss of all things" and find His service is joy.

Gen 47:26 *Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth. Only the land of the priests alone didn't become Pharaoh's*- "To this day" would refer to when Moses wrote Genesis. The wilderness generation had lived in Egypt, and would have been aware of the social structure and taxation system there; and Moses was now explaining to them so that they understood, perhaps for the first time, how it had originated. The Mosaic law was to teach that Yahweh's priests had no land inheritance and that they must tithe what was given to them; which was in sharp contrast to the cushy life of the Egyptian priests, who kept their land as their own and apparently didn't have to pay a fifth of their harvest to Pharaoh.

Gen 47:27 *Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen; and they got themselves possessions therein, and were fruitful, and multiplied exceedingly*- The birth rate amongst the general population would have dropped sharply after years of this kind of intense famine. But the promises to Abraham and Jacob of a multitudinous seed surged forward in their primary fulfilment, in the face of every reason to think that they could not. The promise to make Israel a great nation was fulfilled during the famine; it was the Divine intention that once the famine was over, they should return to Canaan (see on Gen. 45:7). But they wanted their kingdom in Egypt rather than Canaan, and not to be disturbed from what they had become accustomed to. This power of conservatism is so dominant in the human psyche. It is only careful and sensitive attention to the implications of the promises that can make us rise above it.

Gen 47:28 *Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were one hundred forty-seven years*- Israel were intended to return to Canaan once the famine ended. There were five years of famine after they entered, and during those five years they increased greatly and Joseph was given the property deeds to the land of Canaan (see on :18,20; Gen. 45:7). So the final 12 years of Jacob's life were intended to be lived back in Canaan. But as so often happens, although believers will be ultimately saved, they don't actualize in this life the potentials possible for them.

Jacob cared for Joseph for the first 17 years of his life, and now Joseph cares for Jacob for the last 17 years of his life. Clearly some are intended to requite their parents,

motivated by realising that old age is a return to childhood, a time for repaying them for what they did for us as children. This is a humbling process for all concerned.

Gen 47:29 *The time drew near that Israel must die, and he called his son Joseph, and said to him, If now I have found favour in your sight*- The way Jacob recognizes the greatness of Joseph (as representative of the future Messianic seed, the Lord Jesus Christ) reflects a maturing of attitude since the day when he refused to accept that he would ever bow down to Joseph (Gen. 37:10). The way he speaks to Joseph at the end shows his deeper respect of him: "If now I have found favour / grace in your sight" was the same way in which he had addressed Esau, when crawling before him in Gen. 33:8,10,15. His appreciation of the greatness of Joseph reflected his appreciation of the greatness of the future Christ, and his salvation by grace.

Please put your hand under my thigh- This was the thigh which had been wounded by the Angel and was so weak, the thigh upon which Jacob limped, the reminder to him of his salvation by God's grace (Gen. 32:25 s.w.). In response to that grace, Jacob didn't want to be buried in Egypt but to identify with the things of the Kingdom and the hope of resurrection.

And deal kindly and truly with me- The phrase often refers to the promises to Abraham and the fathers; "mercy and truth" is to be performed to Abraham and Jacob at the resurrection (Mic. 7:20). The implication of them was that Jacob didn't want to be identified with Egypt but with the patriarchs and the things of God's Kingdom. So the receipt of this "truth", the true promises, elicited action in practice. Truth is not therefore merely a set of doctrines; it refers to an obedient and responsive life. The LXX uses the phrase 'to do truth', which John uses in the New Testament, in passages like Is. 26:10 and 2 Chron. 31:20 (about Hezekiah's obedience to commandments), or here in Gen. 47:29 to describe arranging a burial in faith. The fact truth must be *done* indicates it is *not* merely correct academic interpretation of doctrine. To commit violence to others' persons is to live a lie (Hos. 12:1), and 'to truth' is to live in love to others.

*Please don't bury me in Egyp*t- Despite the opulence and easy life, Jacob wanted to use even his own death to demonstrate that this was not to be the resting place for God's true people.

Gen 47:30 *But when I sleep with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place. He said, I will do as you have said*- Jacob's heart was in the land of promise, despite living in Egypt in opulence compared to his tent dwelling, cattle rancher life. Our hearts too must be in the things of the Kingdom rather than in the passing comforts of this life. Jacob's desire to be buried with his fathers may well imply his hope of resurrection, although burial place is irrelevant to experience of resurrection. God had promised Jacob that he would come up out of Egypt (Gen. 46:4),

and he seems to have never quite lost his tendency to try to bring about God's promises by his own device; for he asks Joseph to ensure that he is carried up from Egypt when he dies. God had promised Jacob that "*I* will bring you up", but Jacob wanted to as it were ensure this would happen within his own strength. More generously to Jacob, it could be argued that the promises of salvation do require us to play our part in them.

Jacob spoke of sleeping with his fathers, and then his body being taken to Canaan. So he doesn't refer to being buried in the same tombs as his fathers. Just as David slept with his fathers, but was buried in Jerusalem- whereas his literal fathers were buried elsewhere. Rather did he see death in Egypt as all the same sleeping with his fathers. Because his heart was with them and not with the world / Egypt around him. For all his weakness, it is clear what his essential self identification was and where his heart was.

Gen 47:31 *He said, Swear to me, and he swore to him*-As explained on :30, God had promised or sworn to Jacob that *He* would bring up Jacob from Egypt (Gen. 46:4). Jacob making Joseph swear to do this is therefore somewhat lacking in faith in God's swearing to him. Even at the end of our lives, we like Jacob will not have developed spiritually as we might have done, and yet even though we die in spiritual weakness, we shall be raised in power by His grace (see on 1 Cor. 15:43).

Israel bowed himself on the bed's head- LXX: "And Israel worshipped leaning on the top of his staff", which is how the New Testament quotes it in Heb. 11:21. "Staff" and "bed" are the same consonants, and would easily have been confused before vowel points were added in Hebrew. This is one of many reasons to reject the "King James only" school; the translators simply do not always have it right, as the New Testament quotations from the LXX make clear. Heb. 11:21 is part of the wider argument in Hebrews 11, which appeals for Hebrew faith in Jesus and the Kingdom because all the Old Testament heroes had this same faith in Jesus and the Kingdom. So we are invited to imagine Jacob praising God for the things of the Lord Jesus, his future seed so strongly typified in Joseph; and the things of the Kingdom.

One translation is "He bowed upon the cushion of the bed", seeing that beds in those times didn't have head boards. That "head of the bed" may therefore have been the stone which he used as a cushion for his head at Bethel. The LXX of Gen. 28:22 suggests "This stone... shall be a divine house to me". It was as if Jacob had taken that stone with him, or perhaps gone and recovered it at some point. Instead of building a temple at Bethel, he had taken that stone with him and worshipped God upon it, even placing it at the had of his bed. In this case we see the triumph of personal spirituality, the praise and worship of a bedridden man in his thoughts and quiet words, over mere religion- the idea of building a shrine on a literal foundation stone.

I noted earlier that Jacob had some reticence about actually meeting Joseph, sending a messenger ahead of him to meet Joseph just as he had done in meeting Esau. I suggested that this was because almost his last words to Joseph at 17 had been rebuke for his dreams, and a refusal to accept he would ever bow to his son. We are set up to expect Jacob bowing to Joseph and apologizing, but he never does. Perhaps now, facing death, he finally gets there- bowing before Joseph in an act of worship, thus fulfilling the dream he had so struggled with. And perhaps this is why Heb. 11:21 focuses upon this incident as an act of faith by Jacob, as he perhaps looked ahead to the day when that dream would be fulfilled when Rachel too would be resurrected and would also bow down to Joseph. And we note that it was only at the very end of his life that Jacob really got there. We are all works in progress, and must cut a lot of slack to each others' immaturities.

GENESIS CHAPTER 48

Gen 48:1 *It happened after these things, that someone said to Joseph, Behold, your father is sick. He took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim*- The implication could be that Joseph and his sons weren't living near to Jacob. This just possibly might be a factor in Jacob apparently not recognizing the sons; but see on :8. The implication seems to be that it was not the brothers who told Joseph that their father was on his death bed. We could translate "someone or other told Joseph...". There is no record of any communication between Joseph and his brothers in the 17 years they were in Goshen before Jacob died. And we note in Gen. 50 how after Jacob's death, they send a message to Joseph claiming their father had said things to them outside of Joseph's presence. But Joseph's dream had been that the brothers and Jacob would come to Egypt and live near him. Likewise when he reveals himself to them, he begs them to come near him. The impression is that his dream for reconcilliation in this life was never realized. And so many live and die with a dream for reconcilliation unfulfilled. Be it unrequited love, a desperate desire to be understood by those you are unreconciled with, unity within a church or denomination... unrequited desire for reconcilliation and, in a word, relationship... is the stuff of every man's life path. "Please understand me, please accept me" is written large on every man, and we die like it. And really that is a reflection of God's largely unfulfilled desire for intimacy with His creatures now. This approach explains why the dreams of Joseph's brothers and parents bowing down to him await a yet future fulfilment- not least because his mother was dead before his brothers bowed before him. And there is no time when the brothers and Jacob bow together before Joseph. We must be realistic and hopeful enough to realize that ultimate reconcilliation will only be in the Kingdom, and that is one of the many joys ahead of us.

Gen 48:2 *Someone told Jacob, and said, Behold, your son Joseph comes to you, and Israel strengthened himself, and sat on the bed*- This blessing on the bed was given in faith (Heb. 11:21); on the surface, it seemed that Israel were established and prosperous in Egypt. Yet by faith Jacob envisaged the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant in Joseph's sons in a quite different context of time and place. And by faith we too must see beyond the immediate to the things of the new covenant, remembering that the promises to Abraham are that new covenant with us too.

Gen 48:3 *Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me*- The next verse quotes from Gen. 35, so out of the two appearances of God to Jacob at Luz, it seems the second one is in view. Jacob's perception of the power of God, this one Almighty *El*, is growing. Ex. 6:3 says that Yahweh appeared to Jacob "by the name of God Almighty", so presumably this Name was declared to Jacob at the vision in Bethel; for this, Jacob says, was when God primarily "appeared" to him. And yet he is only recorded as using this name 50 years later. It took 50 years for the fact that God really is *all* mighty to sink in, and for him to come out with this publicly. And yet despite having arrived at this correct theoretical understanding, Jacob now goes on to try to fulfil God's promises of fruitfulness, of El Shaddai, the God of fruitfulness [*shad* = breast], God Almighty, in his own strength- by forcibly adopting Joseph's sons as his own sons, to increase his number of children.

Gen 48:4 *And said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful, and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your seed after you for an everlasting possession'*- Jacob's *personal* grasp of the wonder of the promises at the end is revealed here. God never actually said all this to Jacob; Jacob is quoting the promise to Abraham of Gen. 17:8 *and applying it to himself*. And with us too, a personal grasp of the wonder of it all, that it really applies to *me*, is a mark of that final maturity we fain would achieve.

He seems to have perceived the spiritual danger his children were in, living in the luxury of Egypt. The promises of being fruitful and being given a land were being fulfilled, in a primary sense, in Israel's experience in Egypt (cp. Gen. 47:27). Joseph was *given* the *land* of Egypt (Gen. 41:41), using the same words as in Gen. 45:18; 48:4 concerning how the true *land* -of Canaan- had been *given* to Abraham's children. Jacob's children were given a *possession* in Egypt (Gen. 47:11), and therefore Jacob emphasized that their *real* possession was the eternal inheritance of Canaan, not Egypt (Gen. 49:30; 50:13). Thus Jacob at the end realized the importance of warning God's people against the world, against the temptation of feeling that God's present material blessing of us with a

foretaste of His Kingdom means that in fact we lose our enthusiasm for the *true* Kingdom, in its real, material sense. Like Paul in his final flourish of 2 Timothy, Jacob saw the need to warn God's people, to point them away from the world, and towards the future Kingdom. Jacob saw that his people, like him in his earlier life, would be tempted to see God's promises on an altogether too human and material level.

Jacob didn't want them to think that their multiplication and prosperity in Goshen was the total fulfilment of the promises. It was only a primary fulfilment, a foretaste of so much to come. "A company of peoples", *laqahal amim*, has the idea of a company or *ecclesia* gathered out of the peoples, or as in Gen. 35:11 "a company / *ecclesia* of gentiles". The true Israel was going to incorporate gentiles; they were to share their blessings with them, and be a light to the gentile world, welcoming believers into the covenant, sharing it with them. But in this Israel failed miserably, and do to this day. The 70 families who went down with Jacob into Egypt were supposed to represent the 70 nations of the *eretz* listed in Gen. 10 (cp. Dt. 32:8). And the inheritance was to be "an everlasting possession", understood in the New Testament as implying eternal life on an individual level. But we all tend to be like Israel, satisfied with what we have, and not looking to these longer term implications of the covenant.

But more negatively, it seems that Jacob justifies claiming Joseph's sons as his own on the basis that God had promised to multiply him. For this is the context of his comments about the promises. So he is still trying to fulfil God's promises for Him in his own strength and not perceiving the grace implicit in God's promises. And yet God worked through this- because Ephraim and Manasseh did indeed become part of the Israel of God.

Gen 48:5 *Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, will be mine*- He carefully mentions Ephraim first, because he intended to make him the firstborn although he was the youngest. Reuben and Simeon were Jacob's first two sons, and he is saying that they are to be replaced by Joseph's sons. At the very end, Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons as the firstborn is seen as an act of faith (48:5; Heb. 11:21). Yet on another level, Jacob was taking the blessings away from the firstborn [Reuben] who was the son of the wife he disliked, and giving those blessings to Joseph (via his sons) the son of his favourite wife, who was not the firstborn. This was quite contrary to the will of God as expressed in Dt. 21:17. At best we can say that God allowed one principle to be broken to keep another (although what other?). At worst, Jacob was simply showing rank favouritism, and yet at the same time he foresaw in faith the Messianic suggestions in Joseph's experience, and therefore made Joseph's sons the firstborn. God saw the good in Jacob at this time, and counted this to him, and recognized and worked with Joseph's decision to make "the son of the hated" the

firstborn (1 Chron. 5:1,2), even though this may have been contrary to God's highest intentions. Likewise God worked through Jacob's paganic use of poplar rods and mandrakes. The way Jacob insisted on blessing Ephraim as the firstborn again seems to show some kind of favouritism and a desire to see his grandson living out his own experience, i.e. the younger son who fought his way up and received the blessings as opposed to the rightful heir. Ephraim becomes a code-name for apostate Israel throughout the prophets. And yet God accepted Jacob's preferential blessing of Ephraim and repeated this in Dt. 33:17.

It seems that the sons of Rachael, Jacob's favourite wife, were favoured by Jacob. Ephraim and Manasseh [the sons of Joseph, counted as Jacob's personal sons] and Benjamin marched in front of the ark (hence Ps. 80:2), and these three tribes were represented in the second row of the breastplate by the three most precious stones. Could it be that God so identified with Jacob even in his weakness, that He too reflected this perspective of Jacob's, in treating these three sons as somehow especially favoured? Such was and is the extent of God's identity with His wayward children.

"Even as Reuben..." would suggest that Jacob was confirming that Reuben, his biological firstborn, had indeed been removed from firstborn status, and he was now giving this not to Judah nor Joseph, as he had previously attempted, but to Ephraim, with Manasseh after him. The confusion is reflected in 1 Chron. 5:1-3: "The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn; but, because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brothers, and of him came the prince; but the birthright was Joseph's. The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel..."(Reuben is also called this in Num. 26:5). This choice of Ephraim was however done by Jacob on a quite arbitrary whim, as there is no evidence for Ephraim's qualification. We see him obsessed, still, with birthright and firstborn status- when he ought to have learned from the night of wrestling in Genesis 32 that these things are nothing. There is no very clear Divine comment on whom He considered Jacob's firstborn- because the issue is totally irrelevant in spiritual terms. Jacob had grasped all this so clearly in Gen.32, but he returns to his old obsessions and human weakness. Just as we shall all come to our graveplanks imperfect, having learnt some lessons but failed to retain them to the end.

The firstborn inherited a double portion. Clearly Jacob wanted Joseph to be his firstborn, although he was only firstborn of Rachel, not Jacob's absolute firstborn. By demoting Reuben from firstborn status and adopting Joseph's two sons, it worked out that Joseph received a double portion- because each of his sons received one portion. So the whole things seems to me to be Jacob cunningly trying to make Joseph inherit the firstborn's double portion, through giving a portion to each of Joseph's children, whom Jacob adopts as his sons. So the blessing upon Joseph, which is ostensibly what Jacob is

doing here, involves Jacob adopting Joseph's two sons as his own. He blesses Joseph with a double portion through adopting Joseph's two sons as his own. Although God works through this, and accepts Ephraim and Mannaseh as inheritors of land and tribes of Israel / Jacob, I suggest Jacob's initial reasoning and motivation was completely human. And a total failure to learn the lessons from his experience with Esau over the firstborn. The way he just tells Joseph that his two sons are now his... hardly comes over as very spiritual, and seems manipulative and domineering over the son whom he was supposed to fall down and worship and respect as his saviour. Yet God graciously works through these things. And I would like to add that here again, we have an example of the absolute psychological credibility of the Biblical pictures of people; an old man, suffering from Anno Domini, but absolutely mentally sharp, cunning and acute as he had ever been.

Gen 48:6 *Your issue, whom you become the father of after them, will be yours. They will be called after the name of their brothers in their inheritance*- If Joseph was to have any more sons, they would not become separate tribes, but numbered amongst Ephraim and Manasseh.

Gen 48:7 *As for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died by me*- Literally, 'upon me', as if she died in his arms. But the plain meaning of the text is that she died by or on account of Jacob. Jacob's cursing of whoever had taken the idols actually came true (Gen. 31:32). For Rachel died soon afterwards. Hence Jacob later reflects that Rachel died by or because of him. This is one of many Biblical warnings that what we say, especially in wishing evil, has a way of coming true. We think of David's cursing of Saul and Absalom in his Psalms, and how bitterly he wept when his cursings came true. Again we see the importance of life and living, and the significance of words, even if said in anger. We enquire why Jacob raises this issue in the context of telling Joseph that Jacob is going to count Joseph's sons as his personal sons. It could be that he is reasoning that the fruitfulness promised to him in Gen. 35:11 had not happened because of this sin, and that was why he was taking Joseph's sons as his own sons, seeing they were in the line of Rachel. But that would reflect a very poor understanding of the promise of fruitfulness; it referred to his seed multiplying in Egypt, and in the future seed, the Lord Jesus. But Jacob apparently understood it as meaning simply that he would have many more children, which didn't come true after that point. And so he felt he must force the fulfilment of it by taking Joseph's sons as his own. Again, we see him trying to force through the fulfilment of [his perception of] God's promises, in his own strength.

In the land of Canaan in the way, when there was still some distance to come to Ephrath, and I buried her there in the way to Ephrath (the same is Bethlehem)- Jacob's

tendency to have an over-physical view of the promises was still with him at the end. He seems to speak as if he saw the fact that Rachel was buried in Canaan as a proof that therefore in that sense he had possessed the land of Canaan. Yet the NT says that the fact Jacob *didn't* own the land meant that he hadn't received the fulfillment of the promises, but would do so in the future.

Another possible weakness of Jacob is that to his deathbed, he continued his obsession with the unspiritual Rachel. Although he didn't realize the significance of it at the time, he stresses that she didn't make it to Bethlehem, the Lord's birthplace.

Gen 48:8 *Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these?*- Or, "whose". He knew who and whose they were- although see on :1. This is part of a way of saying 'You think they are such and such, that they belong to this one; but I am telling you that they are now such and such and belong to me'. It could be that Jacob literally could not see them because of his blindness (:10), and yet we are told that he indeed "saw Joseph's sons". Jacob was surely aware that he was now in the position of his blind father Isaac whom he had deceived. And he was determined that by his own wit he would not be likewise deceived, and wished to emphasize that unlike Isaac, he understood exactly what he was doing.

Gen 48:9 *Joseph said to his father, They are my sons, whom God has given me here. He said, Please bring them to me, and I will bless them*- There was a unity, a mutuality, between Jacob and God at the end. No longer did he see God as someone else's God, not even just his father's God. The lessons of Jacob's name change were finally learnt. Thus he asks Joseph to bring his sons to him, so that *he* may bless them; but when he gives the blessing, he states that this is God blessing them (48:8,9,15,16); he saw God working through him. See on Gen. 49:33.

Gen 48:10 *Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he couldn't see. He brought them near to him; and he kissed them, and embraced them*- Gen. 27:26 has the same scene, when Jacob deceitfully 'came near' to his father Isaac to fraudulently obtain the blessing of the firstborn. That sin of Jacob was to be remembered by him to his very deathbed. Not that it wasn't forgiven; but we are providentially enabled to understand how others feel, whom we sinned against.

Gen 48:11 *Israel said to Joseph, I never thought I would see your face, and behold, God has let me see your seed also*- see on Gen. 49:8. This is Jacob's final appreciation of God's grace, the way He does far above what our works should deserve. "Thought" is 74 times translated "pray", and only once "thought" ; the idea is surely: 'I never prayed to

see you again, I didn't therefore have the faith in the resurrection which I should have done, just as I didn't believe your mother could be resurrected when you spoke of her coming to bow before you (Gen. 37:10); but God in His grace has done exceeding abundantly above all I asked or didn't ask for, and shewed me not only your face in this life, but also your children'.

There seems an allusion to this scene in the Kingdom prophecy of Is. 49:21: "Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?" (AV).

Paul seems to allude here by saying that God does for *us* exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think; making Jacob representative of every believer. Jacob was focused upon Joseph and now he had seen him, he felt prepared to die in peace, rather than from a broken heart as he had imagined he would earlier. His attitudes to death were governed by the status of Joseph. If Joseph was dead or consumed by a wild animal, he would die broken hearted; but if Joseph were alive, as he demonstrably was, he would die in peace. Whether or not his other sons fessed up to him about their sins was not relevant to him, compared to his focus upon the 'resurrection' of Joseph. And our hang ups over whether others have or have not fully repented and set the record straight is utterly obscured by the joy of knowing and seeing the risen Lord Jesus. Jacob at this point and in this sense represents us all.

Gen 48:12 *Joseph brought them out from between his knees*- They would have been around 18 and 20 years old. To come out from between the knees was a euphemism for giving birth, although usually applied to women rather than men (Gen. 30:3). However the same idiom is used for Joseph's grandchildren being raised upon his knees (Gen. 50:23), as if to emphasize that they were 'his'. So the idea may not be of toddlers hiding shyly between daddy's knees, but rather that these sons who were really biologically Joseph's... were now to become Jacob's.

And he bowed himself with his face to the earth- The grammar is unclear as to whom bowed to whom. We are inclined to think that Jacob was bowing to Joseph, in fulfilment of the dream which he had so objected to in Gen. 37:10. At the end of our spiritual paths we may come to accept some realities which we have struggled against all our lives. The man who rejects his gay son as a brother in Christ comes to accept him, the forgiveness which was unthinkable to grant is given, and the impossible reconciliations achieved. We think of how Paul accepted John Mark as his co-worker, when Paul was on his death bed (see on 2 Tim. 4:11).

Gen 48:13 *Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near to him*-

Jacob himself was the younger who had been more blessed than his elder sibling Esau. But whilst on one hand he was correct to continue the theme of the second born being as the first born, he also was missing the point- that all this angst about the blessing of the firstborn was irrelevant. He had himself recognized that at the acme of his spiritual perception when he met Esau again, as he effectively handed back to him the blessing of the birthright, feeling that being in receipt of God's grace was the only blessing worth anything (see on Gen. 33:11). But what we may grasp at one point in our lives, we sadly don't always take with us. And even on his deathbed, Jacob was still wanting to play games over this issue of the blessing of the firstborn. He apparently paid no attention to how Manasseh was going to feel and subsequently carry with him in life, stripped of the coveted status of firstborn by the apparent caprice of a cranky old grandfather. And Joseph also might have learnt the lesson and not been concerned about the issue. I suggest Jacob's highest level response to the boys coming to him for blessing would have been to say to the effect: 'All that blessing of the firstborn stuff... I got over that years ago. Focus on getting the blessing of God's grace, that's all you need, boys. And Joseph, you too, don't sweat all that stuff, you too like me should know better by now'. And reviewing the subsequent history of Israel's sons, the whole issue of which son had the birthright was insignificant. It was only an item in their minds and cultural patterns at the time. See on :14.

In Gen. 32 and 33, Jacob resigned his material blessing, and gave up his struggle to be the firstborn. He collapsed upon grace. “Blessing” (brkh), “firstborn” (bekhor) and “birthright” (bekhora) are all related words. But despite that peak of appreciation, which having slipped from he apparently reached again in Gen. 35 (see notes there), even on his grave planks, Jacob was still conniving in his own strength about blessings and firstborns. And yet he will be saved ultimately; along with all of us who likewise are still immature at the end of our mortal path.

Gen 48:14 *Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn*- Ps. 78:67 comments that God did not chose Ephraim- whereas Jacob did. The implication could well be that even at the end of his life, Jacob's choice of Ephraim over Manasseh reflected some sort of weakness, a being out of step with God. This attitude that *he* could bring about the fulfillment of God's promises through his own efforts was the outcome of Jacob's self-righteousness. See on :13. The firstborn was known as the son of the right hand. I note on :19 that Jacob had changed the firstborn several times, and had even named Benjamin "son of my right hand", effectively shifting the firstborn to his youngest son. Jacob was quite obsessed with the issue of who was the firstborn; at different times Reuben, Joseph, Benjamin and Judah had it, and now he wants Ephraim to have it. Even at the end of his days, he had not

quite learnt the lesson taught him earlier, that it is God's blessing of grace and not being the firstborn which is the important thing.

Gen 48:15 *He blessed Joseph, and said, The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day-* At age 130, Jacob had mumbled to Pharaoh: "Few and *evil* have the days of the years of my life been", as if every day had dragged (Gen. 47:9). But at the very end, 17 years later, he more positively speaks of the Angel that had redeemed him from all *evil* (48:15). He felt that he was but a sheep, and God had "fed" or 'shepherded' him. He says this fully aware of the Egyptian way of despising sheep and shepherds, and yet he states here that God Himself is Israel's shepherd, despised of men, but clearly perceived by His people. If we read this as meaning 'fed' in a literal sense, Jacob's all too physical view of the promises is suggested. He wanted to make Yahweh his God because He had fed him all his life long. Earlier he had promised to do this, if Yahweh would indeed provide him with daily food (Gen. 28:20). That bargain he struck with God would surely have been best repented of rather than carried through.

Jacob's reference to how Abraham and Isaac 'walked before' his God is a reference back to Gen. 17:1; 24:40. Jacob had meditated upon these records, in whatever form they were preserved, and now bubbled out with reference to them. Those same promises concerning the Lord Jesus and his Kingdom should become the centre of our thought as we reach spiritual maturity. "Let my name be named upon them (Joseph's children), and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac" (48:16) indicates that he saw an equivalence between Abraham and Isaac and himself; he saw they were "heirs of the same promise" (Heb. 11:9). Jacob finally came to graduate from mere Sunday School Christianity, the faith of mum and dad, to realize that those promises made to them were the very basis of *his* faith too, as well as theirs, and he knew therefore that he would be resurrected with them into the glory of God's Kingdom. And so he wanted to be buried with them; he didn't reject them, but he came to understand that the promises were gloriously true for him on a personal level.

Almost on his deathbed, Jacob speaks of how the God of Abraham and Isaac is his God (48:15,16); he speaks of being gathered to his people, to them, just as they too had been gathered to their people (Gen. 49:29 cp. Gen. 25:8; 35:29). He really stresses his desire to be buried in Canaan along with Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 47:29,30; 49:29; 50:5,6), alongside his dad and grandfather, remembering how they had lived together in the same tents in his childhood (Heb. 11), speaking together of the promises. The fact he had prepared his grave there years before shows that this was not only the sentimental feeling of a dying man. This repeated emphasis on his connection with Abraham and Isaac shows that at the end, Jacob saw the supreme importance of being a member of

God's people. He didn't just fix on his own personal hope, but on the fact he was connected with all the heirs of the promise. Paul also focused on this aspect when he came to his time of departing. And so with us, we will come to see (if we haven't already) that our association with Christianity is not just a part of our social structure. We aren't just Christians because of parental expectation. Our association with God's people is eternal, the consequences of being baptized into the body of Christ (the believers) are related to our salvation. Thus the believers are joint-heirs together of the same Abrahamic promises (Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 3:7), just as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived together as joint heirs of the same promises (Heb. 11:9).

Gen 48:16 *The Angel who has ever redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac-*

The Angel who redeemed Jacob from evil may specifically refer to the Angel with whom Jacob wrestled, who then blessed Jacob in response to his begging for blessing. And he wishes that blessing of grace upon his grandsons. Yet Jacob appears to see that gracious blessing of him as ongoing, because his wrestling with the Angel for blessing and grace was a cameo of his entire life.

See on Ex. 23:27. It is so easy to under-estimate the amount of work the Angels are doing in our lives; Jacob recognized that his Angel physically fed / shepherded him all his days, and that it was not just at the crises in his life that the Angel had been present; he describes the Angel as "ever redeeming me" (Heb.), as if the whole process of life is one continual redeeming process by the Angel, as He designs trials for us which will perfect us in order to gain redemption, as well as physically redeeming us more times than we realize. Subsequent generations were to take comfort in the fact that God had redeemed Jacob / Israel; Isaiah is full of this idea, encouraging the Jews of the restoration, and all of us, that the same God who redeemed Jacob is our God, to no lesser an extent. Jacob had primarily in view his deliverance from Esau and Laban by the Angel with whom he wrestled; but he realized that those incidents were but examples of an ongoing redemption which was ongoing even as he spoke.

At the end, Jacob spoke of God as his redeemer, which is the first Biblical reference to the concept of redemption. Joseph was the one who had redeemed Jacob from all evil, but Jacob realizes that it was ultimately God working through this great seed of Abraham, and thereby he looks ahead to the Messianic seed, who was the ultimate redeemer (Gal. 3:11; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18). This was not the only area in which Jacob was a paradigm breaker (consider how he coined the word *abiyr* to describe God's mightiness). The Hebrew for "redeem" is taken from the idea of the nearest kinsman. Jacob at the end of his days is surely saying that now he saw God as closer than his family. We really have a lot to learn here. God comes before family- although increasingly this isn't appreciated by Anglo-Saxon believers. The new convert who

sacrifices family ties for allegiance to Christ realizes this full well. But in my observation, second and third generation believers aren't so committed. The majority of the divisions and bitterness which plague the body of Christ are largely a result of believers wanting to stay with their family, rather than follow Divine principles. Time and again brethren and sisters change fellowships, with all the disruption this causes, simply because of family, not for any genuine Biblical conviction. Effectively they will throw others out of fellowship, throw new converts into turmoil and disillusion, just to stick with a dogmatic family member, even though they may not share his or her convictions. And so God's Truth becomes a social and family affair rather than a candlestick burning with the fire of the Spirit. Christians tend to follow parental expectation and the norms of their social network rather than God's word.

Let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth- The "land" in view was that promised to Abraham. Jacob's dying wish was that his children would hurry up and return to Canaan as originally intended and made potentially possible at the end of the famine (see on Gen. 45:7); and *there* and not in Egypt would they become a multitude, in fulfilment of the promises given to Abraham and Jacob.

Gen 48:17 *When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him. He held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head*- As noted on :13, Joseph ought to have learnt from history, that this whole angst about the blessing of the firstborn was irrelevant. It is true that Genesis has repeatedly recorded how the second born or younger was more blessed than the older: Abel, Seth, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph; and the Old Testament history continues the theme, with Moses over Aaron, David over his brothers etc. But that blessing was not by human device, but by Divine blessing and the operation of His Spirit in human life.

Gen 48:18 *Joseph said to his father, Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head*- See on Gen. 17:18. Joseph was wrong to have so much angst about who got the blessing of the firstborn; see on :13 and :17.

Gen 48:19 *His father refused, and said, I know, my son, I know. He also will become a people, and he also will be great. However, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his seed will become a multitude of nations*- Although Jacob maybe favoured Judah on a human level, he certainly favoured Joseph spiritually. It seems that he made up his mind that Messiah would come from Joseph (when in fact Christ came through Judah). He said that Ephraim's seed would become a multitude of nations (48:19)- he was applying the Messianic promise to Ephraim. Likewise he stated that from Joseph (Ephraim's father) would come the Shepherd / Stone / Messiah (see on Gen. 49:24); presumably, Jacob thought, through Ephraim. Yet Jacob was wrong in this. Thus whilst

Jacob showed his spiritual maturity by an enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus Christ, even right at the very end of his life, he still had an old flaw: a desire to fulfill God's promises in the way *he* wanted them fulfilled, a desire to turn God's word round to fit in with *his* preferred way of thinking (in this case, that Messiah would come through Joseph / Ephraim). The way the prophets continually describe sinful Israel as "Ephraim" is perhaps God's way of showing that Jacob's way was not His way.

And yet despite these wrong perceptions by Jacob, it is true that at the first census in the wilderness, Ephraim numbered 40,500 and Manasseh only 32,000; and later, when in the land, Ephraim became the most numerous tribe in the ten tribe kingdom, to the point that it was often called "Ephraim" just as the two tribe kingdom was called "Judah". Jacob was almost repeating the prophetic word spoken about himself (Gen. 25:23). It is natural to want our own experience to be replicated in others, especially our offspring. But although Jacob was not completely mature in his reasoning about this whole blessing of the firstborn, God still worked through it. He had removed Reuben from being firstborn (1 Chron. 5:1), replaced him with Joseph, and then when he disappeared, he decided that Benjamin should be the firstborn, renaming him "Son of my right hand", another title of the firstborn; again wanting the youngest to be as the eldest. And now Joseph is back on the scene, he seems to want to change things around so that Ephraim and Manasseh become his adopted sons, and out of them, Ephraim [the youngest] is as it were his firstborn; the very youngest of his 'sons' treated as the eldest. But all this chopping and changing about the firstborn had no ultimate meaning in Israel's subsequent history.

"Will become a multitude of nations" alludes to the promises to Abraham (Gen. 17:6,20). It was as if Jacob in his immaturity wanted the line of Abrahamic descent to go specifically through Ephraim. But there is no evidence God respected that. Rather, all who showed themselves to be the seed of Abraham through faith, receive an equal share in the Abrahamic blessings. Again we see Jacob's stubborn immaturity even at the end of his days.

Gen 48:20 *He blessed them that day, saying, In you will Israel bless, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh'. He set Ephraim before Manasseh*- "Bless" is literally 'to bow the knee'. "In you" is you singular, and refers to Joseph. Jacob is accepting what at the time he had refused to- that the dreams of Joseph would indeed come true, and his brothers ["Israel"] would bless or bow to him.

Gen 48:21 *Israel said to Joseph, Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you, and bring you again to the land of your fathers*- As explained on Gen. 45:7 and elsewhere, the people were supposed to return to Canaan once the famine finished; see on :16. Jacob

wished they had done that whilst he was still alive; but he knew that God would work in their experiences so that He would bring them back to the land. They should have returned there themselves; but God would "bring" them there, just as Abraham ought to have left Ur for Canaan and broken with his family immediately, but he didn't, and so God brought him there and made him separate from his father's house (see on Gen. 20:13). Jacob sensed an analogous situation was going to happen to get them out of Egypt; and the same was to occur centuries later in getting them to leave Babylon. In our days too, we don't make the moves we are supposed to make, or to the extent intended; and God's Spirit works to bring about those moves. This is His saving grace. And Joseph quotes these words of his father on his own deathbed (Gen. 50:25), as he too retained the perspective that Israel out to leave Egypt and return to Canaan, but he believed that if they didn't, then God would structure situations to ensure that they did- by His grace.

Gen 48:22 *Moreover I have given to you Shechem, one portion above your brothers, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow*- This indicates that Jacob's old self-reliance was still not totally gone; his sense that through his own effort he could bring about the fulfillment of God's promises for him. He appears to be referring to some unrecorded military conflict in which he captured Shechem; perhaps he refers specifically to the burial ground which Abraham had bought in the area, which perhaps he had had to forcibly recapture (Gen. 33:19). And he wanted the family tomb to specifically be Joseph's inheritance, as he more than any appreciated the significance of resurrection to fulfil the Abrahamic covenant. But the reference to having taken it by how own strength shows that the weakness of Jacob remained, in thinking that his own strength was so significant. These very words are alluded to in Josh. 24:12 and Ps. 44:1-6, where the Spirit says that the land was given to Israel *not* on account of their bow and sword. The more closely we analyze the Bible heroes, the more apparent it is that they were shot through with weakness; and some of those weaknesses it seems they unsuccessfully battled with until the day of their death. Jacob, right at the end of his life, still hadn't completely overcome that besetting weakness of self-reliance. This is, of course, a dangerous road to go down. In no way can we be complacent about our urgent need for spiritual growth. But on the other hand, we will never reach the stature of Christ without righteousness being imputed to us. In this sense, true Christian believers aren't good people, but people who know and believe in God's grace.

It seems on balance that Jacob was referring to how his sons Simeon and levi had massacred the men of Shechem; and it seems Jacob joined in with his sword and bow. He later criticizes his sons for having done this, and he and his tribe only survived revenge from the surrounding tribes by God's grace. And yet, so true to human thought and behaviour, he now later glories in his part in the massacre, whilst later cursing his

sons for their part in it. God destroyed the Amorite before Israel, Am. 2:9, but He worked through their quite wrong behaviour towards the Shechemites. Jacob seems proud of capturing Shechem when he ought to have been ashamed of how it was done, and had forgotten that he was saved from the consequences by grace alone.

However it could be that just as "I have given" is a prophetic perfect, speaking of the future [he means 'I will give'] as if it has happened because of his faith, so he speaks of taking Shechem as already having been achieved by him when it was yet future. Yet another alternative is that Jacob is again showing weakness by recalling the massacre at Shechem and proudly claiming that this was his victory, and he wanted Shechem to be Joseph's. And another option is that the inheritance at Shechem was the parcel of land bought by the patriarchs for burials, which Jacob gave to Joseph (Jn. 4:5), and where Joseph's bones were buried. But in this case, we enquire how Jacob took that land from the hand of the Amorite with sword and bow.

GENESIS CHAPTER 49

Gen 49:1 *Jacob called to his sons, and said: Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which will happen to you in the days to come*- This follows right on from the blessing of Joseph, in which Jacob had attempted to give the blessing of the firstborn to Ephraim as his son. I commented throughout Gen. 48 that he might have better learnt from his earlier handing back of Isaac's paternal blessing (see on Gen. 33:11). On the acme of spiritual perception, he confessed that paternal blessings are not worth anything compared to the blessings of God's grace. But now Jacob is still thinking in human terms, concerned about final blessings of children, when he should have realized that these are meaningless. And so we find that as many of the paternal blessings uttered by his father never came particularly true, so not everything he says here to his sons had fulfilment.

The order of the blessings is not strictly according to birth order. But it is according to how the tribes were geographically located in Israel, from the South to the North. He has the same time in view when he speaks of Levi being scattered in Israel, and Judah being the kingly tribe. So although there are elements in these blessings which appear to be Jacob reasoning as a cranky old man, clearly the higher hand of Divine inspiration was also present working through his weakness. And that is the story of how God works with all men through His Spirit. But the structure of the blessings is poetic in form, and Joseph is clearly at the center of the poetry. Many of the sons leave their father's deathbed with no real blessing, some only with a curse. But they were all blessed, each son individually had a blessing (:28). Blessed on account of the blessing upon Joseph, which is why he and his blessings, which were their blessings, are at the center of the poetry. For the men would have departed from their father's deathbed bewildered;

Joseph and Judah got the blessings, and the three first born sons were cursed not blessed, with the remaining sons getting vague and abstract blessings usually mixed with some negative predictions about them. Reuben would have naturally speaking been irrate that he was cursed for his sexual misbehaviour, whereas Judah's sexual misbehaviour was apparently overlooked and he was blessed. The whole episode appears bizarre, until we realize that Jacob was doing this intentionally- to highlight that their blessings were through the blessings to be shared with them from Joseph and to some extent Judah.

In fact, blessing within curses is the theme with which Genesis starts in Gen. 3, especially because it led to the promise of the Saviour and His victory in Gen. 3:15. The woman is cursed, but "she shall be saved through the childbearing" (1 Tim. 2:15). Adam was cursed with sweat and toil in labour, but there is some blessing within those things ("In all labour there is profit", Prov. 14:23; "that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God... to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God", Ecc. 3:13; 5:19). Even the curse of death can be seen as a blessing, as it provides rest from a meaningless life, under the sun. And as 1 Cor. 15 explains, unless we die we cannot rise again to new and glorious eternal life. Even the curse on Cain has some blessing in it: "And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him" (Gen. 4:15). Or as Paul put it during the shipwreck, "You have *gained* this harm and *loss*". Loss is gain, in the spiritual ecosystem. In talking about his own death, Paul could say that "to live is Christ, and to die is gain". It's win-win. We can't lose, in Christ. Death is swallowed up in victory.

And another theme of Genesis is that the blessing of one person brings blessing upon another; hence the Gospel is all about the blessing given to Abraham's seed through whom many will be blessed. And so the 'curses' given some sons in place of blessings do not mean that those sons are without blessings; because they share in the blessings of Joseph and Judah, both looking ahead to the Lord Jesus. In this sense, all the sons were "blessed" (:28) because of the blessings upon Joseph and Judah, even though their own behaviour led to them being cursed, or at least, not having much blessing of their own. As the sons crowded around their father on his deathbed, they would have all expected blessing. How he spoke was most unusual, and only the reflective would have understood that they went away blessed- because of the blessing upon Joseph.

Gen 49:2 *Assemble yourselves, and hear, you sons of Jacob. Listen to Israel, your father*- He parallels his old and new names, in order to demonstrate that he has accepted God's grace in changing his name. The gathering of his sons may point forward to the last judgment.

Gen 49:3 *Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength; excelling in dignity, and excelling in power*- The way Jacob rebukes and effectively rejects Reuben, Simeon and Levi, the sons who had flaunted their natural strength and prowess, reflects the right perspectives which Jacob attained at the end. The language here sounds as if Jacob associated his natural strength with Reuben, and yet now he rejected it. Doubtless these men gathered round their father expecting to hear some sweet fatherly blessing mixed with a few gentle reproofs for past behaviour. The whole process of Israel's sons being "gathered" to him and receiving their blessing and judgment is typical of the final judgment, showing how Jacob was a type of Christ at this time. The surprise of the sons we are left to imagine, but it would point forward quite accurately to the surprise which will be a feature of the rejected (Mt. 25:44).

Gen 49:4 *Boiling over as water, you shall not excel; because you went up to your father's bed, then defiled it. He went up to my couch*- The evident problem the Abraham family had with women is emphasized in the record. One man, one woman was the declared standard of God at this time. Adam, Noah, Noah's sons, Aaron, Moses were all one man: one woman cases. The patriarchs having more than one wife at a time sticks out. Abraham's apparently casual relationship with Hagar, Judah's use of a harlot (apparently the sort of thing he often did), Esau's many carnal wives, Dinah's love affair, Reuben's incest... all this creates a certain impression of weakness in this area. Joseph's evil report regarding his brothers may well have featured news of their playboy escapades while far away from usual family life (Gen. 37:2 = 1 Sam. 2:23,24). The repeated way in which they lied about their wives also indicates that they didn't take their marital responsibilities as they should have (Gen. 12:13; 20:3,13; 26:7).

AV "unstable as water" may mean that just as water goes downhill naturally and apparently irresistibly, so Reuben had given in to sexual temptation as if it were irresistible. Whereas Jacob has said that Reuben was the beginning of his strength, his firstborn, perhaps claiking to have been sexually self controlled until be made his wife conceive his first child. The argument that sin is irresistible looms large in our minds in the moments of decision as we face temptation. Sin is not inevitible, although in reality there is none who sins not, apart from the Lord.

But we note that Reuben's sexual sin is maximized by Jacob, whereas Judah is blessed despite having sinned concerning Tamar over a protracted period. This would've seemed "unfair" to the men who stood around the deathbed. But the point is, that although some are more blessed than others in this life, the real blessing is through the work and blessing of Joseph / Jesus. We can contrast Jacob's attitude here with how King David would not punish Amnon for his incest "because he loved him for he was his firstborn (2 Sam. 13:21, LXX).

Reuben's incest, twice lamented, meant that he was stripped of the title of firstborn (1 Chron. 5:1,2). I suggested on Gen. 35:22 that the incest may not have been due to simple lust, but rather anger. So the statement that he had boiled over like water would refer to his anger problem rather than sexual lust. He 'went up' to his father's bed and bedroom, perhaps suggesting that he wanted to become the head of the family in place of Jacob. He had 'excelled in dignity' (:4), but now he did not 'excel'. The two words are related in Hebrew as they are in English. And yet despite all this, Reuben is presented as having more genuine concern for Joseph and Jacob than most of the other brothers. But clearly even on his deathbed, Jacob couldn't forgive Reuben for what he had done. He offers no blessing, only a statement that he remembers Reuben's sin and abiding shame.

Gen 49:5 *Simeon and Levi are brothers. Their swords are weapons of violence*- The reference is to their massacre of the Shechemites. Jacob seems to speak as if this is not forgiven, for he says that their swords *are*, not "were", weapons used to do violence to others. Jacob again offers them no blessing, but just wants them to know he remembers what they did and retains his sense of separation from them. In Christian terms, of forgiveness and grace, Jacob seems remarkably lacking, despite all the grace shown to him. He died not quite 'getting it'; and yet will be saved. And we noted on Gen. 48:22 that it seems Jacob himself joined in the violence against Shechem. The sword is of course a "weapon of violence" so perhaps they used their circumcision knives as weapons of slaughter- the classic case of religious abuse. Jacob leaves no possibility for future blessing for Levi for doing this; and yet God used Levi's seed, as the priestly tribe, to do countless circumcisions. The words of curse are in fact later described as a blessing. God is kinder than man, and has a far greater future Hope for people than we tend to. We tend like Jacob to judge people for what they did in the past and refuse to move on from that.

Gen 49:6 *My soul, don't come into their council. My glory, don't be united to their multitude; for in their anger they killed men. In their self-will they hamstrung cattle*- Although Jacob's seed had become a "multitude" as promised, he says that he refuses to unite himself with the "multitude" of Simeon and Levi, as if he now saw this physical fulfilment of the promises in his lifetime as worth little. His appreciation of the promises absolutely fills his thinking at the end. The promised Kingdom was "the pride of Jacob" (Ps. 47:4 NIV; Am. 6:8; Nah. 2:2), his chiefest joy. There are aspects of Jacob's blessings of his sons which evidently have not been fulfilled. Presumably they will be fulfilled in the Kingdom, which shows how Jacob's mind was not dwelling on his children receiving physical blessings from God in the short term (cp. how Isaac blessed his sons), but rather the promised eternal blessings of the Kingdom. It is quite likely that the sons, in their humanity, expected blessings of a more immediate sort, such as a dying father of

those times would have shared out between his sons. But instead, Jacob's talk is not of the things of this brief life, but of the Kingdom. And yet Jacob does come over as bitter, refusing to associate his honour ["glory"] with their extended families, their "council" [group] or "multitude" or AV "assembly", their community. It is really a deathbed disassociation from his own sons, when he himself had many sins which had been dealt with by grace alone.

Jacob's reflection on Joseph's sufferings gave him a clearer picture of those of the future Messiah. His complaint that they "hamstrung cattle" can be understood as prophetic of the murder of God's son. It can be translated in the singular, as if referring to one individual, namely Joseph: "houghing the ox" (RV), or bullock (Concordant Version), i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ (Dt. 33:17 RV), the bullock of the sin offering (Heb. 13:11-13). Gen. 49:6 can also be rendered 'murdering the prince' (Adam Clarke's Translation), referring initially to the murder of Shechem but looking ahead to that of the Lord Jesus. The Roman historian Hippolytus says that "From Simeon came the Scribes, and from Levi the priests"; it was these groups who murdered the Lord, and Jacob seems to have foreseen this, through his reflection on their hatred of Joseph. He may mean that they took counsel against Joseph, as the scribes and priests would do against Christ (Ps. 2:2).

The conspiracy or counsel was in their counselling the men of Shechem to also be circumcised- so that they could attack and slay them whilst they were incapacitated after the circumcision procedure. "May my soul not enter their conspiracy" is surely hypocritical when Jacob had earlier boasted in Gen. 48:22 of taking Shechem with his own sword and bow. "Hamstrung cattle" can be "and at their pleasure they destroyed leading citizens".

Gen 49:7 *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel*- Several times at the very end of his life (Gen. 49:2,7,24) Jacob mentions his old and new names ('Jacob' and 'Israel') together, as if to show that now he finally accepted and believed the wondrous change that God had wrought in him. First of all, he doesn't seem to have accepted his name change, and needed God to remind him of it again (Gen. 32:28; 35:10). To accept, really accept, the Name we called upon ourselves at baptism (Acts 2:21; 9:14; 22:16; Rom. 10:12-14) is difficult. To believe that God really does see us as His people, bearing His Name, with all the moral glory this implies... it took Jacob no less than 50 years to realize the implications of Jacob's name change (Jacob's name was changed when he was 97, and he only uses it freely of himself just before his death at 147). It's unusual for a man to repeatedly mention his own name when talking to others; and yet this is exactly what Jacob did in Gen. 48:20; 49:2,7,24; it was as if he was playing with a new toy, reflecting his grasp of that basic, wondrous truth he had been taught 50 years ago; that in *God's*

eyes, his name had changed. In God's eyes, he was not the Jacob, the liar, the supplanter, the deceiver; but Israel, the prince with God. But it took 50 years for the wonder of it all to come home to him.

And yet the immediate meaning of his words here are to call his sons for the expected deathbed blessing, and then curse them. When Jacob himself closed his eyes covered by grace for many failures in his life; his repeated recollection of their massacre of the Shechemites decades previously is perhaps because it did him shame, and he could never quite live it down.

Jacob's desire to "divide" them uses a word which can mean to divide out a portion with others; it is thus used in :27, and frequently about the dividing up of spoil or the promised land. The idea could be that their part of the inheritance Jacob wished to be taken by others, or divided up between the other sons. His idea of 'scattering' them in Israel can too easily be applied to the scattering of the Levites throughout Israel; but this is uttered as a curse, and it was intended to affect both Simeon and Levi. Scattering throughout the *eretz* is the language of judgment upon the Babel builders (Gen. 11:9 s.w.) and Israel's scattering among the nations is associated with God disinheriting them of their land (Dt. 28:64; Jer. 9:16; 18:17 s.w.). It may be that this is what Jacob intended; that they would be scattered amongst the other tribes and their share of the inheritance was to be divided amongst them. There is no record of this happening; and God turned the curse into a blessing in that the scattering of the Levites around Israel was to be a blessing for all. And in a strange way, the curse upon Simeon had at least some fulfilment. Simeon became the smallest of the twelve tribes (Num. 26:14); it is given no blessing by Moses in Dt. 33; and is given no independent territory in Canaan, just a few cities within the borders of Judah (Josh. 19:1-9); and eventually Simeon was absorbed into Judah.

Gen 49:8 *Judah, your brothers will praise you. Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's sons will bow down before you*- see on Gen. 37:10. Joseph's dreams had clearly stated that all the brothers would bow to him. And Jacob had come to see that and accept it, despite his initial dislike of the idea. But now his very last words seem an attempt to make those dreams apply to Judah and not Joseph. "Judah" was so named in order that others would "Praise Yah"; but Jacob turns this around to Judah himself being praised. It seems to indicate that Jacob died somewhat bitter and without having grasped that the grace shown to him ought to have been reflected by him to others. And yet he shall be saved, as with so many believers who end their days likewise.

The three older brothers of Judah have just been as it were trashed by Jacob in his preceding discussion of Reuben, Simeon and Levi. He overlooks Judah's disgraceful behaviour with Tamar, but focuses upon that of Reuben. We get the impression that he has made his mind up to present positively those whom he once wished to be his

firstborn. Judah was blessed that his brothers would bow down to him. But they were all acutely aware that God had blessed Joseph with this blessing. The idea may therefore be that Judah would be blessed only in that some of Joseph's blessing would come to him. Which is the basis upon which all the brothers were to be blessed (:28).

"May your father's sons bow down to you" is the same phrase as used in the blessing of Isaac upon Jacob (Gen. 27:29), which blessing Jacob had stolen from Esau. Likewise the blessings of Gen. 27:28 are now given by Jacob to Joseph [“May God give you of heaven’s dew and of earth’s richness—an abundance of grain and new wine”]. In Gen. 32, Jacob had resigned all interest in that blessing; but in this final deathbed moment, he has returned to an obsession with such blessings of the father. Like us, he died imperfect, returning to weaknesses he had once momentarily overcome. The art of spiritual growth is to retain the level we reach at some intense moment of need, rather than slouch back into our previous ways.

Gen 49:9 *Judah is a lion’s cub*- Jacob saw himself as the lion, and Judah as his cub. But likening himself to a lion hardly seems appropriate humility in a man who had been forgiven so much and who was now facing his grave planks. But still he will be saved, by grace.

From the prey, my son, you have gone up- This could be a reference to some unrecorded military conflict Judah had been involved in; there may be another reference to such a conflict in Gen. 48:22. But "the prey" is literally 'the tearing', and is the same word used by Jacob when he thought that Jacob was without doubt torn in pieces. "Gone up" is also translated 'depart'. And quite legitimately we could translate this: 'From the torn in pieces son of mine [Joseph], you departed'. This would then reference Judah's refusal to be associated with the plan to kill Joseph, urged the brothers to save his life, and later was the clear leader in the plans to save Benjamin's life. Judah was like the young lion who refused to close in on the kill of the torn prey, allowed it to live, and then grew up to become a truly mighty lion. Jacob is here recognizing Judah's growth in responsibility from the days of his sin to Tamar to his lengthy and persuasive speech before Joseph.

He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, as a lioness. Who will rouse him up?- Jacob may be using the prophetic perfect here, talking about future things as if they have happened, and having in mind a great Messianic descendant of Judah, the Lord Jesus. Jacob twice describes this Messianic descendant as devouring the prey in the morning of the second coming (49:9, 27); he foresaw an aggressive tension between Messiah and other beasts, i.e. the nations of the surrounding world, which would end in the glorious victory of Christ's coming in glory. This image of devouring the prey after the battle against the world in this life is the basis of other latter day prophecies (Ez. 39:18-20; Rev. 19:17-20). The faithful will eat the carcass of the beast at Christ's coming (Mt. 24:28 cp. Rev. 19:17-20), sharing in the victory of the lion of Judah who has slain his prey

and now devours it. This was all foreseen by Jacob, although he would have seen the beasts which the Messiah / lion devoured as the nations surrounding his people (Jer. 15:3; Jer. 28:14; Ez. 5:17 and many others).

Gen 49:10 *The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs. To him will the obedience of the peoples be-* This could be a reference to Judah's great Messianic descendant, the one to whom the Kingdom belongs, and that is how these words are alluded to in Ez. 21:25-27. The alternative reading, "until Shiloh comes", would then name Messiah as "Shiloh", 'the sent one (cp. Is. 8:6; Jn. 9:7). The nations would be obedient to this figure, as Egypt and the neighbouring peoples had been to Joseph. The preaching of the Gospel is a gathering together of God's people to Christ (Gen. 49:10; Mt. 12:30). We are now being gathered together, and yet the final gathering together will be at the day of judgment; therefore our response to the calling together of the Gospel now, is a foretaste of the gathering unto the day of judgment (Mt. 3:12 cp. 13:30).

But Jacob envisaged Judah as having an unbroken line of descendants ["from between his feet", an idiom for childbirth] who would be the kingly rulers [with sceptre and staff] until the Messiah figure came. But this didn't come true. And Ez. 21:25-27 clearly alludes to this passage and adjusts it, saying that the kingly dynasty of Judah had been overthrown and would remain so "until he comes whose right it is". It could be that Jacob was uttering a conditional prophecy, what could have been true, but Judah's later failure precluded it. Or maybe whilst the inspired record of these last words is accurate, the fact that Jacob's predictions didn't come true (as Ez. 21:25-27 seems to emphasize) is in demonstration of the fact that he had failed to learn the lesson that paternal blessings and cursings were not that important. Rather should the emphasis be upon God's blessing and cursing, which is all anyway about grace (see on Gen. 33:11).

The alternative rendering "Until Shiloh come", or "Until he come to Shiloh" could connect with the Divine intention that Israel leave Egypt and return to Canaan, to establish His Kingdom. I have explained this idea on Gen. 45:7. In this case we would have here a prophecy of what could potentially have happened; Judah was to be the kingly ruler, until he led Israel out of Egypt to Canaan and they arrived at Shiloh, where the tabernacle was later established. There a king in the line of Judah would be established, and the Gentiles would be obedient to him.

I suggest that the events predicted by Ahijah the Shilonite (the family of David and the tribe of Judah losing kingship over all Israel) are the fulfilment of Gen. 49:10 "The scepter will not depart from Judah" [he will not be banished from his kingdom] "until he comes to Shiloh". When Judah came to Shiloh to crown Rehoboam there, and there the "peoples [of Israel] will gather to him" to crown him, there the kingship or scepter over the ten tribes was lost. Shechem and Shiloh are close to each other and mentioned together twice: "Behold, there is a sacrifice before the Lord in Shiloh… on the east side

of the highway that goes up from Beth-El to Shechem" (Jud. 21:19). Likewise in Jer. 41:5: "from Shechem (and) from Shiloh". The one who comes to Shiloh, the one from Shiloh, may refer not to Messiah but to Ahijah the Shilonite, the one from Shiloh, who prophesied how the kingship would depart from Judah. Ahijah is called "the Shilonite", the man from Shiloh, five times in the record. Quite some emphasis. If "until Shiloh come" refers to the Lord Jesus, it is hard to understand how the kingship departs from Judah when He comes, seeing He Himself is the lion from Judah. And it is hard to understand why He should be called "Shiloh" and the passage never apparently applied to Him in later scripture. The diadem / sceptre did depart from Judah, as Ezekiel 21:25-27 makes clear- and well before the Lord Jesus came. So to make "Shiloh" simply equal to Messiah just doesn't work.

Gen 49:11 *Binding his foal to the vine, his donkey's colt to the choice vine*- Literally, "the vine of Sorek", a valley in Canaan (Jud. 6:4). Jacob's thoughts were back in Canaan, envisaging an ideal situation of peace being enjoyed in the land once Judah had led Israel back there from Goshen.

He has washed his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes- He saw Judah's great Messianic descendant as being associated with the ass, the Hebrew for which essentially means 'patience'; he foresaw the Lord's patient endurance in the struggle, and even foresaw his garments as dipped in blood (cp. Rev. 14:18), eyes bloodshot with the struggle, and yet with teeth white as milk from a true assimilation of God's teaching (49:12 cp. Is. 55:1); through his personal experience and extensive reflection on the basic need of man and the promised blessing of forgiveness, Jacob really went deeply and accurately into a personal knowledge of the future Christ. Blind as he was (Gen. 48:10), Jacob meditated upon the Lord Jesus. His mind was filled with him. He perhaps contrasted his own dim eyes with the burning, bloodshot eyes of his zealous Lord, visualizing the suffering which he knew He would endure for his sake. The blessings of Gen. 49 are in well planned poetic form; it may be that Jacob composed these poems about the Lord Jesus as the crystallization of his extended reflection on the Lord. Would that we would rise up to the Messianic perception of the blind poet Jacob. Likewise David foresaw the Lord Jesus always before his face, and therefore his heart was never ruffled. Jacob evidently saw in Joseph's experience a type of Christ's future sufferings and resurrection (49:11,23).

The Lord's death is described as His washing "his garments in wine, and his vesture in the blood of grapes" (Gen. 49:11 RV). Treading out the grapes is a Hebraism for judgment, and yet it is used here and in Is. 63:1-3 regarding the Lord's treading of the winepress alone in His death. Indeed, the Isaiah passage is clearly applicable to both the crucifixion and the final judgment of the Lord Jesus. The reason being, that in His death was the judgment of this world.

But despite all these cryptic references to the future Messiah, we must remember that Jacob spoke these words to Judah. Judah had deceived Jacob by washing Joseph's clothes in blood to make it appear that he had been slain by a wild animal. But now, in allusion to that, Jacob graciously projects this image as part of a Messianic prophecy of Judah's final greatness. But Jacob is far less gracious to some of his other sons, whose sins he remembers with bitterness and curses them concerning them.

Gen 49:12 *His eyes will be red with wine, his teeth white with milk*- See on :11. Whilst this blessing can be understood as prophetic of Messiah, the Lord Jesus, we must remember that it was also in its first instance the blessing of the man Judah who stood in front of Jacob at this time. Isaac had blessed his firstborn, as he thought, with "plenty of corn and wine" (Gen. 27:28), as well as dominance over his brother. Jacob messed up his life by desperately trying to win this paternal blessing; when he got it, it never really came true for him, and he handed it back to Esau because he then considered that the blessing of God's grace was all sufficient (see on Gen. 33:11). But now Jacob seems to have taken a step backwards, and is expressing this blessing in the same kind of terms, to Judah- who was not the firstborn, but the favourite of a moment, it seems. He has just tried to declare Ephraim as his firstborn, the son of his right hand, in Gen. 48. "Eyes... red with wine" seems a crude way of wishing Judah much wine, for this is the language of drunkenness (GNB "His eyes are bloodshot from drinking wine"); the whole feeling of these last words of Jacob is that he was not at his spiritual best, and much of what he said never really came true.

The idea seems to be that good wine makes eyes go red, and milk gives you white teeth. Milk doesn't make teeth white; but as with the language of demons in the New Testament, we have here an example of where wrong ideas are recorded as true, with no footnote pointing this out; because the Bible is written for people at their time, and some issues God doesn't see necessary to correct at the time.

Gen 49:13 *Zebulun will dwell at the haven of the sea. He will be for a haven of ships. His border will be on Sidon*- If we insist that Jacob's words all were to come true, then this appears an unreconciled expositional problem. Zebulun was to dwell along the sea coast (LXX), where ships unload [a "haven"], "beside the sea" (GNB), until Sidon. But this wasn't the case. The canton of Zebulun even in Ezekiel's prophecy of the restored Kingdom was to be nowhere near Sidon, and Zebulun never had a border unto Sidon. According to Josephus (Ant. 19:10,16), Zebulun was never even bounded by the sea, being cut off by Asher. Could it be that at times Jacob's enthusiasm carried him away, and what he said was more his own wishing than the direct revelation of God? Until a satisfactory explanation can be come up with, it seems this is what we must accept. In this case, we see that even in this flurry of faith in the future Kingdom and Messiah, Jacob's interest in the physical aspect of the promises still remained with him, and

carried him away in a way which God refused to work with. Perhaps this is why his old name "Jacob" and his new name "Israel" are used together so much at the time of his death, because he was still not totally transformed; and yet shall be saved, by grace. David's spiritual enthusiasm for Solomon needs to be read in a similar light; he makes statements concerning him which reflect a Messianic zeal, but also a desire to see his physical son more blessed than he was worthy of.

Gen 49:14 *Issachar is a strong donkey, lying down between the saddlebags*- "Issachar has desired that which is good; (i.e.) resting between the inheritance. And having seen the resting place that it was good... he subjected his shoulder to labour" (49:14 LXX). The Apostle alludes to this Greek text in Heb. 4:1: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest". Jacob imputed righteousness to his son Issachar at the end. Imputing righteousness to others, seeing the good and the potential in them, was something Jacob only reached at the end; he saw Issachar as seeing the future Kingdom, and devoting himself to labour now to attain that future rest. And the writer to the Hebrews bids us follow that man's example. Jacob's judgment of his Issachar was with regard to how keenly he perceived the future rest of the Kingdom, and laboured now to attain it. For this reason, Jacob commended him; he judged Issachar according to how keenly he desired the Kingdom.

Jacob's achievement of a true humility is evident in his last words. The way he blessed his sons in Gen. 49 indicates this; note how he saw Issachar's greatness in the fact he was a humble servant (49:14). He learnt the lesson of that night of wrestling; his natural strength was not to be gloried in, neither was this to be his true greatness. And yet in Jacob's words to some of his other sons at this time, and in Gen. 48:22, he is back to his old pride and trust in human strength. This is why the old name "Jacob" is juxtaposed with "Israel" at this time. And yet he died in faith and hope of salvation.

And again, we can read these words to Issachar more negatively; because to compare someone to a donkey was an insult and not seen as a compliment. Hence GNB: "Issachar is no better than a donkey". And it was a lazy donkey, who collapsed under its load. This fits with the generally terse and negative attitude which Jacob has to several of his sons. It's so sad that a man who had been shown such grace, and realized it, could not show it to others by the end of his life.

Gen 49:15 *He saw a resting place, that it was good, the land, that it was pleasant. He bows his shoulder to the burden, and becomes a servant doing forced labour*- Jacob may have particularly remembered Issachar's donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, coming in to the pleasant land of Goshen. But Jacob was prophetically aware that Issachar, along with all Israel, would end up "doing forced labour" in that pleasant

land, which is what happened after new Pharaohs arose. We may enquire what was the "blessing" in this (:28). It is as ever a case of a curse having a silver lining; for one of the great themes of the Bible is that we must humble ourselves to be exalted. And perhaps that is the implication here; that the good land would be his resting place, exactly because he became a servant. And this happened on a national level- the Hebrews did "forced labour" in Egypt to prepare them to inherit the "rest" of Canaan, the good and pleasant land.

Gen 49:16 *Dan will judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel*- The idea may be that Dan would be independent of the other tribes, and would judge / lead his own tribe. Or the idea could be that Dan would be the judge of all Israel- but this never happened.

We note that the sons of Jacob's slave women [whom we now read of] are blessed on the same level as the sons by his wives. He recognized on one hand the equality of all his children; and yet on the other, he still retains his obsession with blessing the second born in the way he treats Joseph's sons.

Gen 49:17 *Dan will be a serpent in the way, an adder in the path, That bites the horse's heels, so that his rider falls backward*- Again we have the theme of blessing out of curse. Dan was called a serpent- but he would thereby come to victory. This is to be connected with Zech. 10:5, which speaks of how in the last days, the invaders of Israel will be toppled from their horses by the men of Israel / Jacob. Again, Jacob's mind was on the far distant glory of his sons in the day of the Kingdom. There is also reference here to Gen. 3:15, but with an unexpected twist; Dan as the snake (not the woman) would bite his enemies, and thereby subdue them. Is there a hint here that Jacob had so meditated on the Lord Jesus, the future Messiah, that he realized that he must have our sinful, snake-like, Jacob-like nature, and yet through that very fact the final victory against sin would be won? 'Jacob' meaning 'heel-catcher' associates him with the seed of the snake, who would bruise the seed of the woman in the heel. He saw how he would somehow be rescued from his own 'Jacob-ness', saved from himself, by the Saviour to come. It turned out that Jacob, who in some ways was the seed of the snake, became the seed of the woman. And yet his Messianic blessing of Dan indicates that he saw these two aspects in his Saviour Lord; he was the one who had the appearance of the seed of the snake (cp. how the bronze snake symbolized him), and yet was in fact the seed of the woman. I really believe that Jacob had so deeply reflected on his own life and sinfulness, on the promise in Eden, and on the promises of Abraham's saviour-seed, that he came to as fine an appreciation of the representative nature of Christ's sacrifice as any believer has today. Thus a lifetime of reflection on the promises (rather than thinking 'Yes, we know all about them') and sustained self-examination will lead to

a deep grasp of the fact that Christ really represented *you*, he had exactly your nature, and thereby he is your very own saviour.

Gen 49:18 *I have waited for Your salvation, Yahweh*- Jacob's hope of Messiah was the hope of his life; "I have waited for Your salvation", 'Your Jesus', he commented, perhaps in desperation at the way his sons generally did not perceive this. This is commented upon by the Jerusalem Targum with the suggestion that Jacob was expressing a very definite Messianic expectation: "My soul waiteth not for the deliverance of Gideon, the son of Joash, for it was only temporal; nor for that of Samson, for it was but transient; but for the redemption by the Messiah, the Son of David, which in thy word thou hast promised to send to thy people, the children of Israel; for this, thy salvation, my soul waiteth"

Yahweh is a saviour God, not just a provider of children, cattle and land for the present; and now, at long last, Jacob associates Yahweh with himself; Yahweh has become his God, as he promised 70 years before. Ex. 6:3 says that Jacob knew the Yahweh Name from the time God appeared to him; but it took him a lifetime to make Yahweh his very own God.

Gen 49:19 *A troop will press on Gad, but he will press on their heel*- This continues the idea that apparent curses are in fact blessings (:28), once the silver lining is perceived and believed. The principle of Gen. 3:15 is recalled through the reference to "their heel"- blessing out of curse.

Or as AV, Gad "shall overcome *at the last*", which reflects how Jacob's mind was focused on the final victory of his people, "at the last" . Again the idea is of temporary defeat or curse, leading to long term blessing. At the end of his life, Jacob had come to terms with his earlier idolatry. 'Gad' was the name of a Babylonish deity which presided over chance; Israel were condemned for believing in him in Is. 65:11 AVmg. Leah using this name reflected the sentiment of 'Good fortune at the hand of the god Gad'. The way she effectively accuses Jacob's God of treating her like a prostitute who gave her "hire" because she let her maid sleep with her husband... doesn't indicate that she was a great believer in Yahweh. Yet when Jacob blessed Gad, he seems to change this: "Gad, a troop (Heb. *gedud*, not *gad*) shall overcome (*guwd*, related to *gad*) him: but he shall overcome". These word plays would suggest that the god Gad would be overcome, would be 'Gad-ed', by the troop of warriors that would come from the tribe of Gad.

Gen 49:20 *Asher's food will be rich. He will yield royal dainties*- Asher "shall yield royal dainties", or 'dainties fit for a king' suggests Jacob imagining how in the Kingdom, the Lord Jesus would eat food grown in Asher? In the restored Kingdom, the tribes of Israel would each bring their royal dainties to the Messiah (Ez. 45:16). But in the shorter term,

it seems Jacob envisioned Israel as being led by a king who came from Judah; and Asher would be supportive of that king. Yet it was not God's will that His people should have a human king. So again we see how Jacob even at his end was not completely in step with the Father; and yet shall be saved.

Gen 49:21 *Naphtali is a doe set free, who bears beautiful fawns*- Or as AV "a hind let loose: he giveth goodly (lit. 'gracious') words"; this is another Messianic hint. Ps. 22 (title) likens the Lord to a hind at the time of his death; and again, Jacob's appreciation of the quality of grace as it would be manifested in Christ comes out. The LXX says that Naphtali is "a tree trunk let loose". With all the other Messianic insights in Jacob's words, this cannot be accidental. Jacob even foresaw something of the physical manner of the Lord's death. The idea of being let loose has day of atonement connections (Lev. 16:21). Did Jacob see that far ahead? One Chaldee text reads for this verse: “Naphtali is a swift messenger like a hind that runneth on the tops of the mountains bringing glad tidings”.

GNB gives "Naphtali is a deer that runs free, who bears lovely fawns". This would imply Naphtali was to be captured, but would break free afterwards. Which fits the theme of cursings having a silver lining of blessing in the end, rather like :19 "Gad will be attacked by a band of robbers, but he will turn and pursue them" (GNB).

Gen 49:22 *Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a spring. His branches run over the wall*- This speaks of the descendant of Joseph as a fruitful vine, with branches. The Lord Jesus seems to have quarried his description of himself as a vine with branches from this very passage (Jn. 15:5). Joseph is only recorded as having two sons, so he was not so fruitful in his lifetime; but Jacob spoke by faith, anticipating how Ephraim would become very fruitful and the largest tribe in the ten tribe kingdom. I have noted above that most of the sons are not much blessed and some are cursed, yet they are all blessed (:28). I suggest this was because the huge blessings upon Joseph, the blessings promised to Abraham in the covenant (:26), would be shared by Joseph. And this is intimated by this statement that his branches run over the wall, i.e. his fruitful vine branches bring fruit and blessing to people outside his own house. This is confirmed by :26 LXX; the huge blessings of the covenant, the blessings given to the fathers, "shall be upon the head of Joseph, and upon the head of the brothers of whom he took the lead". This means that the blessings upon Joseph would be mediated to the brothers. It was because of his exaltation over them, which they had so resisted when his dreams first described it, that they would also be blessed.

But the Hebrew is difficult here. The GNB offers: "Joseph is like a wild donkey by a spring, A wild colt on a hillside". The image then would be of Joseph's loneliness, separate from his brothers, silhouetted alone on a hillside. "A fruitful bough" (AV) is

literally 'son of a fruit tree', thereby again elevating Jacob's own importance; he was the tree, and Joseph a branch only. When Jacob was to bow to Joseph, according to the dreams. It's rather like Jacob praising Judah as a cub- suggesting Jacob was the great lion.

Gen 49:23 *The archers have severely grieved him, shot at him, and persecuted him*- The figure of archery seems slightly inappropriate compared to what the brothers did to Joseph. Perhaps the brothers never reached the ideal level of repentance in telling Jacob what really happened; and Joseph didn't tell Jacob because he had forgiven the brothers. The brothers' abuse of Joseph "severely grieved him", he took it very much to heart. There were likely serious incidents against Joseph before he was finally put in the pit, and Jacob may be alluding to them. However, Genesis 49 is poetry, and perhaps we are to interpret their arrows as their words, which is common enough symbology in the Bible (Jer. 9:7). Joseph was deeply hurt by their words, but (:24), God placed His hands upon those of Joseph so that the arrows he shot back, the words he spoke in response, were of grace. Jacob was marvelling at this, as we also do.

The ecclesia in the time of Amos "chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Am. 6:5,6). They drunk wine and anointed their faces with oil- rejoicing in Gods blessings. They looked back to the heritage of their spiritual ancestors (David), and on a surface level appeared to follow them. They chanted the temple songs, and yet there was no grief within them for the affliction of Gods people. The archers were to surely grieve Joseph, but they chose to ignore the terrible import of those prophecies of Messiahs suffering. There was the appearance of religion and worship, but no grief nor passion for the tragedy of Messiahs forthcoming death, no grieving for the tragedy of Gods people, who were about to be afflicted for their sins. And in this we must take our warning.

Gen 49:24 *But his bow remained strong*- As in :23, Jacob is using the imagery of archery. But he is also handing out blessings which sound very similar to those given to him by Isaac. Those blessings were supposed to have been received because the firstborn had taken his bow and arrows and caught wild game (Gen. 27:3 s.w.). All this allusion to human strength, and Jacob himself boasts of how he used his bow to take Shechem (Gen. 48:22), is quite inappropriate for a man made to limp so as not to trust in his own strength. And he had earlier resigned the blessing of the firstborn which he had received, awed instead by the blessing of God's grace (see on Gen. 33:11). But now he returns to the scene of Isaac his father blessing him and Esau, and he starts to make conscious and unconscious allusion to it. Hence this imagery of bows and arrows.

The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob- The archery allusion continues. The idea is that Joseph placed his hands on a bow, and God placed His hands on Joseph's hands, so that he was able to pull the string back further and take perfect aim. David uses this analogy about himself in 2 Sam. 22:35, and it is precisely acted out in 2 Kings 13:15-17. The idea is that God would be behind whatever Joseph did. But bows and arrows also speak of children, and the thought may be that God would make Ephraim and Manasseh go far, perhaps leading up to a Messiah figure, "the shepherd". So we could translate: "The masters of archery hated him. But his bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob".

Jacob coins a new name for God: the *abiyr*, translated here "the mighty [God]". This word occurs only in five other places, and each time it is in the phrase "the mighty one (*abiyr*) of Jacob" (Ps. 132:2,5; Is. 1:24; 49:26; 60:16). Likewise, the Lord used new titles of God in his time of ultimate spiritual maturity as he faced death (Jn. 17:11,25). Many of the Messianic Psalms refer to God as " my God" , and it was one of the phrases in the Lord's mind in His final, glorious maturity (Mt. 27:46). Moses in his final speech of Deuteronomy often encouraged Israel that God was *thy* (singular, personal) God. Jacob knew God's mightiness for himself in a very special way; he knew His gentle forgiveness of all his pride and self-will, that mighty forgiveness, that mighty patience with him, that Almighty salvation of him which had been made possible. In the same way we will each be given the name of God, and yet this Name will be known only to us (Rev. 2:17; 3:12; 14:1); it will be God's Name, but in a form entirely personal to us. In dim foreshadowing of that glorious relationship with God, Jacob reached something of this even in his mortal life.

From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel- This describes "the mighty one of *Jacob*" as the shepherd and rock of *Israel*. Again Jacob is finally acceptant of the name change. Jacob recognizes that God through His Angel had shepherded him all along (Gen. 48:15), and He would do likewise to Joseph's seed. The references in Deuteronomy to God being the rock that Israel forsook therefore refer to the Angel (Dt. 32:15,18). It is worth noting that the shepherd and rock ("stone" of Gen. 49:24) are both clear titles of Christ- implying that this Angel specifically represented Jesus? Hence "that rock (Angel) was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).

Jacob describes the future Messianic seed as "the stone of Jacob / Israel". Jacob's physical stone had been overturned, rested upon, set up and anointed (Gen. 28:13-15); perhaps now at the end, Jacob thought back to that incident and saw in that stone a prophecy of the death and resurrection of the Lord. Perhaps he even saw that the anointing, the 'Christ-ing' of the Stone would be after its raising up; he foresaw that the

Lord Jesus would be made the Christ, the anointed, in the fullest sense by the resurrection (Acts 2:36). "The hope of Israel", or (see modern versions), "he for whom Israel / Jacob hopes" is another title of Christ (Acts 28:20 cp. Jer. 14:8; 17:13; Joel 3:16); he was the one for whom Jacob / Israel hoped. And his hope is the hallmark of all the Israel of God.

Jacob's reflection on the Lord Jesus must have been deep indeed, for he reaches some quite advanced and deep conclusions concerning him. Thus he describes God as the God from whom is "the shepherd, the stone of Israel / Jacob", both evidently Messianic titles. Yet "the rock of Israel" is later understood to be a reference to the God of Jacob (2 Sam. 23:3). Therefore we may conclude that Jacob saw his God as manifest in the future Messiah, who would come out of the Father, i.e. be the Son of God. To understand God manifestation in Christ and the necessity for his Divine Sonship could have come from direct Divine revelation, but my sense is that it came instead from his deep appreciation of the promised blessing of forgiveness through Abraham's Messianic seed. Jacob's ever deepening appreciation of this and his progressive appreciation of God's grace led him to deeply meditate on the Lord's role. Jacob himself was a shepherd (Gen. 46:34; Hos. 12:12), and yet he gave the Christ the title of "*the* shepherd", as if he recognized that although the Lord Jesus would come out of God, he would also be exactly like Jacob, of his nature. He saw on a completely personal level the way in which Christ truly was his very own representative. He therefore saw in himself a type of Christ, indicated by the way in which he asks his sons to gather themselves unto him, and then goes on to say that ultimately, his people will gather themselves together unto Messiah (Gen. 49:1,2 cp. 10). See on 1 Cor. 10:4; Gen. 48:19.

Moses' hands being upheld by the hands of others can be seen as a type of the Lord Jesus being sustained by Angelic hands on the cross, connecting with this Messianic prophecy concerning the hands of Messiah being strengthened for His mediation by the hands of God. Throughout Scripture, God's hands are associated with His creative work in the natural creation (e.g. Ps. 8:6; 95:5; Heb. 1:10)- work which was and is performed through the Angels. The Lord Jesus was aware of the Angels in His final agony; He was painfully aware that they were at His command to lessen the physical torment (Mt. 26:53).

Jacob stated that from Joseph (Ephraim's father) would come the Shepherd / Stone / Messiah (49:24); presumably, Jacob thought, through Ephraim. Yet Jacob was wrong in this; indeed, he uses Messianic imagery about Judah's seed as well. Thus whilst Jacob showed his spiritual maturity by an enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus Christ, even right at the very end of his life, he still had an old flaw: a desire to fulfill God's promises in the way *he* wanted them fulfilled, a desire to turn God's word round to fit in with *his* preferred way of thinking (in this case, that Messiah would come through Joseph /

Ephraim). The way the prophets continually describe sinful Israel as "Ephraim" is perhaps God's way of showing that Jacob's way was not His way. See on Gen. 48:19.

Gen 49:25 *Even by the God of your father, who will help you; by the Almighty, who will bless you, with blessings of the sky above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb- Finally*, at long last, Jacob got there. In this section, he says three times the same thing; God is my God, Yahweh- Messiah will be the my rock, my stone, yes, He is the God of your father Jacob, He is ALL-MIGHTY to save. That promise to make Yahweh his God, made 70 years previously in semi-belief, he had now fulfilled. He had made Yahweh his God. He was not only the God of his father and grandfather. The God who can do all things, not only physically but more importantly (as Jacob now realized) *spiritually*, was with his very own God. No wonder he dies repeating this three times over. And remember, he's our pattern.

The word "help" used here frequently occurs in the context of military help. Again Jacob's thoughts seem to be circling around the material and physical, when his whole life's lesson was surely that the spiritual must dominate over the material. The blessings he wishes Joseph again recall those uttered by Isaac, Jacob's father (Gen. 27:28); and God had taught Jacob that His spiritual blessings are far more important than these kinds of material blessings. In a moment of spiritual desperation and perception, Jacob had grasped this, and handed them all to Esau (see on Gen. 33:11); but as with us, over the years, that perspective had become eroded.

We note that Jacob blesses Joseph with blessings of the heaven and the deep, or, the earth. This was exactly the blessing which Isaac had given Jacob when he stole the birthright blessings from Esau. Jacob had been taught many times that these blessings were immaterial, and had at one point in Gen. 32 resigned them back to Esau. But here he considers such blessings significant- he has still not learned that these material paternal blessings are irrelevant. His behaviour with Ephraim and Manasseh likewise reflects his failure to have really learned his lessons about the irrelevancies of being the firstborn. He thus died imperfect spiritually, like all of us, and yet secure in God's salvation.

Gen 49:26 *The blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of your ancestors, above the boundaries of the ancient hills*- Jacob had lamented that he had not been blessed with as long a life as his ancestors Isaac and Abraham (see on Gen. 47:9). But he finally feels he has been blessed far more than them. He certainly had more children, but materially it would seem they had more. So the "blessings" he perceives are spiritual rather than material; even though, as pointed out throughout this commentary, he still had the material and the spiritual too mixed up in his perceptions.

And he now realizes that the huge blessings of the covenant have all been placed upon Joseph, and have as it were run off from his head onto the heads of his brothers (see LXX). This implies they were kneeling before him with heads bowed, exactly what Joseph had dreamed at 17.

Jacob's progression from perceiving the promises as concerning physical blessing to seeing their essential relevance to forgiveness and future salvation is made explicit here: "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of the ancient mountains, the delight, glory or loveliness of the hills of eternity" (this rendition is supported by the LXX, Gesenius, RVmg.). Remember that in the wrestling incident, Jacob realized that the blessing of God essentially refers to His forgiveness, and he had therefore given away his material blessing because he was so thrilled with his spiritual blessing (see on Gen. 33:11). This connection between blessing and forgiveness / salvation is widespread throughout Scripture: Dt. 33:23; Ps. 5:12 (blessing = grace) Dt. 30:19; Ps. 3:8; 24:5; 28:9; 133:3 (= salvation); Ex. 12:32; 32:29; Num. 24:1; 2 Sam. 21:3; Ps. 67:1 (cp. context); Lk. 6:28 (cp.) Acts 3:26; Rom. 4:7,8; 1 Cor. 10:16; Gal. 3:14 (= forgiveness). Surrounded by his sons clamouring, one can imagine, for physical, immediate blessings, just as he did in the first half of his life, Jacob says that the spiritual blessings he had received, the grace, the forgiveness, the salvation, were infinitely higher than the blessings of rock-solid hills and mountains, things which seemed so permanent and tangible. His intangible blessings were, he finally realized,. much higher than his intangible ones.

Jacob no longer saw the promised blessings as solely referring to him personally having a prosperous time in the promised land; he joyfully looked forward to the future Kingdom. He says that he now realizes that his blessings (of forgiveness and the subsequent hope of the Kingdom) are greater than the blessings of the everlasting mountains (49:26 RV mg.); he saw the spiritual side of his blessings as more significant than the material aspect. Despite the fact that the promises were primarily fulfilled in the peace and prosperity he and his seed enjoyed at the end (Gen. 48:4 "multitude" s.w. 47:27; 35:11; 28:3), Jacob doesn't emphasize this fact as he could have done; instead, he looks to the future, ultimate fulfilments. He looked back on his life as a "pilgrimage", a series of temporary abodes on the way to something permanent, i.e. the future Kingdom (Gen. 47:9).

They will be on the head of Joseph, on the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers- This may not simply be a statement to the effect that Joseph was separate from his brothers. He was literally 'Nazirited', consecrated, from among his brothers; this could be a reference to how he was the family priest, wearing the coat of

many colours; and how he was clearly consecrated by God as well to be the family's saviour.

LXX "shall be upon the head of Joseph, and upon the head of the brothers of whom he took the lead". As discussed on :22, the idea is that the brothers were each individually blessed (:28) because they partook in the blessings upon Joseph. Even though many of them were 'blessed' with curses.

Gen 49:27 *Benjamin is a ravenous wolf. In the morning he will devour the prey. At evening he will divide the spoil*- "In the morning he shall devour the prey" (49:27) connects with the promises that Messiah's second coming would be the true morning (Is. 60:1; Mal. 4:1,2); this was the day when Benjamin would have his true blessing. Many of Jacob's blessings of his sons contain some reference to Christ's future work, e.g. "he shall divide the spoil" (49:27); "he whom thy brethren shall praise" (49:8 = Rev. 5:5). Jacob describes Judah's Messianic descendant as "my son"; he eagerly looked ahead to the Lord Jesus as fulfilment of the promised Messianic seed. He perhaps saw that the multitudinous seed he had been promised was in fact an intensive plural, referring to the one great Messianic seed.

Or perhaps Jacob was angry with Benjamin, the 'son of my right hand' who had become firstborn after Joseph disappeared. The GNB translates more bluntly: "Benjamin is like a vicious wolf. Morning and evening he kills and devours". Maybe this is some reference to an unrecorded military encounter (as in :9 and Gen. 48:22) where Benjamin, although young, had acted with great brutality. Jacob would be raising this issue as a reason for not now seeing him as the firstborn.

Gen 49:28 *All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them and blessed them. He blessed everyone according to his blessing*- GNB has it about right: "These are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said as he spoke a suitable word of farewell to each son". And yet only Judah and Joseph got any real blessing; Jacob's attitude with most of the other sons was to raise issues from the past and curse them because of them, being quite insolent to some of them, e.g. "Issachar is no better than a donkey". And he tells Simeon and Levi that he is nothing to do with them. What was intended to be a time of blessing, he turned into cursing. When God had graciously turned his cursings into blessings for him, and Jacob himself realizes that he has been so amazingly blessed himself. It was a sad end, and yet Jacob still shall be saved, and God is still the God of Jacob. None of us will attain moral perfection by the time we die, and so in essence we are like Jacob, dying in hope of grace, in immaturity, not having got as far as we ought to have done.

Or perhaps we are to understand that in the curses and noted consequences for disobedience, there is a silver lining. There is blessing, for those who respond and humble themselves; judgment and consequence become a magnificent defeat. Thus the scattering of Levi was fulfilled through their becoming the priestly tribe, intended to bring blessing to the rest of Israel through their scattering.

Gen 49:29 *He instructed them, and said to them, I am to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite*- Although the rather rambling, bitter and bizarre statements so far in this chapter could give us the impression that Jacob had dementia, he speaks of his funeral and the location of the burial cave with great accuracy. His heart was truly on the things of the Kingdom and the promises. We note that he saw his fathers as lying in the grave; if he had believed in an immortal soul, surely he would have spoken otherwise.

Gen 49:30 *In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as a burial place*- That this spot was bought, when it was their eternal inheritance, is cited as an example of the faith of the patriarchs (Acts 7:5). They had not inherited the land eternally, yet God keeps His promises- and therefore they were forced to look ahead in faith to the day of resurrection and eternal inheritance.

Gen 49:31 *There they buried Abraham and Sarah, his wife. There they buried Isaac and Rebekah, his wife, and there I buried Leah*- In his penultimate sentence, Jacob makes the perhaps strange comment that "they buried Isaac" (his father; 49:31). The "they" meant him and Esau (Gen. 35:29), but perhaps Jacob wanted to show his separation from Esau by describing the funeral in this way. Separation from the world is thus an aspect of spiritual maturity, and also a result of sustained appreciation of the covenant promises.

It seems that Jacob came to see his beloved parents in spiritual, not emotional terms, at the end. Consider the pronouns he uses: "There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they (i.e. he and his brother, Gen. 35:29) buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah" (49:3 AV1). He doesn't talk in the first person about "my father" or "I" buried. He sees himself as their friend in faith, more than their son. These words were said in Jacob's last breath. It shows to me how at last he had won this battle, he had shed the crutch of his father's faith, he stood alone before *his* God, at the very end he wasn't leaning on his parents spiritually any more, all the scaffolding had been removed, and he stood alone, on his own deep foundation. His final words are full of conscious and unconscious reference to the fathers and the promises. See on Gen. 47:9; 48:15.

Gen 49:32 *The field and the cave that is therein, which was purchased from the children of Heth*- Jacob's final words reflect his resentment against the children of Heth; he saw that they were the world, the children of this world which now possess the land of promise, covenanted to be God's Kingdom, not theirs. He realized that the time was not yet ripe, and his very last words were a reminder of this. His mind was centred on the promises and the future ownership of the land, and on his connection with Abraham and Isaac; the fact that the land was not inherited during the patriarch's lifetimes (the land had to be bought from the children of Heth) is seen by the Spirit as an indication that the Kingdom had not yet come, but surely would do (Acts 7:5). And Jacob died with exactly the same perception. In doing so, he was reflecting the view of his dear mother, who detested the ways of the Godless children of Heth (Gen. 27:46). So in his time of dying, Jacob was not divided from the spiritual views of his parents. Their Hope was his Hope, but he had made it his own. He was not just living out their expectations of him. The way he got there in the end is just marvellous to behold.

Gen 49:33 *When Jacob made an end of charging his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the spirit, and was gathered to his people*- At the very end, Jacob gathered himself up into his bed to die, and then God gathered him up (this comes out very clearly in the Hebrew text). That desire of God for mutuality with His servant Jacob had always been there. See on Gen. 48:8.

The idiom of Jacob being "gathered to his people" is used, despite the fact that many Bible readers will misunderstand this as meaning that he therefore joined them in some disembodied existence. The idiom is used but not corrected. God is not so primitive as to keep on as it were tripping over Himself to defend and define what He has said and the way He has chosen to say it. He speaks to us in our language, and at various times over history has dealt with men in terms they can cope with.

GENESIS CHAPTER 50

Gen 50:1 *Joseph fell on his father's face, wept on him, and kissed him*- As noted through Gen. 49, Jacob cursed rather than blessed many of his sons. It is Joseph who comes over as the most affectionate for Jacob, and is in charge of his burial; see on :10. To fall on the face was a sign of inferiority; Joseph did so knowing that the next time he would see Jacob, in the resurrection, Jacob and Rachel would fall before him. So he did this realizing that it was in the flesh, as part of this fallen state. The same phrase "wept on and kissed" is used of what Joseph did to his brothers, to assure them that all was forgiven (Gen. 45:15). We wonder if Joseph felt he had things to forgive Jacob for; not least Jacob's reprimand of Joseph for his dreams, and never apologizing about it later. Jacob's favouritism towards Joseph had been the root of so many

problems for Joseph. In the end, we all have to come to forgiving others, and we may as well do it immediately rather than needing time to do it. And perhaps the way Jacob had removed Joseph from being the firstborn and effectively given it to Benjamin, then Ephraim and then Judah... all felt like it was something he had to forgive, as he finally accepted that all this talk about the paternal blessing was really nothing.

We note that only Joseph is recorded as weeping over his dead father. The brothers are not mentioned as doing so, when we would rather expect them to. This perhaps indicates again that the human ending of the story of Joseph was not ideal. The brothers realized they had deceived their father over Joseph and made him suffer terribly. But they never once admitted it nor apologized to him for it. And when he dies, they do not weep over him. Joseph's dream of restored relationships between them, on account of his great wisdom and grace, was unfulfilled. But his dreams will have their fulfilment in the Kingdom, when Rachel his mother shall also arise to bow before him as he prophesied. For this was never fulfilled in the story fo Joseph in this life.

Gen 50:2 *Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father; and the physicians embalmed Israel*- The Hebrew for "physicians" is literally the healers, those who make whole. It was not the job of physicians to embalm. But Joseph makes them do it, perhaps to teach them that all their Egyptian myths about prolonging life were incorrect. They had not kept his father alive, and so he made them embalm him, dealing personally with the body which they had failed to cure or keep alive. This fits in with a wider theme in the Joseph story- that the ways of the true God demonstrated the errors of Egyptian thinking.

Gen 50:3 *Forty days were fulfilled for him, for that is how many the days it takes to embalm. The Egyptians wept for him for seventy days*- Jacob's sons wept for a shorter period (:10), perhaps again demonstrating (as noted on :2) that the Egyptian ways were inferior to those of the Hebrews; for such lengthy weeping was but a formalism compared to the true grief of the family. We note that Jacob was embalmed; the body was not divided into parts, perhaps in reflection of the hope of resurrection by Joseph. Hence Joseph commands the servants specifically to embalm the body. And the word translated "embalm" also means "to ripen". Death is as Paul explains, the sowing of a seed, which then ripens into the resurrection body.

Gen 50:4 *When the days of weeping for him were past, Joseph spoke to the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found favour in your eyes, please speak in the ears of Pharaoh, saying*- We wonder why Joseph did not directly speak to Pharaoh. Perhaps a new Pharaoh had arisen, and already there was a distance between Joseph and the new ruler. For the rigours of famine were now 12 years in the past. There may be far more implied in the statement "If now I have found favour in *your* eyes".

Gen 50:5 *'My father made me swear, saying, Behold, I am dying. Bury me in my grave which I have dug for myself in the land of Canaan. Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come again'*- The burial place was therefore not simply a cave, from where bodies could be stolen, but involved digging. This was unusual for the Egyptians, who preferred to build structures over the bodies and keep the bodies above the ground; but we can understand it given the Hebrew hope in resurrection. It is not clear when exactly Jacob had this grave "dug"; perhaps he did it

when leaving Canaan, so distinct was his sense of association with the promised land. Yet Jacob himself, despite so often asking to be buried in Canaan, had never spoken of having dug a grave. We wonder if Joseph threw this in at the last moment to underline the need to do it.

Gen 50:6 *Pharaoh said, Go up, and bury your father, just like he made you swear*- Joseph now needs Pharaoh's permission to leave Egypt. This is different to the relationship he had with the Pharaoh earlier, when he could do what he wanted. And the record is pregnant with connection with how Israel were to ask a later Pharaoh to leave Egypt and were not allowed to. The winds of change were already blowing, and the tide of history was turning against Israel in Egypt.

Gen 50:7 *Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, all the elders of the land of Egypt*- Clearly the elderly Jacob had become a senior figure in Egypt in the 17 years he lived there. These "elders" of Egypt were those to whom Joseph had taught "wisdom" (Ps. 105:22 s.w. "senators"). Perhaps they had come to share the hope of Israel.

Gen 50:8 *All the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house. Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen*- Again this points us forward to how a later Pharaoh insisted that Israel's flocks must remain in Goshen if they wanted to leave (Ex. 10:24). And Ex. 10:10 could imply that Pharaoh had tried to bargain that Israel could temporarily leave Egypt to sacrifice in the desert, but their "little ones" must remain. We are being prepared for the Pharaohs getting more controlling and demanding of the Hebrews.

Gen 50:9 *There went up with him both chariots and horsemen. It was a very great company*- I explained on Gen. 45:7 that it was the Divine intention that Israel leave Egypt and return to Canaan once the famine ended; Jacob was intended to die in Canaan with Joseph next to him, and the blessings on the tribes in Gen. 49 would have had their primary fulfilment in the land of Canaan at that time. Israel were to become a great company in the land of Egypt during the famine, and then return to Canaan. And now indeed they were a great company, and were returning to Canaan- but temporarily. They ought to have gone permanently. We too face so many problems in our lives because we do not follow the Plan A which God intended for us. It's not that He rejects us for not following it; but the other plans involve so much suffering for us which would be otherwise needless, and so much human damage.

Gen 50:10 *They came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan*- That they crossed the Jordan is twice mentioned (:11). We wonder why they took the more circuitous route to Mamre from Goshen; for there was a direct highway, that didn't require them to cross the Jordan river. Whatever the reason, it was perhaps to help Israel in the wilderness (the first audience of the book of Genesis) to see that their route was not in fact without precedent. And this is the whole purpose of Biblical history; to help us see that man is not alone, no situation is essentially unique, others have passed this way before. With God's grace ever with them.

And there they lamented with a very great and severe lamentation. He mourned for his father seven days- We notice a separation between "they [the other sons] lamented", and Joseph's mourning ["he mourned"]. They wept in different ways. Joseph clearly led the funeral but we get the impression that the brothers were still not

OK with their father at his burial, whereas Joseph was because he had forgiven him. The last words many of the sons had heard from their father were his ranting at them and effective cursing of them when he was supposed to be giving them a blessing. So perhaps they forgave this, or humbled themselves to accept that although he was unreasonable to them in his demented state, yet indeed they had done wrong and deserved his words. For otherwise it is hard to understand how they could apparently so genuinely mourn their father's passing. Perhaps they now 'got it'; that their blessing, given to each of them (Gen. 49:28), was on account of their connection with Joseph.

Gen 50:11 *When the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning by the Egyptians. Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan*- The Hebrews appeared as Egyptians, just as Moses was later to appear as an Egyptian. We too may be perceived as the people of this world, our Egypt; we look the same, wear the same clothes, pass through the same general experiences, speak the same language. And in moments of weakness, this can lead us to think that perhaps there is really nothing of substance to our religion. But we are different; circumcision is of the heart, in the hidden, inner man, as the New Testament describes it. For the significance of them taking the route over the Jordan, see on :10.

Gen 50:12 *His sons did to him just as he commanded them*- This is laboured (:13). The record wishes all to see how "Israel" were centred around identity with the promises made to the patriarchs, with the patriarchs personally, and with the associated hope of the resurrection of the body. And that is just as true for the new Israel; for the new covenant was expressed in the promises made to the patriarchs.

Gen 50:13 *For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field, for a possession of a burial site, from Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre*- Again the point is repeated, that the patriarchs had to buy land in which to bury their dead, when God had promised them the land as an eternal inheritance. They had to buy a possession; whereas God had *given* them the land as an eternal possession. God keeps His promises, and thus is necessitated the resurrection of the dead and the establishment of God's eternal Kingdom in the land promised.

Gen 50:14 *Joseph returned into Egypt - he, and his brothers, and all that went up with him to bury his father - after he had buried his father*- As noted on :9, there is a tragedy to this. They ought to have taken their children and flocks, and remained in Canaan. But it is emphasized that not one of them remained in Canaan; they all returned to what seemed the softer life.

Gen 50:15 *When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said*- As always with the inspired record, this has the ring of psychological credibility. The 'seeing' or perception of another's death sinks in some time after the burial.

It may be that Joseph will hate us, and will fully pay us back for all of the evil which we did to him- "It may be" can as well be translated "certainly". They were sure Joseph was now going to punish them. Likewise there are some convinced of their certain condemnation who will have an eternal surprise. Why did they have this fear of him, when all the evidence was of his utter love, grace and forgiveness? It is the

same question as to why God's people today doubt their acceptance with the Lord Jesus. Perhaps they had been subconsciously pricked in their conscience by passing by the pit into which they had thrown Joseph so long ago. For there was only one main route from Canaan to Egypt. And they had Joseph with them on this journey, indeed he is presented as leading the return procession. They had not fully believed his forgiveness and salvation of them . Just as we too doubt it. And so when the memory if past failure is restimulated, we too can fall into a spiritual panic attack. We are reminded in the communion service of the utter certainty of our salvation and His love. And we are to meet all our restimulations calm in that knowledge.

They recognized that the apparently single act of selling Joseph into Egypt had led to "all of the evil" which had come upon Joseph. He had clearly explained to them what had happened. And they accepted, as we should, that one bad act spawns many others for which we are responsible. The man who abuses a young child has some blame for the life of theft, drug addiction and self harm which resulted from actions which may have summed up to "just" a few hours. This is the nature of all sin- it has rolling consequences. See on :17.

The brothers still needed education in their faith in grace. The same word is used of how they had "hated" Joseph (Gen. 49:23). So they proceeded to tell a lie, to show a lack of faith, on the basis of a 'What if...' logic. And it is 'What if...?' which drives so much of our lack of faith. It drives the need to undermine others, to pursue ever more wealth, to be untruthful. God does at times pay back evil- the same words are used of Him doing this elsewhere (Jud. 9:56,57; 1 Sam. 25:39; Ps. 54:5 etc.). Joseph does not just gloss over their evil; he agrees with them that they had done evil (:20), but he tells them that he is not God (:19; although that is possible of an alternative explanation). It will not be for him to have any part in any possible repayment of them for the evil done. He doesn't rule out the possibility of God doing so; but it is for him to show grace and to only repay evil with good. This is a profound lesson which Christians have struggled to learn over the centuries.

Gen 50:16 *They sent a message to Joseph, saying, Your father commanded before he died, saying*- As noted on :15, this was a lie, told on the basis of fear of possible futures. It is those same fears which lead us to so much poor behaviour. The Hebrew word for "message" can mean either a message or a messenger- hence Gen. 50:16 AV "messenger", RV "message". In the Divine thinking which is so often reflected in the Hebrew language, the man is his message, the messenger is the message. “What the Soviet cosmonaut wanted when he looked for God in the dark void outside his spacecraft window is... the hungering desire of our age. We want proof, evidence, a personal appearance, so that the God we have heard about becomes the God we see” (Philip Yancey, *Disappointment With God* (Zondervan, 1997) p. 46). And the only evidence is in you and me. People are interested, they are hungering and searching for Him; and the evidence they seek is in our radically transformed lives. They won’t get a voice out of a whirlwind or sight of a Heavenly form; they just get a glimpse of you and me. In this sense the [human] medium *is* the [Divine] message. The word is to be made flesh in us, as it was in the Lord.

Gen 50:17 *‘You shall tell Joseph, Now please forgive the disobedience of your brothers, and their sin, because they did evil to you’. Now, please forgive the disobedience of the servants of the God of your father*- We wonder why the emphasis upon "disobedience". The sin of selling Joseph into Egypt was the summation of much "disobedience"; and they recognized that this apparently single act of selling Joseph ["their sin"] had much more to it (see on :15). They did it because they were

disobedient to Joseph as the family priest, and were disobedient to the implications of his dreams. This would be why they go on to say that they are indeed his servants, as shown in the dreams by their bowing before him. We note that they like their father Jacob are still talking about the God of their father, rather than their personal God. This is the closest we get to any famous final scene of repentance. We are set up to long for and expect some amazing human breakthrough in relationship and dramatic moment of transformation. It doesn't come, or at least, not very dramatically. And even this confession from the brothers is a very long time coming, and as noted earlier, the brothers clearly did repent in their hearts and re-think their past actions and attitudes. But only now, years after Joseph had accepted them anyway, do they move to a formal statement of repentance. And even then, it is expressed in general terms and is not specific, nor is there any specific acceptance that his dreams had come true. And it seems motivated by fear of him rather than being from the heart. And there is never any word of repentance from them to their father for lying to him and distressing him over what they did to him and Joseph. We are left wondering why exactly Joseph wept on hearing these words. This is one of those intentionally open questions which we are left to think about. Was it from joy that all his efforts to lead them to repentance had worked? Or was it from sorrow that they had still not really got there and their words were rooted in fear of him, a fear based on still misunderstanding and not accepting the greatness of his grace and patience?

Joseph wept when they spoke to him- He wept as God must weep, at the slowness of men to believe His wonderful grace. The good news of the Gospel is disbelieved so often because it is in fact too good news.

Joseph's brothers had slink away from him, and he had had to encourage them: "Come near to me, I pray you" (Gen. 45:4). They absolutely knew that they ought to be punished and killed by him, and they obviously thought he would do it. And now even years later, Joseph wept in frustration at their lack of full acceptance of his total forgiveness. These scenes are so evidently typical of the future judgment seat of Joseph / Jesus. There is even the suggestion in Rev. 7:15 that after the judgment process, the Lord will come down off His throne and mix with us, after the pattern of Joseph. See on Gen. 45:4.

Gen 50:18 *His brothers also went and fell down before his face*- They recognized that they had been disobedient to the implication of Joseph's dreams (see on :17), and so again they fall down before him.

And they said, Behold, we are your servants- In :18 they say that they are servants of God; here, that they are Joseph's servants. They perceived Joseph as God manifest, hence his comment in :19 "Am I in the place of God?". Or it could be that Joseph is encouraging them that he is indeed in the place of God (the Hebrew can be translated "I am in the place of God"); and he could therefore assure them that his grace towards them was indeed a reflection of God's grace to them. And God to this day arranges things and encounters in our lives to elicit repentance from us, and to help us perceive that others' grace to us is indeed God's grace to us reflected through them. "We are your servants" is what they had said to Joseph around 20 years before (Gen. 44:16). They had not moved on from this attitude to experiencing open fellowship, friendship and communion with Joseph. And this is indeed a level of relationship with the Lord Jesus which is beyond simply accepting him as our Master. For He wishes to call us friends, not servants.

Gen 50:19 *Joseph said to them, Don't be afraid, for am I in the place of God?*- Joseph doesn't point out their lie; he doesn't say 'I don't believe you, it makes no sense to say this, surely he would've told me himself as I am the one to do the forgiveness;

see, again, you are back to your dishonest ways'. Rather he doesn't confront them but lets his own example of grace speak for itself, setting us a great example. See on Gen. 40:8. He might be saying that indeed "I am in the place of God" (Heb.), not acting according to my own gut feelings; and God is full of grace and forgiveness, so they need not fear him, as he was manifesting God's saving grace to them. I noted on Gen. 41:19 that Joseph was an intense manifestation of God, and the vehicle through whom God was working.

Perhaps there is a purposeful ambiguity in the Hebrew, implying both "I am in the place of God" and "Am I in the place of God?", implying he was not. So this could also be read as Joseph telling them not to fear him, because evil is repaid only by God and not himself; see on :15. 'God manifestation' doesn't mean playing God. Joseph held himself back from being vindictive against his brothers by saying that he could not do so, because if he did, he would be acting 'in God's place'. His fear of 'playing God' meant that he wouldn't presume to judge them. All too easily, a too simplistic view of 'God manifestation' can lead us to assume that we are to judge and condemn others, thus arrogating to ourselves what is only and rightly God's personal prerogative.

This can as well be translated "Fear not, for I am in God's place". Because they had just described themselves as God's servants and now they say they are Joseph's servants. His reasoning is that because he has forgiven them, so has God. Or because God has forgiven them, so has he and he will therefore not punish them. This is how what is bound on earth by us is bound in Heaven. Of course God can forgive us whether or not man forgives us, but the point is that if we forgive then God is eager to match that with His forgiveness. This gives us great power over those who abuse us. In this sense we hold the keys of the Kingdom. And this is the huge significance with which our forgiveness is freighted.

Gen 50:20 *As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day*- When Paul wrote that all things work together for our "good" (Rom. 8:28), he was echoing how in all the grief of Joseph's life, the rejection by his brethren, the cruel twists of fate [as they seemed at the time]... *God meant it for good*. This same wonderful process will come true in our lives- for they too are equally directed by a loving Father. Joseph is clear that "You sold me into Egypt" (Gen. 45:4), but he repeatedly explains that "You sold me [but in fact] God sent me" into Egypt. You sold me, but God sent me (Gen. 45:8). This is the key to coping with life, to perceive that what happens to us on one level is used by God on another.

The wonder of it all is not simply that good triumphs over evil, but that good triumphs /through /evil. And this is finally the message of the Gospel, of the cross of Christ, of the Kingdom, that even death itself becomes a magnificent defeat. Christus Viktor, Jesus Christ as victor, Lord, Master and Saviour. And this is the message we take to a world where evil appears to triumph over good, and where even children's fairytales seem to have evil triumphing. And we have a part in the cross; the Lord's victory there is ours, ultimate and eternal good shall triumph through the evil we experience now.

"To bring it to pass" is vague. What is the referrent of the "it"? Perhaps Joseph's dreams, seeing that Joseph may have seen those double dreams as he did Pharaoh's double dreams, as being "one". He was explaining that they were not about his power over his brethren, but rather their gratitude to him for grace and salvation.

Joseph held no grudge against his brethren, and would not be vindictive to them, because he understood something of predestination: "You *meant* evil against me; but God *meant* it for good". And because he understood that God's good intentions were

worked out through the evil intentions of others, Joseph was content to leave all in God's hands, and on *this basis* he assures his brothers that given his understanding of this 'predestination', he wouldn't hit back at them for what they'd done to him. This can be a helpful perspective for us in our struggles to forgive. "Meant" is literally to weave, to fabricate. Their weaving of evil plans and lies were more than matched by God's incredible weaving through the whole situation to bring about good from evil- He doesn't just walk away from evil and sin, but weaves through it. It is the word used of the "cunning work" of the tabernacle tapestry and the breastplate of judgment, where the threads of colours representing God are woven through the scarlet threads of human sin (Ex. 26:1,31; 28:15). The cherubim were made likewise; through all this, God's absolute glory shines (Ex. 36:35).

The same words and ideas of good and evil are found in 1 Sam. 20:17, where Saul does David evil, but David repays that evil with good. David was inspired by Joseph; as we should be. So often he laments that Saul and his men 'mean evil' ["devise... my hurt"], and yet God will preserve him as He did Joseph, for good (Ps. 35:4; 41:7 etc.). For these records are for our learning, that we too like David might slot ourselves into Joseph's place.

This verse is clearly alluded to in Rom. 8:28: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." We therefore have a part in all this. This is not mere history, but an actual pattern for us, and the living word speaking to us personally.

To save many people alive- God's abundant grace is revealed in the way that they devised evil against one man, and yet God through that devised good not for one man, Joseph, but to save not only him but "many people". They devised death; but through that God devised life. Paul catches this spirit when he draws up the contrasts between the death which came from the one man Adam, and the life which comes through the Lord Jesus.

Gen 50:21 *Now therefore don't be afraid. I will nourish you and your little ones. He comforted them, and spoke kindly to them*- Joseph alludes to his words of 17 years before, when he had first promised to "nourish" his brothers and their families in Egypt (Gen. 45:11; 47:12 s.w.). He assures them yet again that he is a man of his word, no matter how long the consequences of that word go on for. He was in this sense manifesting God to them (see on :19). The 'comfort' he gave them was really comfort in their slowness to believe in his grace. The same words are found in the prophecy of how the Elijah ministry will speak to the heart ["comfortably", s.w.] of latter day Israel, assuring them that their sin is past and forgiven (Is. 40:2).

He "spoke to their heart" (Heb.), so perhaps the story does have a happy ending in that they did finally believe in his love, forgiveness and salvation. And their names will be inscribed eternally upon the new Jerusalem, so we can assume they will indeed be saved by Joseph's grace.

However we would be mistaken if we were to conclude that this is a story of forgiveness and reconcilliation. Joseph indeed forgave his brothers and did so on God's behalf. But there is no blissful picture of reconcilliation, with the brothers and Joseph living happily together. Just as there is rarely any truly happy ending in this life. Forgiveness may be granted, and we may avoid judging those who sinned against us, and our grace may indeed lead to the final salvation of those who sinned against us. But as with Joseph and his brothers, there is often no happy reconciliation in this life; that is one of the joys of the Kingdom which awaits us all. The final fulfilment of Joseph's dream of his brothers and parents bowing *together* before him in gratitude will only then be fulfilled. And we therefore are wise not to join the vast majority who

live and die in unfulfilled hope that there will be such interpersonal reconciliations in this life. People, even believers, live and die divided and distrusting of each other. But the final reconcilliation will come, if we on our part truly forgive. In all these situations, somebody around here has to be the Christian, and that person happens to be you. And really this is the spirit of all God's dealings with us. He forgives and saves, right now. But that doesn't achieve the intimacy with us which it should and could and ought to. But it will, finally, in the Kingdom.

Gen 50:22 *Joseph lived in Egypt, he, and his father's house. Joseph lived one hundred ten years*- After the flood, lifespans slowly decreased. We have quite a lot of data in the Bible regarding this; my friend Dr. John Thatcher once analyzed it and found that the recorded ages decline precisely in line with the decay function of entropy.

Gen 50:23 *Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation. The children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees*- Ephraim and Manasseh themselves had been taken from Joseph's knees and made the sons of Jacob. But these children of Machir and thence Manasseh, the rejected firstborn, were counted to him; see on Gen. 48:12. If he died at 110 he would have presumably seen many grandchildren and great grandchildren, but these of Machir are mentioned as born on his knees because they were counted as his. He may have wanted this to as it were compensate for his "loss" of his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, who were adopted by his father Jacob. Or maybe as he too faced his death, Joseph was acting in the same way as his father Jacob; even though in this issue of adopting grandsons as his own children, there are a range of moral and ethical problems. Joseph clearly alludes to his father's death bed scene when he commands his bones to be buried in Canaan and not Egypt (:24). The same idiom is used for Bilhah bearing children on the knees of Rachel, making them effectively Rachel's children. But it could be that because Machir's mother was a concubine as well as a Syrian and therefore non-Hebrew (1 Chron. 7:14; Gen. 46:20 LXX), Joseph wanted to ensure that the children with non-Hebrew or non-standard associations were still counted as his children. For he himself had married a non-Hebrew. And in this case we again see Joseph's grace and desire to include the rejected.

Gen 50:24 *Joseph said to his brothers, I am dying, but God will surely visit you, and bring you up out of this land to the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob*- In his time of dying, Joseph speaks and wishes just like his father Jacob in his time of death; and he said these words in faith, seeing the future as if it is now (Heb. 11:22). The implications of the promises which comprised the covenant were identical for every man, as they are for us this day. He emphasizes three times (:25 also) that Egypt, this world, is not the resting place of God's people Israel. They should have returned to Canaan of their own volition (Gen. 45:7); but they did not, and so God would 'bring them up', taking the initiative to bring about the fulfilment of the Gospel's promises- by His grace, rather than just abandoning them to their own choice, which at the time was Egypt over Canaan. Earlier, the brothers had been 'brought up out of' Egypt to Canaan when Joseph had released them from the burden of their sins by his grace (Gen. 45:25 uses the same Hebrew phrase). And on a collective level, Israel were to be brought to the same level of desperation and repentance before they could be brought up from Egypt to Canaan. But like the brothers, it seemed they never really got to the required level of repentance; but they were saved by grace all the same.

Gen 50:25 *Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here*- Like Jacob, Joseph's heart was in the land of promise. Joseph's bones were 'carried up' with them when Israel left Egypt. The Hebrew word here is elsewhere translated 'to rise up', 'lift up', 'spring up', clearly hinting of the resurrection which will come at the Lord's return. I explained on Gen. 45:7 that it was God's intention that Israel leave Goshen and return to Canaan; and they had failed to do so. Joseph probably wanted to do so, but his brothers didn't. He perhaps envisaged that the generation contemporary with him would do so, as he asks them to take his bones with them. So he foresaw a special intervention of God in Israel's collective life, God 'visiting' then, so that they would leave Egypt. That could all have been avoided if they had been obedient and quit the soft life and returned to Canaan immediately.

These words were fulfilled in Ex. 13:19: "Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the children of Israel swear, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones away from here with you". And so we enquire whether Joseph's words were prophecy, or command. We have the same question about the prophecy / command to rebuild the temple in Ez. 40-48. Ex. 13:19 seems to present the carrying up of Joseph's bones as a fulfilment of Joseph's prophecy. But Moses and Israel had the freewill choice as to whether to take his bones with them. There was surely an inconvenience factor in locating, preparing and transporting Joseph's bones as they fled Egypt "in haste" on Passover night. So the 'prophecy' was in this sense dependent upon man to fulfil it, and in the case of human failure to obey, then the 'prophecy' would have been rescheduled or reinterpreted into some other form of fulfilment, or not fulfilled at all. And this is a principle applicable to various apparent prophecies which are in fact more command than prophecy, and obedience to command depends upon human freewill.

This could imply Joseph expected his brothers to leave Egypt very soon, and so he asked them to take his bones with them. If they had done this as God intended, the sufferings of Israel in Egypt could have been avoided. We note too that here he emulated his father's attitude, focusing upon the positives in his father rather than the negative.

We note that Joseph's bones were finally buried in Shechem (Josh. 24:32), the specific inheritance given to him by Jacob. Yet it was from Shechem that the 17 year old Joseph had gone to "seek" his brothers. And finally he returns there. It's as if his amazing work in seeking and saving his brothers was finally fulfilled; for their names will be written on the new Jerusalem, and we can assume that his work in seeking and saving them, through so much hurt, grace, wisdom, patience and forgiveness, was finally done and achieved.

Gen 50:26 *So Joseph died, being one hundred and ten years old, and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt*- To remain in power for 80 years in the cut throat politics of Egypt was a huge testament to his integrity. We note again that he was embalmed and put in a coffin; the body was kept intact in reflection of the hope of resurrection. See on :2,3. 'Embalm' also means 'to ripen'. Death is as Paul explains, the sowing of a seed, which then ripens into the resurrection body.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: EXODUS

EXODUS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

EXODUS CHAPTER 1

Exo 1:1 Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into Egypt (every man and his household came with Jacob)-
"Now these are the names" is the phrase used towards the end of Genesis (Gen. 46:8).

Clearly the records are by the same editor / author, who is clearly Moses, according to how these writings are quoted in later scripture.

Exo 1:2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah-
Although Reuben was demoted from being firstborn, the list here seems to be in order of birth.

Exo 1:3 Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin-
The sons of Leah and Rachel are listed first. The sons of the concubines come secondly, perhaps reflecting how this was not God's ideal intention. What Jacob did was not right, but still God worked through his dysfunction to build up the foundation of His people. I suggested in commentary on Genesis that God's ideal intention was that Jacob marry Leah and have his children by her. But he insisted on also marrying Rachel, and had relations with his servant girls. He didn't act in marital life as God intended, but all the same God worked through it all.

Exo 1:4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher-
Eleven sons are listed because these listed in :2-4 are those who came into Egypt; Joseph and his sons Ephraim and Manasseh were already in Egypt (:5).

Exo 1:5 All the souls who came out of Jacob's body were seventy souls, and Joseph was in Egypt already-
LXX "seventy five". The Canaanite explanation of the family of the gods was that it contained a total of 70 gods – Ugaritic Tablet II AB 6.46 speaks of the "seventy sons of Asherah". This is re-focused by the record of Genesis 10 – which speaks of 70 nations of men. Likewise Gen. 46:27 and Ex. 1:5 speak of the 70 sons of Jacob – and Dt. 32:8 says that the number of the Gentile nations was fixed "according to the number of the sons of God" or, "Israel" (according to some texts). The belief in the 70 gods of the Canaanite pantheon is therefore re-focused down to earth – where there were 70 sons of Jacob, 70 nations in the world around Israel, and Dt. 32:8 may imply that each is cared for by a guardian Angel in Heaven.

Exo 1:6 Joseph died, as did all his brothers, and all that generation-
He lived 110 years, which was not as long as his father Jacob, although he appears to have been more spiritual than his father. Length of life was not and is not the ultimate indicator of Divine blessing.

Exo 1:7 The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly and multiplied, and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them-

The suffering of Israel at the time of the first Assyrian invasion of 2 Kings 15:29; Is. 9:1,3,4 is spoken of in terms of their experience in Egypt, which is clearly typical of the last days: "Thou hast multiplied the nation (as God did in Egypt - Ex. 1:7), and not increased the joy... thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder (the language of Israel in Egypt), the rod of his oppressor" (same word translated "taskmaster" in Ex. 1:11). Biblical history continually interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on Ex. 14:25; 15:21.

The situation was also a primary fulfilment of the promises to Abraham about the multiplication of the seed. Those same promises are made to us, and likewise have an element of fulfilment in this life, as well as in the Kingdom to come on earth at the last day.

Exo 1:8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who didn't know Joseph-
"Know" seems used here in the sense of respecting Joseph- who had after all saved Egypt and done so much to establish the power of Pharaoh over the nation.

Exo 1:9 He said to his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more numerous and mightier than we are-
Clearly God had poured out His blessing upon Abrahams seed, until it seems there were more of them in Egypt than there were Egyptians- or at least, more than the members of the ethnic group then in power in Egypt.

Exo 1:10 Come, let us deal prudently with them, in case they multiply yet more and it happens that when any war breaks out, they also join themselves to our enemies, and fight against us, and escape out of the land-
Fear of possible consequence has led men to do the most awful things. So may crimes and murders are rooted in fear. And this horrific abuse of the Hebrews arose from this too. And we are to learn from this, and through faith live without fear, and all the bad things which fear leads to.

Exo 1:11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens-
The taskmasters 'afflicted' Israel in their forced labour, the Hebrew meaning to browbeat/depress. These were exactly the tactics of Hitler's bully boys in the death camps. The Hebrew word translated "taskmasters" in the record of their persecutions is also used concerning Nebuchadnezzar (Is. 14:4) and peoples like Damascus, Tyre, Gaza etc. Concerning Israel's latter day deliverance from them, Zech. 9:8 reads, "I will encamp about mine house... because of him that passeth by (Passover language)... and no oppressor (same word "taskmaster") shall pass through them... for now have I seen"

(cp. Ex. 3:7). Like the Nazis, the Egyptians seem to have excused their abuse of Israel with a concocted ideology. Stephen says that they "dealt subtly" with Israel, using the Greek word from which "sophistry" comes. Militant Islam has already developed an equivalent to this.

They built storage cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses-
Seeing that all ultimately belongs to God, it is an utter delusion to think that we totally own anything. But the possession of wealth leads to just that illusion; because wealth is of itself a delusion. The very possession of wealth tempts us to amass more of it- it truly is potentially addictive of itself. The Hebrew word translated "treasure" is also that used for "store"- hence Ex. 1:11 AV "treasure cities", RV "store cities". The rich fool is a visual presentation of this fact; the more wealth is possessed, the stronger is the desire to store it, amass it- but not use it.

Exo 1:12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out. They were grieved because of the children of Israel-
I will argue throughout Ex. 1-15 that God's intention was that Pharaoh and Egypt should convert to Him. Israel at this time were worshipping the idols of Egypt and were far from Yahweh. But He blessed them by grace, and the more the Egyptians cursed them, the more the Israelites prospered. This was all from God, as part of His wider appeal to the Egyptians to accept Him by perceiving how Yahweh was with His people by grace- even if His own people had effectively rejected Him at the time. The same theme recurs in Ex. 1:20, where the attempt to slay the Hebrew babies results in the Hebrews growing even more.

Exo 1:13 The Egyptians ruthlessly made the children of Israel serve-
We must remember that all the criticisms and denunciations of 'Israel' are denunciations of Jacob, who *primarily* was the man Jacob, whose children shared his characteristics. Therefore in some ways we can feed back from the failures of Israel as a people and see the weakness of Jacob as a man. Thus the way Israel were made to "serve with rigour" in Egypt reflected the way Jacob served in the same way with Laban (Ex. 1:13,14), and thereby implies that Jacob was suffering for his sins and was also idolatrous as they were at that time (Ez. 20:8), while he served Laban.

Exo 1:14 and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all kinds of service in the field; they ruthlessly made them serve in all their service-
The Passover, as the prototype breaking of bread, featured bitter herbs to remind Israel of their bitter experience in Egypt. The breaking of bread should likewise focus our

attention on the fact that return to the world is a return to bondage and bitterness, not freedom. Israel didn't learn this lesson, they forgot the bitterness of Egypt, and longed to return to it.

"Slime" is the same word as "mortar" in Ex. 1:14, and "mortar" in Gen. 11:3 is the word translated "pitch" concerning how Moses' bulrush basket was made (Ex. 2:3). This conjures up the picture of Amram bringing home some mortar from the building site in order to make that ark.

Exo 1:15 The king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah-
The plan to slay the Israelite baby boys didn't apparently get too far, because there were six hundred thousand Hebrew men who left Egypt. So these midwives may have been very local to Pharaoh, perhaps amongst his servants. The command to kill the baby boys may therefore have just been quite localized. Puah, "one who cries out", would be representative of the Israelites as they cried out to Yahweh in their affliction. "Shiphrah" is LXX Zipporah.

Exo 1:16 and he said, When you perform the duty of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birth stool; if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live-
One Egyptologist claims that "two or three days before the expected time of delivery, the midwife conveys to the house a chair of a peculiar form, upon which the patient is to be seated during the birth". The idea that they 'did the duty to the Hebrew women' could suggest these women were Egyptians, who came to fear Israel's God.

Exo 1:17 But the midwives feared God, and didn’t do what the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the baby boys alive-
See on :19. Apparently they didn't kill a single child. This suggests that the plan to kill the babies was very localized and didn't work; see on :15.

Exo 1:18 The king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said to them, Why have you done this thing, and have saved the boys alive?-
We do well to ask ourselves questions as we read the Biblical narrative. What should they have said? What could they have said? What were their options as they stood there, in fear for their lives? We sense if it were Daniel and his friends, the answer may have been a blunt statement that they feared God more than the king. But they flunked that and came out with a lie, in that what they said may have been partly true but was a lie in that it wasn't the full truth. And God blessed them for that. We see here the

eagerness of God to respond to any sign of faith or movement toward Him, even if it is far less than ideal.

Exo 1:19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women aren't like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous, and give birth before the midwife comes to them-
It is possible that the midwives were in fact Egyptians who were told to take responsibility for the Hebrew births. But midwives were generally not used in primitive societies, as they aren't today. So these women may have been telling more or less the truth, although it was an untruth insofar as it was not the complete truth; for the women "feared God" (:17) and therefore disobeyed the king. As with the lie of Rahab being quoted in the New Testament as an act of faith, and the lies of the Gibeonites enabling them to enter the people of God, we see how morality and ethics are not all so black and white in reality. As discussed on :12,20, this statement that the Hebrew women were more vigorous than the Egyptians was another nudge of the Egyptians towards recognizing that there was something special about the Hebrews; their God was so gracious that He blessed them, even though they were patently unfaithful to them.

Exo 1:20 God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied, and grew very mighty-
This was all from God, as part of His wider appeal to the Egyptians to accept Him by perceiving how Yahweh was with His people by grace- even if His own people had effectively rejected Him at the time. The same theme recurs in Ex. 1:12.

Exo 1:21 It happened, because the midwives feared God, that He made them families-
The natural reading of this would be that the midwives were barren but had children after his incident. But the Hebrew phrase "made them families" isn't usually used to mean 'to give children / conception'. If that were the intention, another phrase would have been used. This is the phrase translated "provide for my own family" (Gen. 30:30), "establish a family" (1 Sam. 25:28; 2 Sam. 7:11). The sense is that their families were established. And yet there is no Biblical record of the families of these two women. Perhaps this potential blessing was disabled by subsequent failure within the families.

Exo 1:22 Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, You shall cast every son who is born into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive-
As noted on :15, this appears to be rather localized. For there was no "river" in Goshen where most of the Hebrews lived. We will read of how the family of Moses lived near to Pharaoh's palace, near the River Nile, to which Pharaoh and his daughter went regularly. The command was now given to all Pharaoh's people, i.e. his own ethnic group who were in power. But this too failed to stop the growth of God's people.

EXODUS CHAPTER 2

Exo 2:1 A man of the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi as his wife-
It was God's intention that the people married within their tribes so as to keep inheritances within the tribes. Such commands had not yet been formally given, but perhaps this faithful couple perceived the truth of the principle ahead of time. **Usually the record says that a man takes a wife, she conceives and they have their firstborn child. But the child to be mentioned in :2 is not the firstborn- for Aaron and Miriam were older than Moses.**

This may be to show that the focus of the record is upon Moses; just as we are not told the names of Moses' parents and siblings until much later in the story. Indeed, the story in Ex. 2 is full of people, but none of them are named apart from Joseph. His parents ["a man of the house of Levi and a daughter of Levi"], sister, the Pharaoh, the taskmaster, the Israelite men fighting each other... none are named. Perhaps this is to highlight the name "Moses"; or to give some feel of the depersonalization that was experienced under the Egyptian tyranny. All these anonymous people stand out the more in the Hebrew text, once we recall that the Hebrew name for the book of "Exodus" is *Shemot*, "The names".

But it's also possible that Amram separated from Jochebed because if they lived together, she would likely become pregnant, and any pregnant woman would be watched by the Egyptians and her child immediately destroyed at birth. Right on the birthing stool, as we learnt in Ex. 1. So we get the impression that Amram remarried Jochebed and they had a child as an act of faithful defiance against the Egyptian policy of murdering every newborn Hebrew baby. The term translated "good" or "fair to God" in :2 can simply mean "healthy" and that is how the word is sometimes translated. So it could be that she gave birth prematurely; and when she saw the child was healthy, she hid him three months. It would've appeared to the watching Egyptian "police" that she had miscarried. Amram's conscious having of a male child by Jochebed can be read as an act of defiance against the regime, just as the preceding passage has recorded such an act by the midwives. And the next part of the story shows Pharaoh's daughter likewise defying her father's regime. They were hoping for a saviour, and so God blessed their plans. We note that Moses' father Amram married his own aunty, a relationship Moses was later to define as incestuous [Ex. 6:20 "Amram took Jochebed his father's sister to himself as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses"]. Moses' beginnings were therefore rooted in weakness and his survival as a healthy child was spiritually and physically against all odds.

Exo 2:2 The woman conceived, and bore a son. When she saw that he was a child fair to

God, she hid him three months-
Every faithful mother perceives that her child is "fair to God", so we are to surely read this as meaning that she perceived him as having some particular role in God's purpose. And yet she would have died whilst Moses was apparently lost in the court life of Pharaoh, not making any move towards saving his family nor his people. For only at the age of 40 did it "come into his mind to visit his people". She would have died very disappointed; and will arise at the last day to such a wonderful surprise, when she realizes how Moses turned to God in later life. **Likewise Bithiah [see on :5] may well have died of breast cancer in a neglected corner of a Hebrew slave camp, her body covered with sand anonymously. Lamenting that her adopted child had got caught up in the soft life of Egypt, and that her Hebrew husband had married a woman of Judah in addition to her (1 Chron. 4:18 ESV). Bithia is indeed the unsung heroine of the Old Testament. Perhaps her story is hidden away in the scriptures in reflection of how her amazing heroism likewise was hidden away, and was not generally perceived at the time. Just as the heroism of so many believers isn't perceived now, and they die obscure and unappreciated. But it was Bithiah and Jochebed whose examples and initiatives paved the way for Moses at 80 to become Yahweh's greatest servant after the Lord Jesus. We do not know the way the seeds we sow will later flourish after our time in this world. It may be that only after our death, our 80 year old children will serve God. In my many years pastoring the soup kitchen church in Riga, I baptized so many older folks who commented that they first came to faith through faithful grandmothers or mothers in the Soviet years, although it took them a lifetime to personalize it for themselves. And there are examples of older men and women giving the final part of their lives to stellar service of the Lord. So this is indeed reality, and not just a flimsy peg of hope for disappointed Christian parents to hang their desperate desires upon. And the principle is wider than children. This life is a time of sowing seed; but we reap the results of that seed not now, but in the Kingdom. In secular life, there is so much depression and disappointment from realizing that the seeds sown didn't produce a great harvest; be it in children, career, business, relationships. But for us, the harvest is in the Kingdom, and it will be a harvest of eternal moment.**

Exo 2:3 When she could no longer hide him, she took a papyrus basket for him, and coated it with tar and with pitch. She put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank-
See on 2:10. Moses is set up as example and representative of his people Israel. Israel is likened in Ez. 16:5 to a child rejected at birth, but miraculously found and cared for, and brought up with every pampered blessing. Just as Moses was. Stephen described the 'putting out' of Moses with the same word used in the LXX for what happened to Israel in Ezekiel 16 (Acts 7:21; Ex. 2:3 LXX).

"Slime" is the same word as "mortar" in Ex. 1:14, and "mortar" in Gen. 11:3 is the word translated "pitch" concerning how Moses' bulrush basket was made (Ex. 2:3). This conjures up the picture of Amram bringing home some mortar from the building site in order to make that ark.

She made the ark of bulrushes and placed it amongst bulrushes. So it was invisible by such camouflage to someone passing along the banks of the river; but :5 informs us that the maids walked by the riverside, didn't notice it, but when Pharaoh's daughter went in to the river, she noticed it. And then, to cap it all, the baby cried. The whole story is so imaginable; a plan works well, but then it fails from another angle, and then the baby cries... and all seems to come crashing down. But we see here a classic example of how every cloud has a silver lining; from this apparent crash arose the salvation of both Israel and Moses personally. Even though Moses' parents would likely have died in disappointment whilst Moses was still apparently forgetting about them and enjoying the cool court life of Egypt. We too must realize that the fruits of our sacrifices may only be seen well after we have fallen asleep. The Lord's babyhood was so similar; very nearly dying as a result of Herod's command to murder all baby boys.

Exo 2:4 His sister stood far off, to see what would be done to him-
Standing afar off is associated in the Bible with mourning. She stood afar off out of morbid fascination as to the fate of her baby brother, feeling utterly powerless to help him. It seems they placed him in the ark and placed him in the river in technical obedience to Pharaoh's command, and yet desperately prayed that God would save the child, seeing they had done all that was humanly possible. And indeed He did. **We recall the ministering women standing afar off from the crucifixion; the classic case of apparent failure turning into the magnificent defeat, the cloud with the ultimate silver lining.**

I have often noted that the Pentateuch often alludes to contemporary myths, deconstructs them, and shows the true perspective and narrative. Israel in Egypt had been exposed to centuries of such mythology which they had come to believe; and the task of the Torah was to debunk those myths and reveal God's truth. So the account of Moses' birth and babyhood deliverance is very similar to mythical stories of how many heroes were abandoned soon after birth, almost died of exposure in babyhood, experienced a miraculous rescue, were moved into a totally different environment from what they were born into etc. But the deconstruction of these myths is in that presentation of the "abandoning family" as lowly rather than noble, as they are in the myths; and the family who found and raised him are a royal family in Ex. 2, whereas in the myths they are always poor. Thus Sargon of Agade (2296–2240 BC) supposedly had a noble, wealthy mother who puts her baby son in a

basket and then into a river, where he is saved by a poor water drawer, who raises him to become a gardener who is then ennobled by the goddess Ishtar. But God's way is different; all is inverted. The roles of the poor and the noble / wealthy are reversed. For this is typical of Yahweh God of Israel.

Exo 2:5 Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe at the river. Her maids walked along by the riverside. She saw the basket among the reeds, and sent her handmaid to get it-
The account of Moses being found by Pharaoh's daughter is a classic Bible story- but it begs many questions. Why did this young woman risk disobeying her father? Given Moses' age, how did she manage to survive in Pharaoh's court with an adopted child who looked like a Hebrew and ought to have been killed in babyhood? What kind of relationship did she have with her father? Did he tolerate her sympathy and "compassion" for the Hebrews?

Where else do we read about Pharaoh's daughter? Searching through the Bible, perhaps with the help of a concordance, we come to the references to Solomon marrying Pharaoh's daughter. No great answers there to our questions. Sometimes in Bible study we do draw a blank. And that's a blank. And there's only one other reference to Pharaoh's daughter, hidden away in the obscure genealogies of Chronicles, which we likely skip reading in our daily Bible readings. But there… is the answer. "The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Epher, and Jalon. These are the sons of Bithiah, the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered married; and she conceived and bore Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah, the father of Eshtemoa" (1 Chron. 4:17 ESV). Who was Mered? A prince of the tribe of Judah. And yes, he lived around the time of Moses. So… a daughter of Pharaoh married a Hebrew. A slave. And she was the daughter of Pharaoh. Now we're onto something.

We eagerly look up the meaning of "Bithiah". And we find that Bithiah means 'daughter of Yah'- there is an intended tension therefore in the way in which she is called 'Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh', especially considering that Pharaoh was thought to be God in Egyptian culture. It cannot be an undersigned coincidence that Bithiah is recorded as having a daughter, whom she called Miriam. It's not very common for the names of daughters to be recorded in the genealogies, so it seems a point is being made. Miriam was of course the name of Moses' sister, who had first introduced Bithiah to Moses' family. Her name in Hebrew is almost the feminine form of her father's name, Mered. Mered had another wife who was from the tribe of Judah: "And his Judahite wife bore Jered … Heber… and Jekuthiel" (1 Chron. 4:18 ESV). Egyptologists have various theories as to who the Pharaoh of the Exodus was. One of them is that it was Amunhotep II. His coffin decorations appear to show that he had a skin condition- perhaps the boils from the plagues? One stele that was discovered shows that two of Amunhotep II's sons have

been "erased". Perhaps one of them was Moses?

It seems likely that many Egyptians became proselytes, because many of them left Egypt with Israel. So Bithiah became attracted to God's people, and decided to forego all she could've had in order to save just one Hebrew life. If nothing else we learn that to sacrifice all for the sake of the salvation of 'just' one person is perhaps what we are called to. The woman who could've been one of the most powerful women in the world sacrificed it all, to marry a Hebrew slave- who already had a wife. And presumably she changed her name. She was Yah's daughter now, and not that of 'god' Pharaoh. What motivated her? Surely her experience with raising Moses. From the mouth of a child, who may well have been with his Godly parents for up to five years, she learnt more of Yahweh's ways. And she must've got to know the family of origin and been impressed by Moses' big sister Miriam… for she named her own daughter after her.

We too face choices. To take a second job, rise early and stay up late… to advance in our careers. To get more income, to dispose of upon expensive coffees, the latest gadgets. Or in the spirit of Bithiah and Moses to realize, and realize finally and once for all, that nothing else matters now. The hope of the Kingdom and fellowship of the rejected Son of God is worth so infinitely more than any of Egypt's temporary glory. Moses rejected it for the sake of his service of God's people- who for the most part never appreciated him, and turned their backs on "this Moses". Bithiah likewise, gave it all up… just to be identified with God's people. Being the second woman in Mered's life, a Gentile compared to the other wife being a true blue blooded Judahite, couldn't have been much fun. For all we know, Bithiah died alone and feeling rejected in the corner of a Hebrew slave camp, lamenting how Moses was apparently caught up in the good life of Pharaoh's court which she had given up, buried in the hot sand without a grave, a far cry from the glory girl of her teens. But she did it all so as to be connected with God's people, just as Moses chose to suffer affliction with a people of God who didn't want him. There are brethren who set us a great example in these things. They lost their families because they married a believer and not the one expected for them. Married someone of another race or colour because of their spiritual connection with that person, thus losing the status they might have had within their own culture. They declined promotion in their career because… they wanted to get home each day in time to read Bible stories to their kids. Didn't take out a court case but suffered the loss of so much, didn't answer slander, left God to judge… Spent their spare time and cash going to the Post Office and mailing Bibles to people rather than… tropical beach holidays. Spent their evenings emailing or visiting old, sick, suffering, depressed, difficult or plain awkward brethren… instead of watching a screen.

Exo 2:6 She opened it, and saw the child, and behold, the baby cried. She had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children!-

The Hebrew is specifically 'male children'. She unwrapped him and saw he was circumcised. The woman presumably figured in a moment what had happened. The child had been placed in the basket in technical obedience to her father's command, and the family were just hoping and praying that their God would save him. And she wanted to be a part of that desperate hope and faith.

Exo 2:7 Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, Should I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?-
As with the blessing of the midwives for their telling of untruth through not telling the whole truth, so Miriam does likewise. And is blessed for it. She gives a false impression. And yet through this deception, as with the Gibeonites, life is saved and God's purpose moved forward.

Exo 2:8 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. The maiden went and called the child's mother-
The record is presented here from the perspective of Pharaoh's daughter. The girl went and called the woman mentioned, who was [as we know] the child's mother.

Exo 2:9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages. The woman took the child, and nursed it-
God records Moses being found by Pharaoh's daughter, who then (unknowingly) asks his mother to be his nurse: "The maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me... and *the woman* took the child and nursed it" (Ex. 2:8,9). Why not say *'And Moses' mother* (not "the woman") took him (not "it") and nursed him (not "it")'? The answer seems to be that the record adopts the incorrect and ignorant perspective of Pharaoh's daughter– although with no explicit statement that this is so. And again, as with the midwives, we see God working through somewhat unethical dishonesty. We wonder at what point Pharaoh's daughter realized what had happened. She surely would have perceived the hand of God; in that a Hebrew mother ended up getting paid for nursing her own baby, when she was supposed to have killed the child. **An alternative is that she knew full well all along what the situation was, and acted out of random, gracious pity towards the family.**

Exo 2:10 The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, and said, Because I drew him out of the water-
The fact she names the child is a sign that she considers himself his mother. But Moses is a Hebrew name. It's as if she wanted Moses to retain his Hebrew identity, and herself knew Hebrew; and we can read her actions as another act of defiance

against her father's regime. This continues the theme of the midwives and their acts of defiance in Ex. 1, and Amram and Jochebed intentionally having a baby boy in hope he would be Messiah, defying the king's edict. The fact she went away from the palace and bathed, possibly went swimming, in a part of the Nile accessible to Hebrew slaves would suggest of itself that she wanted at best some 'time out' from Palace life.

The very name 'Moses' meaning 'drawn out' suggests he is the prototype for every saint- a called out one. **Indeed, *mosheh* in Hebrew and Egyptian could carry the idea of 'drawn out of / born of water', making Jn. 3:3-5 alludes to it- every believer must be born of water ['Moses'] and of the Spirit. The same basic word is used in Ps. 18:17 "He drew me out of mighty waters". But as with Moses, so for each of us- as we were drawn out, so we are to draw others out. This is why when at the burning bush he is called to 'draw out' Israel, he is addressed as "Moshe! Moshe!", 'drawn out!'. His life's work was to reflect to others what had been done to him. As he was drawn out from death in Egypt at Pharaoh's hands, so he was to draw God's people out from a similar fate. And he does this also to the women at the well, and also at age 40 to the suffering Israelite. But his drawing out had been by a Gentile woman, and God was clearly manifest in her.** As Moses was drawn out of the Nile and saved, so he later drew Israel out of Egypt. He could exactly enter into their feelings when they emerged from the Red Sea, as the Lord Jesus exactly knows ours after baptism- better than we appreciate ourselves. Moses was saved by being surrounded by water in an "ark" (Ex. 2:3)- the only other time this word is used is concerning Noah's ark, which is a type of our salvation through baptism. God even worked through Moses' weakness to make him even more representative of his people; as he drew back from the theophany of the burning bush through a bad conscience, so did Israel at the foot of Sinai; as they were excluded from the land for inattention to Yahweh's word, so was Moses. He was touched with the very feeling of their sinfulness. In a marvellous way, the Lord Jesus achieved the same, yet without sin; He really felt like a sinner in His death.

Although Bithia uses the Hebrew word "Moses" to name the child, this is also a common Egyptian word. The suffix "moses", "meses" or "mose" means "son of" or "descendant of" in Egyptian. It is often found in the names of the Pharaohs like Ahrmose, Thutmoses, Rameses. But in Egyptian, the name would have begged the question: 'Son of whom?'. Bithia had changed her name to Bithia, meaning 'daughter of Yah', instead of 'daughter of Pharaoh'. So it was understandable that she would name Moses in this enigmatic way.

Exo 2:11 It happened in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brothers, and looked at their burdens. He saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his brothers-

Moses' 120 years of life split clearly into three sections of 40 years- being trained to be a leader in Egypt, able to handle literacy; then 40 years as a humble shepherd in the wilderness, and then 40 years leading and shepherding God's people in humility towards the promised land. Only in the Kingdom, perhaps, will we be able to attach meaning to event. But for sure, our lives are playing out according to a pattern and Divine intention, all from a God who wishes only to do us good in our latter end.

The Hebrew seems to mean that 'at the time that Moses had grown up, he went out to his brothers'. This would be stating the obvious, unless we interpret the growing up as referring to spiritual maturity. Care for others, and the desire to save them, is indeed the acme of spiritual maturity.

As Moses "looked on their burdens" at age 40 (Acts 7:23), so at the start of his ministry, our Lord assessed the weight of ours. His concern for our burdens in Mt. 11:30; 23:4 is perhaps a conscious allusion back to Moses' awareness of Israel's burdens, and his desire to deliver them, even though it cost him all that he had in this world. See on Heb. 11:24

Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex.2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should. Moses 'struck' the Egyptian who was persecuting the Hebrew just as God would strike Egypt (Ex. 2:11 cp. Ex. 12:12,13,29 etc.). See on 2:17.

At age 40, Moses came to a crisis. He had a choice between the riches of Egypt, the pleasures of sin for a season, and choosing rather to suffer affliction with God's people and thereby fellowship the reproach of Christ (Heb. 11:24-26). He probably had the chance to become the next Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; but he consciously refused this, as a pure act of the will, as an expression of faith in the future recompense of the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which invite us to follow Moses' example in this. Paul was motivated in his rejection of worldly advantage by Moses' inspiration. And as in all things, he is our example, that we might follow Christ, who also turned down the very real possibility of temporal rulership of the world- for the sake of living the life of the cross, and thereby securing our redemption. The description of Moses' rejection of Egypt for the sake of Christ is shown to be our example: "Esteeming the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures (i.e. Pharaoh's treasures, which he could have had if he succeeded as Pharaoh) in Egypt... let us go forth therefore unto (Jesus) without the camp, *bearing his reproach*" (Heb. 11:26; 13:13). We should be even eager to bear 'reproach for the name of Christ' as Moses did (1 Pet. 4:14), knowing it is a surety of our sharing his resurrection. For Moses, "the reproach of Christ" was his having "respect unto the recompense of the reward". He therefore must

have understood in some detail that there would be a future Saviour, who would enable the eternal Kingdom promised to Abraham through his bearing the reproach of this world. Such was Moses' appreciation of this that it motivated him to reject Egypt. His motivation, therefore, was based upon a fine reflection upon the promises to Abraham and other oblique prophecies of the suffering Messiah contained in the book of Genesis. Moses knew he could have a share in the sufferings of the future saviour and thereby share his reward, because he saw the implication that Messiah would be our representative.

"When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens...when he was *full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren... by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness, and then he went to his brethren. God looked on the sorrows of His people through the sensitivity of Moses, He *saw and knew* their struggles, their sense of being trapped, their desire to revive spiritually but their being tied down by the painful business of life and living; and He sent Moses to deliver them from this. But these very words are quoted about our deliverance through the 'coming down' of the Lord Jesus (Ex. 3:7; 4:31 = Lk. 1:68).

Going out to "his brothers" shows how after all his adult life in Pharaoh's court, Moses self identified as a Hebrew. This Hebrew self identification is a major theme. The Midianite shepherd girls think that he looks like an Egyptian, but in his heart he was totally identified with God's people. Likewise, the suffering Hebrews had no idea that they had a man with a heart bleeding for them, right inside Pharaoh's court. Just as we can forget the strong identification of the Lord with us in Heaven, to the point that the exalted Lord of Heaven and earth is still called "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

Israel said they wanted salvation from this world, but like man generally, when offered it they refused it. They in their hearts anyway turned back to Egypt. This is the power of conservatism, the desire to stay put whatever and not bravely step out to Divine salvation. A case can be made that only a fifth of Israel left Egypt anyway (Ex. 13:18 Heb.), most didn't keep the Passover as required. That's why the number of firstborns that needed redeeming was very low- because there weren't as many firstborns as we would expect had all Israel been obedient. The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did Israel eat the Passover?

Exo 2:12 He looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no one, he killed the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand-

This little incident is typical of how Christ was to destroy the devil, the power of sin, on the cross. The common translation of this passage can give them impression that Moses was very nervous. Yet it does not say that when he saw no man *was looking* he slew the Egyptian. There was at least one man looking- the suffering Israelite. And there must have been others looking for news to get round that Moses had killed the Egyptian. So I would suggest that Moses saw the Israelite suffering, and looked round in wonder to see if any other Israelite was going to go to his rescue. Because he saw there was no man, he himself got involved. This is an eloquent essay in the humility of Moses and the Lord he typified. This is exactly the same picture which we find in Is. 59:16 concerning Christ's decision to achieve our redemption: "He saw that there was no man (quoting the words of Ex. 2:11), and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation" (God saved Israel from Egypt by the *arm* of Moses, manifesting His arm: Ex. 6:6; 15:16; Dt. 4:34; Is. 63:12). Is. 63:4-6 also contain allusions to Moses and the exodus (the rest of the chapter speaks explicitly about this): "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year (time) of my redeemed (the one I will redeem) is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation". The implication of these passages is that he was surprised, he "wondered", that there was no one else to save Israel. He looked round for someone else to do it, but he found none- exactly after the pattern of Moses. This is not only an eloquent essay in our Lord's humanity, and the monstrosity of the 'trinity'; it indicates the true humility which he manifested in his work of redemption.

'Looking this way and that way' gives the impression of a nervous Moses. His murder of the Egyptian was done, it seems, rashly. His native anger boiled over and then he seeks to cover it up, and flees in fear when he perceives that he has been discovered. This is typical of Moses' character, but he develops from this to be a confident deliverer of Israel. Acts 7:24,25 says that his attempt to deliver Israel by killing the Egyptian was done at the same time as he "reckoned that his kin would understand that God, through his hand, was giving salvation to them" (Acts 7:25). So killing the Egyptian represents the Lord's conquest of sin; but Israel rejected it, as Moses did. They complained that he wanted to be a ruler and judge over them, but they didn't want that- just as they didn't want the Lordship of Jesus over them (:14; Acts 7:27,28). The one man who said "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?" is to be seen as representative of all Israel: "This is the Moses whom *they* denied, saying, "Who appointed you ruler and judge?" (Acts 7:35).

Exo 2:13 He went out the second day, and behold, two men of the Hebrews were fighting with each other. He said to him who did the wrong, Why do you strike your fellow?-

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (Jn. 1:11). Moses in John's Gospel is an opening theme. "When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren... he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them" (Acts 7:23,25). Therefore Moses in the court of Pharaoh = Jesus working in Nazareth until age 30. Was Moses' "surprise" at Israel's lack of response reflected in Christ (cp. Is. 50:2-7; 59:16)? Despite his own righteousness, did Christ think too highly of the potential spirituality of Israel (Lk. 13:9; 20:13 cp. his high regard of others' spirituality: Mt. 8:10; 11:11; 15:28)? If the Lord respected others so much- shouldn't we have deep respect for each other? The pain of Moses' rejection was Christ's; although he was rich, Moses had become poor for their sakes.

Ex. 21:22 may have some relevance to this historical situation: "If men fight and hurt a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely...". Perhaps Moses had been asked to judge (:14) a situation like this at the time of Ex. 2:13.

Acts 7:26 interprets Moses' words here as appealing for unity between the Hebrews, the people of God, as a result of his killing of the Egyptian: "reconciling them to peace, [Moses] said, 'Men, you are brothers. Why are you mistreating one another?'". But this too was rejected; and Stephen was witnessing Hebrew society again failing to unite despite the Messiah's killing of sin on the cross. Unity between God's people is an outcome of the Lord's victory; but those who don't truly accept reconciliation with God will not therefore be reconciled with each other.

The beating of the Hebrew by the Egyptian is parallel with the Hebrew beating his Hebrew brother. To beat our brother is to act as an Egyptian and to merit Moses' judgment. This is the OT equivalent of NT teaching about losing your brother. The Lord surely had the incident in mind when He spoke of the servant beating his fellow slave.

Exo 2:14 He said, Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you plan to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian? Moses was afraid, and said, Surely this thing is known-
"By faith (Moses) forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King" (Heb. 11:27). But Moses did flee Egypt, because he feared the wrath of the King (Ex. 2:14,15). It seems that Moses had at best a mixture of motives, or motives that changed over time; yet God sees through his human fear, and discerns an element of calm faith within Moses as he left Egypt. In similar vein, at the time of the burning bush, Moses seems to have forgotten God's covenant name, he didn't immediately take off his shoes in respect as he should have done, and it seems he feared to come close to God due to a bad conscience, and he resisted God's invitation for him to go forth and do His work (Ex. 3:5-7,10,11,18; 4:1,10-14). And yet at this very time, the New Testament says that Moses showed faith in the way he perceived God (Lk. 20:37).

Moses didn't want Egypt to know that he was trying to save Israel; he thought he could do it secretly. Once he realized that people knew what he was trying to do, he was afraid. His fearfulness has similarities with that of spiritually weak Jacob, who fled from the face of Laban into the unknown, as Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh. Thus God encouraged him after forty years that he need no longer fear: "Return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought your life" (Ex. 4:19). But then he rallied his faith and left Egypt, without (at the point of leaving) fearing the anger of Pharaoh. He so strongly believed, it was as if he physically saw God- as he asked (Heb. 11:27).

The loneliness of Moses as a type of Christ in showing this kind of love must surely represent that of our Lord. They went to a height which was generally beyond the appreciation of the men among whom they lived. The Spirit seems to highlight the loneliness of Moses by saying that at the same time as Moses *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Israel *refused* him (the same Greek word is used; Heb. 11:24; Acts 7:35). He was rejected by both the world and God's people: for 40 long years. As Israel envied Moses for spiritual reasons (Ps. 106:16; Acts 7:9), so they did Christ (Mt. 27:18), after the pattern of the brothers' spiritual envy of Joseph (Gen. 37:11). Spiritual envy leading to persecution is quite a common feature in Biblical history (Job, Jeremiah, Paul...). And it isn't absent from the Christian experience either.

The tragedy is that Israel's rejection of Moses is typical of the rejection of Christ by those in the new Israel who turn away. The same word used about Israel *refusing* Moses as their deliverer (Acts 7:35) is used about those who *deny* (same word) the Lord (Jesus) that bought them (2 Pet. 2:1). This latter verse is prefaced by the information that as there were those who lost their faith in the ecclesia in the wilderness, so there will be among the new Israel (2 Pet. 2:1). Therefore "the Lord that bought them" is an allusion back to Moses as a type of Christ. The illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses when he first appeared to them is so apparent. They were slaves in Egypt, and then one of the most senior of Pharaoh's officials reveals that he is their brother, and has been sent by God to deliver them. Yet they preferred the life of slavery in Egypt.

Moses is recorded as saying “People have found out what I have done!” – surely he said this within himself (Ex. 2:14 GNB). Samuel’s comment about Eliab was likewise presumably to himself (1 Sam. 16:6); Saul’s “I’ll strike [David] to the wall” was surely said to himself (1 Sam. 18:11); likewise his explanation of his plan to trap David via his daughter Michael was all hatched out within his own brain (1 Sam. 18:21); other examples in 1 Sam. 27:12; 1 Kings 12:26 etc. Only God knew what those men ‘said in their heart’; and yet He has recorded it in His inspired word for all generations to see. In this alone we see how ultimately, nothing remains secret; at the day of judgment, what we spoke in darkness (i.e. In our own minds) will be heard in the light of God’s Kingdom (Lk. 12:3).

Heb. 11:24 fills out what happened: "By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter". "When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens... when he was *full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren... by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness, and then he went to his brethren. We too have points of maturity we must reach before the Lord gives us our next task.

"(Moses) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *having chosen rather* (Gk.) to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:24,25) suggests that there was a struggle within the mind of Moses, between the reproach of Christ and the approbation of this world, and he then decisively came down on the right side. If we are truly saints, called out ones after the pattern of Moses, this struggle between present worldly advantage and the hope of the Kingdom must surely be seen in our minds. For this reason Moses is held up so highly as our example and pattern.

Moses could have been the next Pharaoh; according to Josephus, he was the commander of the Egyptian army. But he walked away from the possibility of being the richest man on earth, he "refused" it, because he valued "the reproach of Christ" and the recompense of the Kingdom to be *greater* riches. Yet what did he know about the sufferings of Christ? Presumably he had worked out from the promises of the seed in Eden and to the fathers that the future Saviour must be reproached and rejected; and he saw that his own life experience could have a close association with that of this unknown future Saviour who would surely come. And therefore, it seems, Moses counted the honour and wonder of this greater that the riches of Egypt. Both Paul and Moses rejected mammon for things which are abstract and intellectual (in the strict sense): the *excellency* of the understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ and His cross, and the Kingdom this would enable. Living when we do, with perhaps a greater knowledge of the Lord's victory and excellency, our motivation ought to be even stronger. He is our pattern; because we too could, should or might have had so much more than we have attained in this life, because we chose the excellency of the Christ who like Moses we only know in an outline sense.

Exo 2:15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and lived in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well-
See on Ex. 4:24. This happened when he was "Full forty years old" (Acts 7:23). The Greek phrase could refer to Moses' birthday, and one is tempted to speculate that it had been arranged that when Moses was 40, he would become Pharaoh. Heb. 11:24 says that he

refused and chose- the Greek tense implying a one off choice- to suffer affliction with God's people. It is tempting to imagine Moses at the ceremony when he should have been declared as Pharaoh, the most powerful man in his world…standing up and saying, to a suddenly hushed audience, voice cracking with shame and stress and yet some sort of proud relief that he was doing the right thing: "I, whom you know in Egyptian as Meses, am Moshe, yes, Moshe the Jew; and I decline to be Pharaoh". Imagine his foster mother's pain and anger. And then in the end, the wonderful honour would have been given to another man, who became Pharaoh. Perhaps he or his son was the one to whom Moses was to come, 40 years later. After a nervous breakdown, stuttering, speaking with a thick accent, clearly having forgotten Egyptian… walking through the mansions of glory, along the corridors of power, to meet that man, to whom he had given the throne 40 years earlier.

Moses forsook the possibilities of Egypt not just for "the reproach of Christ"; he was also motivated by the fact that "he endured (Gk. was vigorous), as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27). It was as if he had seen the invisible God, as he later asked to. **But the fact he later asked to see God could be read as a step backwards for Moses, who at this point saw the invisible God by faith. His life was a very jagged graph of spirituality.** When the disciples asked to see God, Christ said that the manifestation of His character which they had seen in him was the same thing (Jn. 14:8). Our experience of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with unveiled face like Moses, ought to be a *wondrous* experience. When Moses asked to physically see God, the Angel proclaimed the characteristics of God before him. So when we read of Moses *as it were* seeing God at the time he decided to forsake Egypt, this must mean that he so appreciated God's Name and character, he so had faith in the future Kingdom which this great Name and character promise, that he left Egypt. The Lord Jesus fed for strength on the *majesty* of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4).

"(Moses) refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; *having chosen rather* (Gk.) to suffer affliction with the people of God" (Heb. 11:24,25) suggests that there was a struggle within the mind of Moses, between the reproach of Christ and the approbation of this world, and he then decisively came down on the right side. If we are truly saints, called out ones after the pattern of Moses, this struggle between present worldly advantage and the hope of the Kingdom must surely be seen in our minds. For this reason Moses is held up so highly as our example and pattern. He "forsook" Egypt uses the same word translated "leaving" when we read of a man leaving his parents to be joined to a wife, or of the shepherd leaving the 99 sheep to find the lost one.

Heb. 11:27 comments that at this time, Moses "endured, because he saw Him who is invisible". *Hupomone* is generally translated "patience" or "endurance"; the idea is of the staying power that keeps a man going to the end. The meaning of *hupomone* grows as we experience more trials (Rom. 5:3; James 1:3). We find

that the longer we endure in the Truth, the more we can echo the words of Peter, when the Lord asked him (surely with a lump in His throat) if he was going to turn back: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (Jn. 6:68). There is no third road in the daily decisions we face. Over the months and years, *hupomone* becomes part of our essential character; keeping on keeping on is what life comes to be all about, no matter what short term blows and long term frustrations we face. The longer we endure, the stronger that force is, although we may not feel it. Moses is described as having it at the time he fled from Egypt, even though in the short term his faith failed him at the time and he fled in fear (Ex. 2:14,15). Yet God counted him as having that basic ability to endure, even to endure through his own failure and weakness. *This* is what God looks at, rather than our day-to-day acts of sin and righteousness.

Exo 2:16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock-

We think of Jacob meeting his wife at a well, Isaac's servant likewise finding Isaac's wife at a well, and the Lord meeting the Samaritan woman at a well. Such connections within Biblical history become more apparent the more we read the Bible, and thus our faith is confirmed- that here, clearly, there was a higher hand at work over the centuries. Even if we cannot attach exact meaning to event, man is not alone. There are connections within our own lives, and between our lives and those of contemporary believers, as well as with Biblical characters. We through patience and comfort of the scriptures thus have hope (Rom. 15:4).

Exo 2:17 The shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock-

Moses helps and delivers (Ex. 2:17,19) the daughters of Jethro, just as God would help and deliver Israel (Ex. 12:27; 14:13,30; 15:2). He was being shown that his experiences were preparing him for something far greater. Note that at that time when Moses first met Jethro's daughters at the well, Moses was in depression. His plans and vision rejected by his own people, fallen from riches to rags, homeless and alone... and yet in that low moment he was chosen to be a manifestation of God! And this is the wonder of how God rejoices to work with the broken. However, Moses' desire to save others, his concern for the oppressed and helpless, shines through- he seeks to save the slave beaten by his Egyptian master; the neighbour wronged by his Hebrew brother; the unknown women deprived at the well by male nomads (Ex. 2:11,13,17). In all this Moses was manifesting the concern and saving help of God. And when we do likewise, we show God's face to this world. See on 2:11

Exo 2:18 When they came to Reuel, their father, he said, How is it that you have returned so early today?-
Abuse at the hand of the shepherds (:19) was a daily experience for them, just as the Israelites were daily abused- possibly at the hands of the 'shepherd kings' dynasty of Egypt.

Exo 2:19 They said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and moreover he drew water for us, and watered the flock-
Moses flees to Midian, where he helps some unknown shepherd women from being abused by some rough men; he did this without at first receiving any reward, and without the women wanting him to go with them; although they thought he was an Egyptian, showing that he still concealed his relationship with God. See on Jn. 4:7-10.

The whole nature of being human means that we must live in this world, although we are not of it. Consider how Daniel's friends wore turbans (Dan. 3:21 NIV), how Moses appeared externally to be an Egyptian (Ex. 2:19), **as did Joseph and his brothers when they went to Canaan to bury his father,** and how the Lord Himself had strongly Jewish characteristics (Jn. 4:9).

Israel rejected Moses as their deliverer, they failed to see in that dead Egyptian the ability of Moses to save them completely from the life of slavery. And so Moses fled away from them, he came to Gentile, pagan Midian, and rescued a Gentile woman from the persecution of men, married her, and started a new life in the wilderness- to return many years later in the power of the Holy Spirit and redeem Israel when they were in truly desperate straits. All this naturally points ahead to the work of Jesus after Israel failed to respond to his work on the cross. The word used to describe Moses rescuing his future wife from the shepherds is the same used concerning God rescuing Israel from Egypt (Ex. 2:19; 18:10). Thus Moses was manifesting the redemptive work of God when he saved his wife. But the marriage broke up, as it did between God and Israel- but was apparently restored.

Exo 2:20 He said to his daughters, Where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread-
To eat bread together was a sign of acceptance. The way the Lord Jesus broke His bread with sinners was likewise a message of open acceptance to any who wished to sit at His table. He did this, He explained, in order to win sinners to Him; eating His bread was not a sign that they had cleared some moral bar He had arbitrarily insisted upon. It is a strong argument for an open table amongst God's people today. All who wish are to be welcomed.

Exo 2:21 Moses was content to dwell with the man. He gave Moses Zipporah, his daughter-

Moses "was content to dwell" with the father of the women. The Hebrew for "content" comes from a root which means weakness of mind; the implication is that he easily yielded to this man. She was not one of the covenant people; she was the daughter of a pagan priest (Ex. 18:11 implies Jethro thought Yahweh was only one of many gods); she did not circumcise their children. Should Moses have married her? The fact Moses did not bother circumcising his son shows he was not really serious about his relationship with God; God tried to kill him because of this. God tried to kill Moses because of this; this shows how serious this was in God's eyes. Zipporah was a Midianite, a descendant of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:1-6). Circumcision was a sign of the covenant through Isaac, hence the resentment and bitterness of Zipporah over the circumcision issue; and it seems Moses capitulated to her on this. Their marriage is sure proof that fundamental spiritual differences at the start can only lead to anger and break up later on.

Exo 2:22 She bore a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, I have lived as a foreigner in a foreign land-

Positive self-talk will enable us to maintain our basic human dignity, as well as our faith and spiritual integrity, in the face of rejection, slander and breakup of human relationships. It's all too easy to be negative. Moses said within himself "I am a foreigner in this land" – and his self-talk led to the very public 'word' of naming his son 'Gershom' (Ex. 2:22). **We ask 'Which land was Moses feeling he had lived as a foreigner in? Midian, or Egypt?'. I suggest the record intentionally begs this question. Because the answer is, "Both"'. He felt he did not fit in where he was, had never fitted in where he grew up. And this is how all God's true Israel feel.**

Exo 2:23 It happened in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died, and the children of Israel sighed because of the abuse, and they cried, and their cry came up to God because of the abuse-

The whole description of Egypt's judgments in Ez. 29 is also full of links with those in store for Israel. *They* will cry unto Yahweh in their affliction (Is. 19:20), just as Israel did when Egypt persecuted them (Ex. 2:23; 14:10).

The sighing came after the death of the Pharaoh, probably because they hoped that the new rules would change the persecution policy. But he did not and therefore their dashed hopes led them to cry to Yahweh. Perhaps we can deduce from Ex.

4:19 that Moses should have perceived this as the right time to return to Egypt, but he didn't.

Exo 2:24 God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob-
Israel at this time were worshipping Egypt's idols, and took the tabernacles of false gods with them through the Red Sea and the wilderness (Ez. 20:8 etc.). But the wonder of the covenant with Abraham, which is made with all those who are baptized into the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:27-29), is that it is the covenant of grace. God honours it even when those within it are unrighteous and undeserving. And He pities them in their afflictions, even if they are self-inflicted.

Exo 2:25 God saw the children of Israel, and God was concerned about them-
Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex. 2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should. **And our desire to save people should reflect God's desire.**

EXODUS CHAPTER 3

Exo 3:1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to God's mountain, to Horeb-
This was where he would later lead God's people, as a flock. Also for 40 years. It can be shown that much of Moses life, especially his Midian years, were lived in a spirit of semi-spirituality, aware of his responsibility to God, but being slack to rise up to what it really meant, being content, year after year, to live the life of a spiritual minimalist, ever making excuses for himself. Yet somehow God overruled this, as He did the fact that Moses sinned and was excluded from entering the land. The result was that Moses was able to enter exactly into the feelings of rejected, spiritually apathetic Israel in their 40 years wilderness wanderings. For 40 years he too had wandered in the same desert as a shepherd, with the same apathy. This points forward to how the Lord Jesus can enter into the feelings of active sinners, whilst himself being sinless.

Moses was a shepherd for 40 years, and then for 40 years he put this into practice by leading Israel as God's shepherd for 40 years in the same wilderness (Num. 27:17; Ps. 80:1; Is. 63:11). As Moses was willing to sacrifice his eternal life for the salvation of the

sheep of Israel (Ex. 32:30-32), so Christ gave his life for us. John's Gospel normally shows the supremacy of Christ over Moses. In this connection of them both being shepherds willing to die for the flock, Moses is not framed as being inferior to Christ- in that in his desire to die for Israel, he truly reached the fullness of the spirit of Christ. "The good shepherd" was a Rabbinical title for Moses; Christ was saying "I am Moses, in his love for your salvation; not better than him, but exactly like him in this". In a sense, Moses' prayer was heard, in that he was excluded from the land for their sakes (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21; Ps. 106:33); they entered after his death. This was to symbolize how the spirit of his love for Israel was typical of Christ's for us.

Exo 3:2 The angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed-
LXX "bramble bush", representing the thorns and thistles brought forth as a result of human sin. And yet within that, the flame of fire of God's manifestation burned, and did not consume that frail, highly flammable, sin cursed bramble bush. It was all a message of how God would dwell within sinful people, and not consume them. Yahweh was likewise to dwell within Israel in the pillar of fire which never consumed them, despite their sins demanding this. This connects with how Moses' hand was made leprous [symbolic of sin], and how he used that hand to catch a snake [sin] by its tail.

Exo 3:3 Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt-
The spiritual growth of Moses was a jagged graph. In the bigger picture of Moses' life, it's clear that God was working with him according to a pattern. His 120 years of life fall into three distinct periods of 40 years. His 40 years as a shepherd in the wilderness were to prepare him for 40 years of shepherding God's people in the same wilderness. The burning bush was to prepare him for the awesome meeting with God in the burning mountain- note how the unusual Hebrew word used for "bush", *seneh*, echoes the name of the mountain, Sinai. Everything was used by God in His personal development plan for Moses. It was likely an acacia bush, the wood of which was to be used for the construction of the tabernacle, over which the fire of God's manifestation was to burn without consuming the sinful people.

Exo 3:4 When Yahweh saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses! Moses! He said, Here I am-
The double repetition "Moses, Moses" may be some kind of rebuke. "I *have*" seen the affliction of Israel could suggest that Moses felt God was not sensitive to the pain of His children; he had been living for 40 years feeling forgotten by God . Moses "wondered" at what he saw and heard at the burning bush (Acts 7:31)- a Greek word which is often

used in a negative sense concerning people lacking faith and insight when they should have had it.

"Here I am" was to be matched by Yahweh's declaration that "[Here] I am" (:6). We see here the mutuality intended between God and man. Yahweh's manifestation was apparently predicated upon Moses ' turning aside to see' (Ex. 3:3,4). And the same phrase is used later when God says He will 'turn aside' His hand, so that Moses may 'see' something of Him (Ex. 33:23). Here again we see the mutuality between God and Moses.

Exo 3:5 He said, Don't come close. Take your sandals off from your feet, for the place you are standing on is holy ground-
God appeared to Moses in the flame of fire in the bush, but Moses had to be told to take off his shoes as a sign of respect- even though taking off shoes was understood as a token of respect and recognition of sin (see 2 Sam. 15:30). It sounds as if Moses did not appreciate the holiness of God, and ought to have done this without being asked. Stephen will develop the thought of how a thorn bush in the desert could be made "holy ground"; and therefore the idea that the temple alone was "holy ground" was patently false. We don't need any sacred space or religious structure in order to meet God on holy ground. "Holy ground" is the same phrase translated "holy land" in Zech. 2:12. The land of promise included the desert where Moses was then standing; he was being reminded that he was not in fact in exile, but was within the land of promise.

Exo 3:6 Moreover he said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob-
See on Lk. 20:37. Moses is one of the greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. God is His word (Jn. 1:2). Moses is likewise spoken of as if he is his word (Acts 15:21; 21:21; 26:22; 2 Cor. 3:18), so close was his association with it. The words and commands of Moses were those of God. "In the bush God spoke unto (Moses), saying, I am the God of Abraham... Isaac and Jacob" (Mk. 12:26; Mt. 22:31; Ex. 3:6). Yet Lk. 20:37 says that "that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham" etc. Yet this was what God said of Himself.

Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look at God-
Clearly the Angel in the bush (Acts 7:30,35) was functioning as God Himself to Moses, just as the Lord Jesus can function as God without being God. And just as Moses was to be made as God to Pharaoh (Ex. 9:1). We note Moses' spiritual growth; for later he wanted to see God's face.

Exo 3:7 Yahweh said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows-
God looked on the sorrows of His people through the sensitivity of Moses, He saw and knew their struggles, their sense of being trapped, their desire to revive spiritually but their being tied down by the painful business of life and living; and He sent Moses to deliver them from this. But these very words are quoted about our deliverance through the 'coming down' of the Lord Jesus (Ex. 3:7; 4:31 = Lk. 1:68). Our heart can touch the heart of God. It's a priceless wonder to know and experience this. God saw Israel's depressed *minds* in Egypt and was moved to 'come down' to them in response (Ex. 3:7- the word translated "affliction" is rendered by Strong as 'depression').

Our guardian Angels are emotional beings, capable of changing their plans in accordance with how moved they are by our prayers, and to an extent they fellowship the sufferings they bring upon us- so the Angel in the burning bush could tell Moses "I have seen the affliction of My people (for whom I am guardian)... and have heard their cry... for I know their sorrows: and I am come down to deliver them. . and to bring them up out of that land (again, the work of the Angel)" (Ex. 3:7,8). The purpose of God in Christ is to "bring together in one all things, which are in Heaven (Angels) and which are on earth (us their charges)", and in the day of judgement we will perhaps be united in some special spiritual sense to our Angel who has redeemed us through this life.

Exo 3:8 I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey; to the place of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite-
We know an Angel was physically sent in advance of the Israelites to drive out those tribes, and so the phrase "I am come down" used by the same Angel here may therefore be taken literally- He literally, physically "came down". Although this phrase "came down" is often used to describe God manifestation, it may be that when it is used in connection with the Angels, it does have a physical, literal application. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10. We note that "bring them up out of" Egypt to Canaan was also literally true, in that Canaan is far higher than Egypt (this is stressed- Gen. 12:10; 13:1; 37:25; 39:1; 42:2; 46:3,4; 50:25).

The promised land was only 'larger' than Egypt if we accept that it was God's intention to give Israel the entire land promised to Abraham, from the Nile to the Euphrates. But in reality they lacked the faith to inherit it, and so He was willing to work with them to give

them the area from around the Jordan to the Mediterranean. And they didn't even possess all that. See on :17.

Exo 3:9 Now, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me. Moreover I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them-
Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex. 2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should.

Exo 3:10 Come now therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt-
Isaiah realized his unworthiness: "Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips". He felt he was going to be condemned. But then out of the same vision, the Angel comforted him: "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged". And then immediately he offered to go on a preaching mission to Israel, motivated by his own experience of forgiveness and with therefore an appropriate humility: "Here am I, send me" (Is. 6:5-8). This incident is full of allusion to the sending of an equally hesitant Moses. As God appears in the burning bush, so God appears to Isaiah among the seraphim, the burning ones. Moses is reluctant to bear God's word because "I am a man of uncircumcised lips", and Isaiah felt the same. Whom shall I send... who will go? (Ex. 3:8,9) is matched by Is. 6:8,9. The willingness of Moses to go (Ex. 3:4) is that of Isaiah. And it is to be our pattern, going forth in witness firstly convicted of our own utter unworthiness.

Exo 3:11 Moses said to God, Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?-
See on Ex. 4:10. Through Moses allowing himself to become part of God manifestation, he found a confidence to achieve that which felt impossible to him. He asks God: "Who am I...?" to do the great things God required... and the answer was "*I* will be who *I* will be" (Ex. 3:11-13). Moses' sense of inadequacy was met by the principle of God's manifestation in him; and so will ours be, if we participate in it. "Who am I?" is answered by "I am...".

The more we enter into the depths of the Name, the more we will seek the Father; and in this sense, the Name is an endless inspiration to know the Father better and better, closer and closer, world without end. The whole declaration of God's Name to Moses is actually part of a mutuality between God and Moses. Moses has just commented: "Who am I to bring Israel out?" (Ex. 3:11). And God alludes to this in His answer, for His declaration of His Name hinges around the idea of "Who am I? I am...". The implication

of the Name seems to be "I will be who I am / I am who I will be"- i.e. 'I will be God for you'. Surely the idea of the Name being declared in this way was to assure a doubting, depressed Moses that God will be God, will be true to Himself, and therefore will be God for us in all aspects, all places, situations. This is what the Name is really all about- assurance. For that was the context in which God declared it to Moses, as part of a relationship with that man

Exo 3:12 He said, Certainly I will be with you. This will be the token to you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain-
See on Jud. 6:12,16; Dt. 31:8; Ex. 4:4. It even seems that Moses had forgotten the significance of God's Name, even though it had been revealed to Abraham (Ex. 3:13). Moses' fear to look upon God suggests a bad conscience.

Note that the promise of Moses that God would not fail nor forsake Joshua, but would be with him (Dt. 31:8) was similar to the very promise given to Moses which he had earlier doubted (Ex. 3:12; 4:12,15). Such exhortation is so much the stronger from someone who has themselves doubted and then come to believe. Joshua was encouraged that "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you" (Josh. 1:5). But these very words are quoted in Heb. 13:5 as the grounds of our matchless confidence that the Lord God will be with us too! As He was with Moses- not just in power, but in wondrous patience and gentleness- so He will be with us too. Not only did God encourage Joshua to see himself as in Moses' shoes; He inspired Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 21:8 = Dt. 30:15,19), and Ezekiel (Ez. 2:3 = Dt. 31:27; Neh. 9:17; Num. 17:10); and He wishes us to also see Moses' God as our God. But if Moses' God is to be ours in truth in the daily round of life, we must rise up to the dedication of Moses; as he was a faithful steward, thoroughly dedicated to God's ecclesia (Heb. 3:5), so we are invited follow his example (1 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 24:45).

Gideon was bidden rise up to the example of Moses- for there were many similarities between his call by the Angel, and the Angelic calling which Moses received at the burning bush. Thus Gideon was called to follow the Angel in faith, "because Ehyeh is with you" (Jud. 6:16)- a direct quotation from the Angelic manifestation to Moses in Ex. 3:12, "I will be [*ehyeh*] with you". And yet he responds: "Alas! For I have seen Yahweh's envoy face to face!" (Jud. 6:22). Gideon knew full well that Moses had seen the Angel "face to face" (Dt. 34:10). Gideon's fear is therefore rooted in a sense that "No! I'm simply *not* Moses!". And it's the same with us. We can read of all these reasons to believe that Moses is really our pattern, and respond that "No! This ain't me...". But there, in the record of Gideon and his success, lies our challenge to rise up to the spirit of Moses.

Exo 3:13 Moses said to God, Behold, when I come to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you;' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' What should I tell them?-
To the Semitic peoples, a name stands for the essential identity of a person; to know their name gives access to the power and authority which they have. This is why Moses is so urgent to know God's Name (Ex. 3:13,14). Insofar as we grasp and absorb into ourselves the principles of that Name, we likewise will be empowered by the Father. The Name of God is essentially an epitome of who God is. God declared His Name to Moses when He declared His attributes to Him. This means that all that God is, we must be. Our attitudes to God are therefore related to our views about God.

Exo 3:14 God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM; and He said, You shall tell the children of Israel this: 'I AM has sent me to you'-
The Lord Jesus in John's Gospel describes Himself in terms of the "I am..." formula, alluding to the Name He carried. Each time, He was referring back to the burning bush revelation of Yahweh as the "I am"; and by implication, the Lord's audience are thereby placed in the position of Moses, intended to rise up in response as he did.

The Name speaks of the Father's desire to respond to His children. The root word *ehyeh* from which 'Yahweh' is derived occurs 50 times, mainly in the context of God's help and comfort in real situations. This is the practical nature of the things expressed in the Name. The repeated references to God's Name in Ex. 3 and 6 had a very practical context. Israel needed to summon all their faith to believe that actually, they were not in a hopeless situation there in the concentration camps of Egypt. Even when they were given no straw and told to make the same number of bricks, the comfort they are given is to remember the *Name* of their God, who had acted according to that Name in the past, and would do so in the future for them- because He is and will be who He has been.

Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2; Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God's Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God 'is' not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He 'is' there with and for us. Von Rad puts this in more theological language when commenting upon Ex. 3:14: "It is to be understand in the sense of 'being present', 'being there' and therefore precisely not in the sense of absolute, but of relative and efficacious, being- I will be there (for you)". The verb behind 'YHWH' was "originally causative", i.e. God not only 'is' but He causes things to happen. We aren't to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name... but rather

passionately active and causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

Exo 3:15 God said moreover to Moses, You shall tell the children of Israel this, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you'. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations-
The idea is that God didn't have a new Name. He was going to act according to the principles of His Name as He had acted with their fathers. Nothing had changed; and He had always been a God of salvation by grace. This was to continue; He was to be remembered for how He had articulated His Name in how He had historically acted in saving the patriarchs, and He would be remembered for how He was going to act to save His people from Egypt. What was to be memorialized was therefore His actions, rather than simply the letters YHWH. It was His wonderful works which were to be remembered [Ps. 111:4, s.w. "My memorial"]. By contrast, the sinful works and persons of the wicked would not be remembered / memorialized, be they Amalek (s.w. Ex. 17:14; Dt. 25:19), or God's apostate people (s.w. Dt. 32:26).

Exo 3:16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and tell them, 'Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt-
The pronouns stress how despite Moses' separation from His people over the last 80 years, he self identified as a Hebrew and God accepted that. Yahweh appeared "to *me*", with the new that He had "visited *you*", and was aware what had been "done to *you*". Moses indeed had felt for his own people there and identified with them, and God recognized that.

The ultimate visitation of Yahweh was in His plan to save His people eternally through the Lord Jesus, the greater than Moses (Lk. 1:68; 7:16). And we too are to look out of ourselves and visit the fatherless and widows (James 1:27), which is how Israel in Egypt are described in Ps. 68:5.

Exo 3:17 and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey'-
We note that only six nations are mentioned as living in the land, in contrast to the ten nations listed when the land was first promised (Gen. 15:18-21). It was as if God had already started to scale back the extent of His potential operations with Israel and His grace toward them, foreseeing they would not be able to cope with it all at one time. See on :8.

Exo 3:18 They will listen to your voice-
And yet there were various levels of possible obedience. Thus if the people don't believe the first sign, they may believe the second; if they don't believe either of them then there will be a third sign (Ex. 4:8,9). Yet God states in Ex. 3:18 that the people will listen; and yet Ex. 4:8,9 accepts the possibility that they may not. In this we see not only the essential hopefulness of God for human response to Him, but His willingness to go along with our continued weakness and blindness in an open-ended manner. There is, therefore, the possibility of living before God on different levels. See on Ex. 4:1.

And you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall tell him, 'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Now please let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God'-
See on Ex. 6:12; 33:14-16. God had explained to Moses what He wished him to tell Pharaoh: "Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: and now let us go, we pray thee, three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God" (Ex. 3:18). But Moses actually doesn't say those exact words. Instead he says: "Thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness... The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice unto Yahweh our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword" (Ex. 5:1,3). This seems perilously similar to the way in which Eve added to Yahweh's words when telling the serpent that actually, God had told Adam not to *even touch* the fruit. Moses appears to be painting Yahweh as somewhat draconian and threatening of him personally as well as Israel- as if to say 'Well sir, please do us this favour, or else our God is gonna get mad with us'. Perhaps this was actually how Moses misperceived Yahweh; or perhaps he added to Yahweh's words in order to make his appeal sound more plausible.

Thus we can as it were do the work of the Saviour Himself, if we truly live as in Him. In this spirit, *Moses'* faith in keeping the Passover led to *Israel's* salvation, they left Egypt *by* him (Heb. 3:16; 11:28); and when Aaron deserved death, he was redeemed by Moses' prayer on his behalf (Dt. 9:20). Moses' prayer, with uplifted hands, resulted in Israel's victory over Amalek; without his prayer, and the intensity of it, there would have been no victory for them. However, he had to learn this lesson; for God first of all taught him that if he explained the power of God's Name to Israel's elders, then they would hearken unto him (Ex. 3:18). But they didn't hearken unto Moses (5:20), because he didn't bother expounding the Name to them. Therefore he did explain it to them (6:1-9 = 3:14-17); but then again they refused to hearken to him (6:9 cp. 3:18). He learnt that what was proclaimed by God as possible all the same depends on human effort. And this lead him on even further, to realize that through his spirituality, he could bring salvation for others.

The concepts of being God manifest and also being representative of a sinful Israel come together in Moses in a wonderful way. Ex. 3:18 is an example of this. The elders of Israel were to tell Pharaoh that "the Lord God of the Hebrews has met with us". Yet Yahweh God of Israel had only met with Moses. Yet because he was representative of Israel and also because he himself manifested Yahweh God of Israel, the elders had met Yahweh when they met Moses. In this we see a superb prefigurement of the Lord Jesus. He was the supreme, faultless manifestation of God, and yet also the total, empathetic representative of sinful man.

Another reading is found in commentary on Ex. 5:1.

Exo 3:19 I know that the king of Egypt won't give you permission to go, no, not by a mighty hand-
And yet Pharaoh had the real possibility to let the people go, and therefore Ex. 4:23 NRSV implies that God only therefore went ahead with the plan to kill Pharaoh's firstborn. The "mighty hand" speaks of God's huge efforts to save Pharaoh by persuading him to submit to Yahweh. God did bring them out "by a mighty hand" (Ex. 6:1 s.w.), so the sense may be that it would require a "mighty hand" to bring them out, because the king of Egypt would not allow them to.

Exo 3:20 I will reach out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst, and after that he will let you go-
Moses "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God *by his hand* would deliver them" (Acts 7:25); but God told Moses that "I will stretch out *my hand*, and smite Egypt...". Moses only slowly learned the meaning of God manifestation through men. The hand of Moses was to be that of God. But he doubted that. Hence he was given signs relating to his physical hand; it became leprous, and he used it to catch the snake which his rod had turned into. Both leprosy and snakes are associated with sin. So God is teaching him that despite his weakness, He was still able and willing to work with Him.

Moses was "sent forth" by God to do the work (Ex. 3:12 and frequently); yet the same Hebrew word is used to describe how God 'sent out' ["stretched forth"] the hand of God to do it (Ex. 3:20). And Moses was taught this by being told to 'stretch out' [same Hebrew word] *his* hand (Ex. 4:4). But Moses, for some moments at least, just didn't want to do this. Hence God's anger when Moses comments: "Send [the same word translated "let go" or "put forth" used about Moses being asked to "put forth" his hand in Ex. 4:4] by the hand of him whom thou wilt send" (Ex. 4:13). It was Moses' hand that God had asked to be 'put forth' or 'sent'. But Moses refuses to play a part in God manifestation. He wanted God to send forth another hand, the hand of God personally perhaps; although God had asked him to put forth *his* hand. We too tend to assume that God cannot manifest

Himself through *us*; but we all tend to assume someone else will do the job, when it is *we* who are called to it.

Exo 3:21 I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, and it will happen that when you go, you shall not go empty-handed-
The Egyptians came to fear the Israelites at the end (Ex. 11:3), and therefore wished themselves to give them their wealth in the hope that this would as it were buy off the threat of death. For after the death of the firstborn, they feared that the rest of them would be slain next. The same word for "empty-handed" is used of how Jacob likewise did not return to his land from his slavery "empty-handed" but wealthy (Gen. 31:42). Constantly they were bidden see how they were being dealt with as their God had previously treated their fathers. And they were to remember this by not sending any slave away from them "empty-handed" (s.w. Dt. 15:13). Always they were to live life under the deep impression of how they had been redeemed themselves, and were to reflect that grace to others in every context and situation of their lives. And the new Israel likewise.

Exo 3:22 But every woman shall ask of her neighbour, and of her who visits her house, jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and clothing; and you shall put them on your sons, and on your daughters. You shall plunder the Egyptians-
We may well ask whether this is commandment or prophecy. It is both, in that so much prophecy is conditional prophecy, dependent upon human obedience to actualize it. The idea was that they would march toward their new land dressed up in the finest clothing and jewellery. And it was this which they were to then give for the work of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:22).

EXODUS CHAPTER 4

Exo 4:1 Moses answered, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor listen to my voice; for they will say, 'Yahweh has not appeared to you'-
This was a bald faced denial of the truth of God's statement in Ex. 3:18 that "They will listen to your voice". Moses' insistence that he doesn't want to partner with God is extreme, as is his disbelief. But God held on to him, and worked through him. This is the amazing encouragement from any reflection upon the life of Moses. Apart from a few flashes of devotion, it seems Moses only really came to a mature faith and commitment in the last part of his very long life.

Moses presents as disobedient and defiant of God's word, when he was to be one of the most major vehicles of that word. Why did Moses resist the call? Probably

because of awareness of his own sin, represented by the serpent and leprosy. But the encouragement was that he could a handle on the tail of the serpent, and his leprosy could be healed. We saw that at the burning bush, Yahweh has insisted seven times that "I will..." bring salvation, the essence of the Yahweh Name, I will be / do. But Moses is in direct defiance of that when he says that the proposed salvation "will *not*" work.

Another reason Moses so strongly refused the call was because the mire of mediocrity is so strong for all men. Minding his father in law's sheep was not the greatest job nor situation. But it was something he could do and had felt secure in for forty years. The workaday life may be disliked by us, we may chafe at, but it suddenly feels so safe, so old and familiar, when we are confronted with the Lord's call to be His man in this world. In all this lies the significance of his shepherd's rod, his workaday tool, the symbol of his working life, becoming God's rod.

Exo 4:2 Yahweh said to him, What is that in your hand? He said, A rod-
Moses "supposed his brethren would have understood how that God *by his hand* would deliver them" (Acts 7:25); but God told Moses that "I will stretch out *my hand*, and smite Egypt..." (Ex. 3:20). **Moses struggled to believe [as we all do] that if God works through us, then our hand is God's hand.** Moses only slowly learned the meaning of God manifestation through men. The hand of Moses was to be that of God. But he doubted that. Hence he was given signs relating to his physical hand; it became leprous, and he used it to catch the snake which his rod had turned into. Both leprosy and snakes are associated with sin. So God is teaching him that despite his weakness, He was still able and willing to work with Him.

Exo 4:3 He said, Throw it on the ground. He threw it on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses ran away from it-
"Ran away" is the usual Hebrew word used for fleeing before enemies. Moses was where he was because he had fled from Pharaoh, with his snake / serpent head dress (Ex. 2:15; Acts 7:29). He was being taught that he need not have done that. Whilst his reaction had been instinctive and natural, he was to do the counter instinctive, in faith-believing that his hand was God's hand.

Exo 4:4 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand, and take it by the tail. He stretched out his hand, and took hold of it, and it became a rod in his hand-
Moses is told to “stretch / put forth” his hand. It is the same word repeatedly translated “let go” in the context of God telling Pharaoh to let Israel go [e.g. Ex. 4:23]. “Caught” is the same Hebrew word frequently translated “harden” in the context of God hardening Pharaoh’s heart [e.g. Ex. 4:21]. As the snake hardened in Moses’ hand into a rod, so this

was how God would deal with Pharaoh through Moses. Thus God is showing Moses that what Moses will do with *his* hand to the snake- a symbol of Egypt- so the hand of God will do, working through Moses' hand. Thus Moses' rod [s.w. Ex. 4:2, about his shepherd's crook] was a symbol of Egypt and Pharaoh. But the throwing down of the shepherd's rod surely also indicated that Moses was to cast down the shepherd's life he had been living, and let God's hand take hold of him, so that his hand became the hand of God. Moses would thus have perceived some sort of parallel between himself and Pharaoh; God was working in both their lives, and it would take as much courage to grab hold of his own serpent-like life, as it would to do battle with Egypt. Ex. 4:23,24 brings out the parallel between how God told Moses that He would slay the firstborn of Pharaoh; and then seeks to slay Moses and *his* firstborn. And we can see lessons for ourselves here, surely. We throw down our worldly lives, take hold of them in faith, and they are transformed into the rod of God through which He will work wonders. **It really is a case of "getting a grip on your life".** Moses had to perceive the serpent-like aspects of his life and grip them; just as the parallel second sign involved his hand becoming leprous, with all its associations with sin, and then being healed and made strong to be used as the hand of God. What all this shows is that God manifestation, our hand becoming the hand of God, God working through us to deliver His people, is predicated upon our own realization of sinfulness, and grasping it firmly. Ultimately, the hand of Yahweh was revealed through the hand of Moses. Moses was "sent forth" by God to do the work (Ex. 3:12 and frequently); yet the same Hebrew word is used to describe how God 'sent out' ["stretched forth"] the hand of God to do it (Ex. 3:20). And Moses was taught this by being told to 'stretch out' [same Hebrew word] *his* hand (Ex. 4:4). But Moses, for some moments at least, just didn't want to do this. Hence God's anger when Moses comments: "Send [the same word translated "let go" or "put forth" used about Moses being asked to "put forth" his hand in Ex. 4:4] by the hand of him whom thou wilt send" (Ex. 4:13). It was Moses' hand that God had asked to be 'put forth' or 'sent'. But Moses refuses to play a part in God manifestation. He wanted God to send forth another hand, the hand of God personally perhaps; although God had asked him to put forth *his* hand. We too tend to assume that God cannot manifest Himself through *us*; but we all tend to assume someone else will do the job, when it is *we* who are called to it. The rabbis hold that Moses is not being weak here, rather he is referring to the Messiah- the hand whom Moses knew God would one day send forth to save His people. He would then be saying: 'No, I don't want to do this, let the Christ do it'. The same thought is maybe found in Ex. 5:22, when Moses asks Yahweh: "Why is it that thou hast sent [s.w. "put forth" and "let go"] *me*?"- i.e., why don't You use Messiah, the man of Your right hand? And this, subconsciously and unexpressed, is so often our view; He must do it, not me. I'm just a shepherd, God ought to leave me alone in the comfortable monotony of my working life. But He has called us to greater things, to realize as Moses finally did that *we*, you and me, are the ones through whom God truly will work in this world. The rod of Moses ("*thy* rod") became the rod of God (Ex. 4:20); the shepherd's crook, the

symbol of an obscure workaday life, became transformed to the rod and arm of God Almighty. There can be no doubt from all this that God was intensely manifest in Moses. The hand of God was manifested through the hand of Moses. Moses had many deep seated spiritual weakness, and also many traits which were not appropriate to leadership, and yet because of his willingness to participate in God's desire to be manifest through him, he was able to be changed and used by God.

Exo 4:5 That they may believe that Yahweh, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you-
It is by taking hold of our own sin that we witness to others who are sinners; it was Moses' having his own sinful weakness transformed [leprosy, snake] which could lead Israel to believe. But they generally didn't believe. "They *may* believe" shows the conditional nature of all this. For the people didn't immediately believe Moses nor these signs. The whole narrative of the Divine- human encounter is about potentials being offered to men, which are often not perceived or realized.

Exo 4:6 Yahweh said furthermore to him, Now put your hand inside your cloak. He put his hand inside his cloak, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, as white as snow-
Leprosy was a symbol of sin. Moses was being again shown that human sin and weakness was not going to stop God's purpose going forward. And we note that his sister Miriam was smitten suddenly with leprosy and quickly healed of it (Num. 12:10). Moses would have been able to see her leprosy with the eye of faith, remembering his own experience; and Miriam likewise would have been encouraged by Moses' experience to believe that the affliction could quickly be healed. If she perceived the similarities between herself and her brother. And we likewise can take encouragement from others' experiences, insofar as we are thoughtful about life. And if we are familiar with the Biblical records and biographies of the lives of God's previous servants.

Exo 4:7 He said, Put your hand inside your cloak again. He put his hand inside his cloak again, and when he took it out of his cloak, behold, it had turned again as his other flesh-
The hand of Moses was to be the hand of Yahweh (see on Ex. 4:4). But like all of us, Moses sensed his moral inadequacy. And so God was showing him that He indeed recognized that Moses was indeed but sinful flesh; but He could deal with that, in a moment. Although it depended upon Moses' obedience to God's plan and the simple command to use his hand as God told him. The same lesson is for us to learn.

Exo 4:8 It will happen, if they will neither believe you nor listen to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign-

The Father is ever seeking for some positive response, and is highly sensitive to it. The God who knows the end from the beginning gives the impression that He is sure they will believe- even though they didn't. He is so seeking for faith in His creatures (cp. "surely they will reverence My son", Mt. 21:37, and Ex. 19:21 cp. 20:18). In this, Isaiah says, He shows His matchless grace: "For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: *so* [therefore] he was their Saviour... but they rebelled, and vexed his holy [gracious] spirit" (Is. 63:8,10). Our tendency is to notice the negative in others, and let it outweigh the positive. God works quite the other way. He hopes for positive response, and even speaks as if He will get it when He knows He won't.

Exo 4:9 It will happen, if they will not believe even these two signs, neither listen to your voice, that you shall take of the water of the river, and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take out of the river will become blood on the dry land-
See on :8. The Egyptians perhaps more than any believed in the waters, especially of the Nile, as the source of good and evil. And the Israelites were worshipping the gods of Egypt, so they too needed to see the gods of Egypt revealed as mythical and powerless before Yahweh. God powerfully deconstructed their ideas about the Nile by enabling Moses to turn those waters into blood – i.e. to effectively slay whatever deity was supposed to live in the Nile, and then to revert the water to how it had been. This was surely to demonstrate that whatever deities were associated with "the waters", Yahweh was greater, and could slay and revive them at perfect ease. Later Scripture identified the Egyptians and not the sea itself as "Rahab... the dragon" (Is. 51:9; Ps. 89:9.10)- whereas the common view was that the sea itself was the Satan figure. Moses' stress was that the real adversaries / satans to Israel were people, and not some mythical dragon figure. Even if such a figure existed, then Yahweh had destroyed him at the Red Sea, in that He clearly could manipulate the Sea at His whim. The conflict was between Israel and Egypt, God and Pharaoh- and not God and some dragon in the Sea.

Exo 4:10 Moses said to Yahweh, O Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before now, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a stammering tongue-

"Before now" is literally "yesterday", so "since yesterday" may refer to the burning bush incident . Moses is saying that although he had been called the day before, his speech impediment had not improved. God has not empowered him as he expected. And so we all reason; we expect empowerment to perform our commission when we are simply comforted that I will be will indeed be with us. Or he is saying that previously he had failed in persuading Pharaoh to let Israel go.

This is how Moses felt he would be perceived, although actually he was previously quite fluent when in the court of Pharaoh (Acts 7:22). Paul would have remembered Stephen

saying how Moses was formerly full of worldly wisdom and "mighty in words". Paul felt that he too had been through Moses' experience- once mighty in words as the rising star of the Jewish world, but now like Moses he had left all that behind in order to try to save a new Israel from Judaism and paganism. As Moses consciously rejected the opportunity for leading the 'world' of Egypt, so Paul probably turned down the chance to be High Priest. God maybe confirmed both him and Moses in their desire for humility by giving them a speech impediment (perhaps part of the "thorn in the flesh" which Paul was "given", 2 Cor. 12:7). Thus Moses no longer had the eloquence he once had. Paul clearly alludes to Moses in this in his self descriptions: "His letters, say they (Paul's detractors in the new Israel) are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible... though I be rude in speech... Christ sent me... to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words (mg. speech)" (2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6; 1 Cor. 1:17). Paul says he was "taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers" by Gamaliel, receiving the highest wisdom possible in the Jewish world; but he uses the same word as Stephen in Acts 7:22, describing how Moses was "learned" in all the wisdom of Egypt.

"Stammering tongue" could refer to a literal stammer, in which case we marvel at how so many of God's words to His people were spoken through a mouth and tongue which stuttered. Truly God's strength is made perfect in weakness. But the term can refer to speaking with a heavy accent or in another language (Ez. 3:5,6). Moses might be arguing that he had forgotten Egyptian and Hebrew, as he had been speaking in the language of the Bedouin for the last 40 years. For "not eloquent", LXX has 'weak voiced', and again we marvel that a man who did so much public speaking of God's word had a weak voice. And yet he was "powerful in speech" (Acts 7:22). Exactly because he had a stutter and was weak voiced, God made him a powerful speaker through his message, rather than his presentation. And yet this could also be an excuse from Moses. "I am not eloquent, neither before now, nor since You have spoken to Your servant" seems to be saying that Moses considered he had never been eloquent. This is in contradiction with Acts 7:22, and would therefore appear to be him making desperate excuses for refusing God's call.

NEB "slow and hesitant of speech". It seems Moses was a far cry from the young man learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, mighty in words and works (Acts 7:22), set up to be the next Pharaoh, and set up by God to be just the right man to interface with Pharaoh and Egypt. We can conclude he had had a breakdown or stroke, resulting in his slow, hesitant, possibly stuttering speech. Or perhaps in the 40 years in Midian he just withdrew into himself and didn't want to come out of that shell. Alternatively, it has been observed that stuttering is largely genetic or from birth, and the fact Moses parents were aunty and nephew (Ex. 6:20) would explain it; and stuttering is common in those raised in bilingual, stressful environments. This would match Moses' upbringing as the adopted grandson of Pharaoh. The Songs of Moses at the Red Sea and at his death were sung by a stuttering man (Ex.

4:10). This shows for all time how God works through those who apparently are unsuited for His work.

Both Moses and Jeremiah reacted to their preaching commissions by saying that they weren't the right person to do it. Moses wasn't an eloquent speaker, nor [so he said] did he know Egyptian very well any more. His comment was: "Who am I...?" (Ex. 3:11; 4:10). Jeremiah protested that he was simply far too young (Jer. 1:6). But as Peter spoke *a-grammatos*, without grammar to an educated, erudite audience (Acts 4:13 Gk.), so did these men. And this was just the attitude of mind which God wanted to use as His mouthpiece. If you feel your inadequacy, then this is just when you are ready for God's use. It's the young sister who still fumbles for where books are in her Bible who is more likely to be the Lord's agent for conversion, than the well versed and over-confident brother giving a Christian talk.

Exo 4:11 Yahweh said to him, Who made man's mouth? Or who makes one mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Isn't it I, Yahweh?-
Moses felt so humanly inadequate, not strong enough for the task before him- and he was encouraged by God to find courage from the simple fact that God had created Moses' mouth and senses- and therefore God was able to strengthen them for what He needed to be done. The fact God created us should encourage us to feel adequate for the tasks He gives us. We note that incapacity and sickness ultimately is from God and not a personal Satan. "*The Lord* will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt" (Dt. 28:60); "an evil spirit *from the Lord* troubled [Saul]" (1 Sam. 16:14).

Moses had complained that his mouth and lips were heavy or uncircumcised. He may well have had a cleft palet, being the offspring of an aunty and her nephew. But God says that He has made the deformations as well. This certainly gives a window onto some theology of disability. God created all. His response is again "I will..." (:12), alluding to the Name as in Ex. 3. No cure is offered, just that God "will be" through all such human weakness.

Exo 4:12 Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you shall speak-
See on Dt. 31:8. This is almost quoted in Mt. 10:19,20 and Mk. 13:11 concerning how we too will be taught what to say when we come before the rulers of our world. In such moments of crisis, Moses, even in weakness as he was at this time, really is our living example.

Because we're mere humans, we don't know what to ask of God as we should; and His very Name is the comfort that He will be for us as we need, with our eternal salvation in mind. God seemed to have encouraged Israel to understand this by going on to promise simply that "I shall be [*ehyeh*] present" (Ex. 3:12; 4:12). He wanted them to trust that He

knew best how to bring them to salvation; He didn't want them to invoke His Name in the primitive way the Egyptians did with their gods, hoping for a quick-fix miracle. God is only *ehyeh* for His people, not for others; and there came a terrible moment when He had to tell them through the prophets that "You are not my people and I am not *ehyeh* for you" (Hos. 1:9). Israel lost this 'presence' of their God. And we know that we are His people by the constant sense we have of the hand of Providence in our lives, even through the unanswered prayers that reveal an altogether higher and ultimately Divine game plan in place in our lives. But like Israel before Moses, we wish for the quick fix, the waving of the wand to resolve the issues, the sense of the saving presence of God in our experiences, working out His ultimate plan of delivering us from Egypt / this world and from ourselves.

Exo 4:13 He said, Oh, Lord, please send someone else-
Heb. "Send whom you will send". This appears a sarcastic allusion to Yahweh's Name, "I will be [and will do] who I will be [what I will do]". Yahweh has just alluded to His own Name as noted on :12. Moses sinks very low here. He has blasphemed the Name, hence the great anger of God against him in :14.

Exo 4:14 The anger of Yahweh was kindled against Moses-
If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for he salvation o f others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10.11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again- because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

And He said, What about Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Also, behold, he comes out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart-
"I will send you unto Pharaoh, that you may bring forth My people... And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go?.... And God said... they shall hearken to your voice... And Moses answered... They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice (he didn't seem to believe God's promise to inspire him)... I am not eloquent, neither heretofore (i.e. in the past)... I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue (although this was untrue- earlier Moses had been an eloquent speaker in Egypt; actually he was just the right man to do what God wanted)... and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses". Remember that God is *very* slow to this kind of anger (Ex. 34:6). Forty years earlier, Moses had understood, presumably from a direct revelation from God, that God would deliver Israel through him. But he had lost faith in that promise, and was arguing back against God. This was the outcome of many years of spiritual slipping. "Send... by the

hand of him whom *You will* send" (alluding to God's Name, I will be) can be seen as indifference; perhaps Moses was saying 'As you do what you will, your name is I will be, then if you send by me, send by men, I can't resist'.

Moses is assured that his older brother Aaron would be happy to be the spokesman for his younger brother; answering Moses' unspoken fear that Aaron would angrily resent having to have an inferior role. In this we see Aaron's humility, rejoicing to play a part even when another has the greater role. This too played a part in leading Moses to become the humblest man (Num. 12:3).

Exo 4:15 You shall speak to him, and put the words in his mouth. I will be with your mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what you shall do-
Moses disbelieved these words when in Ex. 6:29 he repeats that Pharaoh will not listen to him because of his lips. God was equally with the mouths of both Aaron and Moses, even though Aaron could "speak well" in his own strength. God didn't cure Moses' speech defect but worked through it. Moses' impediment meant nothing to God and those without impediment likewise need God's work through them rather than their own strength .

The promise of Moses that God would not fail nor forsake Joshua, but would be with him (Dt. 31:8) was similar to the very promise given to Moses here, which he had doubted at the time (Ex. 3:12; 4:12,15). Such exhortation is so much the stronger from someone who has themselves doubted and then come to believe. Joshua was encouraged that "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you: I will not fail you, nor forsake you" (Josh. 1:5). But these very words are quoted in Heb. 13:5 as the grounds of our matchless confidence that the Lord God will be with us too! As He was with Moses at such a point of Moses' personal weakness (see on :13,14)- not just in power, but in wondrous patience and gentleness- so He will be with us too. Not only did God encourage Joshua to see himself as in Moses' shoes; He inspired Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 21:8 = Dt. 30:15,19), and Ezekiel (Ez. 2:3 = Dt. 31:27; Neh. 9:17; Num. 17:10); and He wishes us to also see Moses' God as our God. But if Moses' God is to be ours in truth in the daily round of life, we must rise up to the dedication of Moses; as he was a faithful steward, thoroughly dedicated to God's ecclesia (Heb. 3:5), so we are invited follow his example (1 Cor. 4:2; Mt. 24:45).

In the last days, God's faithful people will be given a mouth and wisdom which their persecutors will be unable to gainsay nor resist (Lk. 21:15). This evidently alludes to how Moses before Pharaoh was given such a 'mouth'. Moses at that time was a type of the faithful remnant of their last days although he was so weak (see on :13,14), in their witness against the world during the tribulation. Hence Rev. 11 describes their witness in terms of Moses doing miracles before Pharaoh.

Exo 4:16 He will be your spokesman to the people; and it will happen, that he will be to you a mouth, and you will be to him as God-
But the plans / intentions for Aaron seem not to have worked out- for Moses ended up doing everything in reality. “It shall come to pass that he shall be to thee a mouth” (RV)- but it didn’t so come to pass. Aaron flunked it. The statement was evidently conditional. It was evidently God's plan that *Moses* should be His spokesman to Egypt. But when Moses refused, God didn't just give up; He worked with what He had available, He didn't totally reject Moses, but instead put a 'plan B' into operation by conceding to Moses' stubbornness and making Aaron the spokesman (Ex. 4:10-17).

Exo 4:17 You shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs-
The rod was to remind Moses that this was the rod which had become a serpent [associated with sin] and changed back to a rod. Although God would work through the rod, the reminder was that He worked through human sin and weakness, of which Moses was strongly afflicted as he began his ministry at this point. **The rod was just random dead wood. Just like Moses. But the comfort was that God would use it, so Moses shouldn't doubt that God likewise could use him.**

Exo 4:18 Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, Please let me go and return to my brothers who are in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive. Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace-
He seems to make the excuse to Jethro that he is homesick for his family who are still in Egypt, rather than telling him his mission. Moses asks Jethro for permission to return to Egypt to see whether his Hebrew brethren are "still alive"- yet God had just told Moses that there were indeed Hebrews still alive there who he will lead out of Egypt. Of course Moses *may* have been referring to his literal family; but it's possible that his words to Jethro imply a lack of faith in God's word, or at best an unwillingness to openly show his commitment to his new ministry from God. At the very least, he was shy to share God's word to him with Jethro. In this context it may be significant that the words God tells Moses to say to Pharaoh at this time in Ex. 4:23 are in fact never said by Moses throughout the dialogue with Pharaoh recorded in Ex. 11 and 12.

Exo 4:19 Yahweh said to Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead-
Moses didn't want Egypt to know that he was trying to save Israel; he thought he could do it secretly. Once he realized that people knew what he was trying to do, he was afraid. His fearfulness has similarities with that of spiritually weak Jacob, who fled from the face of Laban into the unknown, as Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh. Thus God encouraged him after forty years that he need no longer fear: "Return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which sought your life" (Ex. 4:19). But then he rallied his faith and left

Egypt, without (at the point of leaving) fearing the anger of Pharaoh. He so strongly believed, it was as if he physically saw God- as he asked (Heb. 11:27).

We note the repetition in :24; Pharaoh *sought* Moses' *life*, but then Yahweh *seeks* Moses' *life*, after telling him that all who were *seeking his life* in Egypt had died. Perhaps God is showing that although He has preserved Moses from those who sought his life, this was no automatically created position. Moses was worthy of death but was preserved from it by grace. Moses is also being taught that he is no essentially better than Pharaoh and the Egyptians, despite the judgment Moses was to bring upon them. We too have these kinds of incidents in life, to help us realize we too are saved by grace from God's wrath. This is why God reminds Moses in :23 that Pharaoh's firstborn is to be killed, and then moves to attempt to slay Moses' firstborn. Gershom, or Moses, are saved by touching the blood of the firstborn to his feet- just as the use of the Passover lamb's blood would save the firstborn.

These words are clearly alluded to when the death of Herod, as of the Pharaoh, opens the way for the Lord Jesus to leave Egypt; just as Moses hereby has the way opened to return to Egypt (Mt. 2:20).

Exo 4:20 Moses took his wife and his sons, and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. Moses took God's rod in his hand-
The personal rod of Moses ("*thy* rod") became the rod of God; the shepherd's crook, the symbol of an obscure workaday life, became transformed to the rod and arm of God Almighty. See on 4:4.

Exo 4:21 Yahweh said to Moses, When you go back into Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your hand, but I will harden his heart and he will not let the people go-
See on Ex. 4:4. The wonders were done by the Angels, so we are told in Psalm 78 and other commentaries on the Exodus in Scripture. But Moses through obeying the Word of God had control over those Angels, they were in His hand, symbolized by the rod. And so with us too.

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14 "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart"; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is

prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

This implies the three signs would be followed by the death of the firstborn. In reality God extended the plagues to give Egypt more chance to repent. He is so flexible because of His grace.

Exo 4:22 You shall tell Pharaoh, 'Thus says Yahweh, Israel is My son, My firstborn-
It may be significant that the words God tells Moses to say to Pharaoh at this time in Ex. 4:23 are in fact never said by Moses throughout the dialogue with Pharaoh recorded in Ex. 11 and 12. His response to Divine commandment is often incomplete. But out of such weakness he was made strong. **We note Israel were God's "firstborn"; the first nation to be His people, implying all the other nations would also become His children. Just as the Lord Jesus was the firstfruits, with promise that we also shall be the harvest, "at His coming".**

Exo 4:23 and I have said to you, Let My son go, that he may serve Me; and you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn'-
This is the language used of Babylon's reason for destruction: "The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together (i.e. Jews taken out of the land of Israel plus others from the diaspora alike taken to concentration camps in Arab lands?): and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go" (Jer. 50:33). Similarly Babylon is described as not opening "the house of the prisoners" (Is. 14:17). Biblical history continually interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on Ex. 1:7; 15:21.

Pharaoh had real possibility to let the people go, and therefore Ex. 4:23 NRSV implies that God only therefore went ahead with the plan to kill Pharaoh's firstborn. Likewise if the Israelites don't believe the first sign, they may believe the second; if they don't believe either of them then there will be a third sign (Ex. 4:8,9). Yet God states in Ex. 3:18 that the people will listen; and yet Ex. 4:8,9 accepts the possibility that they may not. In all this we see not only the essential hopefulness of God for human response to Him, but His willingness to go along with our continued weakness and blindness in an open-ended manner. There is, therefore, the possibility of living before God on different levels.

To be caught up in the downward spiral [as we all are at times] doesn't mean that there's no way out. The hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hardened (Ex. 10:1 cp. Ex. 9:34), and yet they did in fact soften when they beg Pharaoh to let Israel go (Ex. 10:7; 11:8). Yet

each refusal of Pharaoh to soften his heart made it harder for him to soften it the next time the opportunity was presented. Conditional language is always used about Pharaoh-if he were to refuse to release Israel, more plagues would happen (Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 cp. 8:21; 4:23 RSV). In fact God wanted Pharaoh to come to realize that there is none like Yahweh in all the earth- and that was actually why He did not immediately kill Pharaoh, but rather appealed to him through the plagues. That's how I read the enigmatic Ex. 9:15: "For now I should have put forth my hand, and smitten thee... and thou hadst been cut off from the earth". Fretheim paraphrases this: "If I had not had the intention of your knowing that there is none like me in all the earth... then I should have put forth my hand and cut you off from the earth. This is what you have deserved". The hardening of Pharaoh's heart didn't mean that he was thereby bound to chose wrongly each time. Indeed, the plagues themselves were designed to warn Pharaoh and thereby appeal to him to change, in order to avoid worse plagues.

"Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn" provides the connection with the strange incident that follows. Whoever was not circumcised was to be cut off from God's people. Moses had not circumcised his own firstborn. So Moses is being shown that he and his son deserved death for this. But he was saved from it by Divine grace and the intervention of a third party, namely Zipporah, the wife whom Moses was to later divorce. So Moses is being taught that he himself is actually no better than Pharaoh. He had been circumcised by a faithful father, and I suggested in Ex. 2 that this was why Pharaoh's daughter recognized and saved him. But he had not circumcised his son. He had not reflected back the good upbringing he had had. His salvation by grace at this point was to inspire him to reflect the work of Zipporah in saving the uncircumcised Israelites. And to realize that he was essentially the same as the Gentile idolatrous daughter of a pagan priest, whom he likely now secretly despised. Just as much as her despite of him is revealed by her comment that Moses was a "bridegroom of blood" to her.

However the pronoun is unclear; the Lord was seeking to kill "him", but who? It could be Moses or Gershom; and perhaps the ambiguity is because Gershom was uncircumcised, he was to be cut off from his people, and Moses also, for not circumcising him. We can retranslate this section as follows, bearing in mind that NEV is wrong on :24 "Yahweh met Moses"; the Hebrew is "Yahweh met him":

"And you will say to Pharoah, “Thus says YHWH, ‘Israel is my son, my firstborn. And I say to you, release my son that he may serve me.’ And he will refuse to release him. Behold, I will kill your son [Moses' son], your firstborn. And it happened on the way, in the lodging place, YHWH encountered him and sought to put him to death. And Zipporah took a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son and touched it to his foot and said, “You are a bridegroom of blood to me!”. As if to say, when I married you as my groom it turned out you would cause the bloodshed of my firstborn son.

This translation makes more sense, because it was the uncircumcised who were to be cut off from the people, not the parents who didn't circumcise them.

Exo 4:24 It happened on the way at a lodging place, that Yahweh met Moses and wanted to kill him-
See on Ex. 4:4; 34:9. The way the Lord "tried to kill" Moses (Ex. 4:24 AV) indicates how God's intentions can be changed by human actions; and it also reflects the limitation of power experienced by the Angel, who presumably was the one who 'tried' to do this but was thwarted by a woman. However in our context of Moses' weakness we need to reflect how this incident echoes how Pharaoh sought to kill Moses in Ex. 2:15. Even through his weakness, Moses was being taught that his personal salvation and continuation in life was by grace. Moses was saved on this occasion by a Gentile woman, Zipporah- just as he had been saved as a baby by another Gentile woman- as well as by the quick-wittedness of his own mother and sister. As Zipporah mediated with the Angel and saved Moses by touching his son with blood, so Moses would save Israel through his mediation with God and through the Passover ritual (Ex. 12:13,22,23), as well as later throwing blood upon the people (Ex. 24:8). What are we to make of all these echoes and connections of thought? Perhaps that Moses was indeed weak at this time, was saved by grace alone, and yet on that basis he was called to in his turn also save the weak through appealing to God's grace. **We also see reflected how Moses had seen an Egyptian about to kill a Hebrew, and had intervened and saved the Hebrew. Zipporah now plays the role of Moses. She is being set up to Moses as an example to be followed, rather than a pagan woman to be separated from, as he was to do. Indeed the way Zipporah saves Moses [or at least her son] fits with a theme in Exodus, of women saving- we think of the midwives, Moses' mother and sister, Pharaoh's daughter. The Bible was way ahead of its time in reflecting the value God places on every human person regardless of gender; and so any claim that the Bible merely reflects the societal views of the day is falsified.**

The way conditions are not stated within the actual prophecy is similar to how blanket statements are made in Scripture, and yet there are exceptions to them. Thus here the Lord sought to kill Moses. If He had done so, all His previous statements about delivering Israel by the hand of Moses would not have come true. God only didn't kill Moses because Zipporah intervened. She did this purely of her own freewill and according to the depth of her spiritual vision. Thus the earlier prophecies about delivering Israel by the hand of Moses actually had at least one major, though unspoken, condition: If Moses himself remained faithful. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue" (Ex. 11:7) was in fact conditional on Israel remaining indoors. But that condition isn't then stated. Even the old covenant, which was in a sense "eternal", was made with Israel "upon all these conditions" (Ex. 24:8 RVmg.). It was eternal, potentially, because it had conditions. But the conditionality of it isn't

always brought to the fore when, e.g., we read of the Sabbath as being an eternal ordinance.

Amos 4:12 sums up the idea of conditional prophecy: “Therefore thus will I do unto you, O Israel: and because I will do this unto you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel”. Thus God *will* do- but therefore, repent so that it won’t happen. There is an allusion here to God in an Angel coming to meet Moses to slay him, but he repented and thereby changed the purpose / will / intention of God.

Time and again, the Jewish apocryphal literature wrongly sought to distance God from doing anything negative in human life. Gen. 22:1 clearly states that it was *God* who put Abraham to the test by asking him to kill his son Isaac; Jubilees retells the story with "Prince Mastema", the Satan figure, telling Abraham to do this (Jub. 17:15-18). Likewise Ex. 4:24 recounts how "the Lord", presumably as an Angel, met Moses and tried to kill him for not circumcising his son; but Jubilees again claims that Mastema / Satan did this (Jub. 48:1-3). The Biblical record highlights the sin of Aaron and the people; the Jewish myths excuse it by blaming it on Satan. Indeed, several times the Hebrew word *mastema* ['hostility, enmity'] occurs, it is in the context of urging Israel to see that *they* and their internal desires to sin are the true *mastema*. Hosea 9:7 is an example: "Because your sins are so many and your hostility [*mastema*] so great".

Exo 4:25 Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me-
Moses' marriage was weak. After 40 years, Zipporah's frustration boiled over: "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me... then she said (again), A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision" (AV). As a descendant of Ishmael she was angry at Isaac's choice and circumcision. This is probably the closest the Bible gets to recording the real life use of taboo language. "Because of the circumcision" suggests she despised Moses' religion. Moses divorced her.

A read through the records will indicate that Moses was somewhat temperamental in his faith. For the first forty years of his life, he scarcely let his light show. Yet all the time his conscience was active, enabling him to build up towards heights of spiritual achievement few of us can achieve. At the age of 40, he had a flash of spiritual devotion; he rejected the opportunity for greatness in Egypt, possibly the opportunity to become king of Egypt (as Christ had the opportunity to become king of the world in his wilderness temptations). Yet after that, he went into 40 years of decline. In the eyes of men, he was a finished man. He had gone away from God's people, he was living in a family of idolaters, and had married one of them. His marriage went wrong, he divorced his wife, and picked up some other woman. He didn't circumcise his children, and thus he despised his covenant relationship with God. Eighty years is a long time. They were eighty years of at best mediocre commitment to the God of Israel, with only the occasional flash of spiritual brilliance. Yet this man Moses went on to become one of

the greatest spiritual men there has ever been, a man who came closer to God than all others except the Lord Jesus. "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Dt. 34:10). The Lord Jesus was "like unto" Moses (Dt. 18:18)- a high enough commendation for Moses.

"Cast it at his feet" could as well be translated "touced it on his legs", Biblical Hebrew making no distinction between legs and feet as in several languages today. It was therefore very similar to the salvation of the firstborn by the painting of blood on the doorposts. We wonder why it was Zipporah and not Moses who perceived the problem and acted upon it? For this is the only Biblical example of a woman performing circumcision. Again we are left with the impression that Moses is uncommitted, switched off and not at all spiritually perceptive at this point. And yet he is used by God to save His people and is, bit by bit, dramatically transformed. When Moses appealed to Pharaoh and threatened the death of the firstborn, he would have made the appeal with the humility and intensity of a man who almost lost his own firstborn, had it not been for repentance and intercession. And he would have seen the judgment carried out with awed humility, realizing that he had not responded to the same situation as he should, but rather Zipporah had.

Exo 4:26 So He let him alone-
Martin Buber, one of academic Judaism's finest minds, coined the term "Yahweh's demonism". He perceived in, e.g., the record of the Angel meeting Moses at night, seeking to slay him and then 'letting him go', all the language which was typically applied to demons- meeting and seeking to slay a man of God (Ex. 4:24). But the point is, it is not a demon who did this, but a righteous Angel of God, to the extent that it was possible for the record to state that it was Yahweh who sought to slay Moses, and yet changed His purpose because of Moses' repentance and the intercession of a woman. Buber's point was that the text is an allusion to the local beliefs about demons, but the Biblical record deconstructs these beliefs by showing that it is Yahweh and His Angels responsible for those situations which pagans would otherwise attribute to supposed 'demons'. Other examples include how the bull cherubim were understood in the surrounding cultures as the abode or throne of a demon; but it is Yahweh who is enthroned upon the bull cherubim; or how the record of Balaam would've lead the contemporary hearers to expect him to receive inspiration from a demon- but instead the inspiration comes from Yahweh, and is *against* those who believed in demons and pagan gods.

"Let him alone" is Heb. 'released his hold '. This would explain why Moses was unable to perform the circumcision. It would be another connection with the Angel holding Jacob and changing his intention to murder him. The same word is in 1 Chron. 21:15 where the Angel intending to kill all Israel 'releases his hand' once

sacrifice is offered by David. Another example if Divine intention being changed by human action or intercession.

We think of how God apparently went out to kill Jacob, but was 'foiled' by Jacob's prayer; He went out to kill Balaam, but was stopped by the donkey helping Balaam; and now, He goes out to kill Moses and his son, but is apparently foiled by Zipporah's zippy action. Of course, God is not foiled nor defeated; instead we are invited to see how He is so open to intercession and to changing His intentions in response to human prayer or third party mediation. We likewise deserve to be cut off from God's people, but are saved by the Lord's blood and intervention and initiative of the greater than Zipporah.

Then she said, You are a bridegroom of blood, because of the circumcision-
It seems from this that the Angel also intended to slay Moses' son. The connection with Ex. 4:23 would mean that God tried to kill Moses' son because Moses was not fully believing that God would kill Pharaoh's firstborn. We note that Moses was saved here by a Gentile woman; just as his life had been saved in babyhood by women (his faithful mother, his sister and the Gentile princess).

LXX "and he departed from him, because she said, The blood of the circumcision of my son is staunched". This suggests that the blood of the firstborn saved Moses and Gershom from death, thanks to the intercession of Zipporah. In this case we see God not in fact cutting off the man who was not circumcised on the eighth day; for Gershom was far older than eight days old at this point. As ever, He by grace accepted the spirit rather than the letter of obedience.

Exo 4:27 Yahweh said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. He went, and met him on God's mountain, and kissed him-
The wilderness would have been that between Egypt and Horeb, or Sinai, which was now "God's mountain" (Ex. 3:1). It was quite some obedience by Aaron to escape from Egypt and travel alone in the wilderness to meet Moses, his brother whom he hardly knew and had not heard from for 40 years. Aaron's obedience should be recognized by us. He could easily have turned down this calling as bizarre.

Exo 4:28 Moses told Aaron all the words of Yahweh with which He had sent him, and all the signs with which He had instructed him-
Aaron's faith would have been buoyed up by actually meeting his long absent brother Moses, his faith in the apparently bizarre word of Yahweh to him would have been rewarded. And so he was the more inclined surely to believe the message Moses now shared with him. Aaron was initially more obedient to the call than Moses was; but that changed over time.

Exo 4:29 Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel-

The Jews thought that as Moses hid himself and then re-emerged from obscurity, so Messiah would. Rabbi Berekiah said: “As the first deliverer [Moses] was revealed, then hidden and afterwards appeared again, so will it also be with the last deliverer [Messiah]” (Quoted in J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea In Israel* (London: Macmillan, 1956) p. 17.). John’s record is clearly presenting the Lord as Moses in this sense.

Exo 4:30 Aaron spoke all the words which Yahweh had spoken to Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people-

The fact Moses had to do all the signs shows that they did not believe the first and second signs. Their faith is consistently shown to be weak and superficial from the very start of their relationship with Yahweh; and later prophets will lament his from Egypt onwards, their faith was very weak indeed. Like us at times, they were saved almost against their will, by grace alone.

Exo 4:31 The people believed, and when they heard that Yahweh had visited the children of Israel, and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped-

"When Moses *was grown*, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens... when he was *full forty years old* it came into his heart to visit his brethren... by faith Moses, *when he was come to years*, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Ex. 2:11; Acts 7:23; Heb. 11:24). The implication seems to be that Moses reached a certain point of maturity, of readiness, and then he went to his brethren. But then he stepped back from that apparent maturity, and spent 40 years building up to it again. We can have similar experiences. God looked on the sorrows of His people through the sensitivity of Moses, He *saw and knew* their struggles, their sense of being trapped, their desire to revive spiritually but their being tied down by the painful business of life and living; and He sent Moses to deliver them from this. But these very words are quoted about our deliverance through the 'coming down' of the Lord Jesus (Ex. 3:7; 4:31 = Lk. 1:68).

Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later. As God "saw" the oppression of Israel (Ex. 2:25; 3:7,9; 4:31; 5:19), so did Moses (Ex. 2:11). He looked on God's people with the eyes / perspective of God- just as we should.

The people asked the Lord Jesus "What sign do you show unto us?" (Jn. 2:18). Cynical Israel asked exactly the same of Moses, in effect; and superficially, "the people believed" (Ex. 4:31) after they saw the signs. The hollowness of Israel's 'belief' in Moses

was matched by the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet they still both loved Israel.

EXODUS CHAPTER 5

Exo 5:1 Afterward Moses and Aaron came, and said to Pharaoh, This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says, ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness’-

See on Ex. 3:18. The commandment had been that the elders should go with them ("And you shall come, you and the elders of Israel, to the king of Egypt, and you shall tell him, ‘Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. Now please let us go three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God’", Ex. 3:18); but it seems that only Moses and Aaron go. So this suggests that Moses was pretty much single handed in saving the people; the people and their elders were unenthusiastic and passive, as many in the body of the new Israel. And this is a theme in so many lives. Whilst fellowship with others is indeed a comfort, anyone who seriously does God's work will at many points stand alone- but alone with God. Those who long for more fellowship, for a nearby church and other believers... need to bear this in mind.

Yahweh had asked Pharaoh to let Israel go that they might serve Him. "Let My people go that they may serve Me" is parallel with "Let My people go that they may sacrifice / keep a feast to Me". That "service" was specifically to keep a feast; but that feast was to celebrate their deliverance from Egypt. God's intention was that their journey to Canaan should begin with a feast. If we enquire 'What was Yahweh asking Pharaoh to do?', the answer is that He asked him to let Israel go and "serve" Him through keeping a feast. They were to ob-serve a feast to Him; to keep a feast was to "serve" God. This is why Moses later says that Israel must take all their animals with them, because they don't know with what they are to "serve" Yahweh, i.e. which animals He might ask them to sacrifice. It is why He asks Pharaoh to let Israel go to"sacrifice" (Ex. 8:26-29), to "serve Me in the wildernesss", paralleled in Ex. 5:1 by "Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness". The "service" was a specific act at a specific time in a specific place- a "feast", which is a term also used of the Passover. Pharaoh refused, and so the intended feast was kept in the form of the Passover, resulting in the death of his firstborn. For there is no record that Israel did keep a feast after they left Egypt. Here we see God's flexibility in the outworking of His plans. We note that the Passover is called both a "sacrifice" ["It is the sacrifice of Yahweh's passover", Ex. 12:27] and a "service" ["You shall keep this service... you shall keep this service", Ex. 12:25,26; 13:5]. Pharaoh was finally told that he must provide Israel with the sacrifices for their feast (Ex.

10:25); and he did so through the death of his firstborn. Finally, Egypt themselves begged Israel to totally leave them, not just temporarily. K.A. Kitchen has documented evidence from Egypt that brick production was indeed done by slave labour, and there were meticulous records kept of the number of bricks produced each day; but he noted that there were allowances for days off, in order to perform religious rituals. So God was asking Pharaoh to allow the Hebrews to have some days off to serve their God. This initially relatively small demand became ever more demanding, resulting in Egypt thrusting Israel out completely. This is typical of how God works. Israel were God's firstborn and therefore must be released to Him. Their release was to involve the sacrifice of firstborns- initially, firstborn animals were in view. But Egypt refused, and so it was their literal firstborns who became the sacrifice. I think this is the thinking here. God has total claim upon man. If we refuse that in apparently small ways, the demand becomes greater, and finally we will in any case forfeit our lives in death. Whereas if we willingly surrender, we receive life eternal. Yet God wanted to save Pharaoh. This is why He initially only asked Pharaoh to let His people go for a three day worship ceremony in the wilderness: "Now please let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God" (Ex. 3:18). Egypt refused, and so Pharaoh and his followers had their hearts hardened until they begged Israel to leave Egypt totally, and "thrust" them out. The initial request, as K.A. Kitchen showed, was not unreasonable. But Pharaoh's repeated refusal led to him being hardened until he himself wanted Israel to leave permanent.

Exo 5:2 Pharaoh said, Who is Yahweh, that I should listen to His voice to let Israel go? I don't recognize Yahweh, and moreover I will not let Israel go-

"Who is" could mean that Pharaoh despised Yahweh (Jud. 9:28; 1 Sam. 17:26; 25:10). But it may have been a genuine request, seeing that he didn't "know" Joseph (Ex. 1:8) and the people hardly evangelized their God to the Egyptians, and had largely forgotten about Him. And this would explain Yahweh's revelation of Himself to Pharaoh through the plagues, so that he might indeed "know" Yahweh.

Yahweh claimed to be He who was, is and shall be; but this was what the Pharaohs claimed. An inscription on a temple gives the idea: "I am that which was, and is, and shall be, and no man has lifted my veil".

Exo 5:3 They said, The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Yahweh, our God, lest He fall on us with plague, or with the sword-

This last phrase is an addition to what Yahweh had told Moses to say in Ex. 3:18. Moses may be adding a human argument in the name of God's word, which wasn't what he should have done. For his idea was 'We're your workforce, we won't be much use to you if our God slays us, will we! So let us go and serve Him!'. This doesn't exactly present Moses as totally loyal to Yahweh. It also misrepresents Yahweh as capricious and likely to lash out and punish His people with death if they don't perform a certain ritual. Moses doesn't come over well here.

Perhaps God's initial intention was that Pharaoh would allow the request to go and sacrifice. And slowly come to thereby accept the religion of the Hebrews. For the request was not initially that he allow Israel to leave Egypt permanently and totally. It was ultimately the Egyptians themselves who were to beg Israel to leave immediately.

We may well ask why God would fall on Israel with plague and the sword unless they sacrificed to Him. Perhaps the idea is that they had sinned, and knew that only sacrifice could bring atonement and the aversion of judgment upon them. But there is no record of them offering sacrifices, and yet by grace therefore the judgment for their sins was averted. Alternatively, the idea may be that the "us" is Israel and the Egyptians; the sword and plague could have been averted for them all if Israel had been allowed to make an atoning sacrifice. For this is the intention of Israel, to be the saviours of the world. We can likewise save others from just judgment through the Lord's sacrifice. The Passover lamb and the Passover feast was the feast Israel had to keep; and this was for the forgiveness of their sins and to avert judgment. The Egyptians who didn't keep it indeed suffered the judgment of the sword upon their firstborn.

Exo 5:4 The king of Egypt said to them, Why do you, Moses and Aaron, take the people from their work? Get back to your burdens!-

He reasons as if Moses and Aaron were also supposed to be working. Perhaps indeed Moses, like the Lord Jesus, shared in the experience of the people he had come to deliver. We wonder whether the king realized who Moses actually was. Ps. 81:6 uses the same word for "burdens" in saying that Yahweh "removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the baskets". We get the picture of the Israelites carrying the burdens on their shoulders, and carrying baskets of bricks with their hands.

Exo 5:5 Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land are now many-

This fact was clearly dominant in his mind; and he reasoned that by stopping so many people from working, they were seriously damaging the kingdom. We note Pharaoh doesn't at all engage with the request. His comment is also a tacit reflection of the fact that the genocide of baby male Hebrews had failed to stop Hebrew population growth. He ought to have reflected that man's most concerted plans cannot thwart Yahweh's will for His people.

And you make them rest from their burdens-

Perhaps the Lord alluded to this when saying that His burden was easy and light compared to the heavy burden of legalistic Judaism, which He thereby compared to Egyptian bondage (Mt. 11:29,30). And His allusion presents Moses as representing Himself; although in the short term, the way to escape from that heavy burden was going to appear heavy. But the point is, that Israel suffering in Egypt, bearing heavy burdens, are every man.

"Rest" is shabath, inviting us to imagine that the Egyptians were angry that the Hebrews were refusing to work on the Sabbath. The Egyptian complaint was that Moses and Aaron were making the Hebrews rest or 'sabbath' from their work. Perhaps indeed Moses and Aaron were encouraging the Hebrews to return to their God and keep Sabbath, although the Sabbath had not been formally instituted.

Exo 5:6 The same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying-

The taskmasters were presumably Egyptians. "Officers" is the usual word for 'scribe', the idea being that these people kept a careful record of how many bricks were made. Egyptologists have uncovered such records.

Exo 5:7 You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick, as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves-

As explained on :12, this resulted in the people being scattered throughout Egypt, which was part of God's way of appealing to the entire nation.

Exo 5:8 The number of the bricks, which they made before, you are to still require from them. You shall not diminish anything of it, for they are idle; therefore they cry, saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God’-

Pharaoh's behaviour here is a classic case of "blame the victim", and accords exactly with the psychology of an abuser who has great power. There is a consistent psychological veracity and credibility in the records.

Exo 5:9 Let heavier work be laid on the men, that they may labour therein; and don’t let them pay any attention to lying words-

We see here Pharaoh's blasphemy against God's word, calling it "vain" (AV), or lies. "Heavier work laid on men" is the very phrase only elsewhere used in Neh. 5:18, of how the people of God later abused each other. They were treating each other like the Egyptians had done. And all such laying of heavy burdens upon our brethren is making us like the Egyptians, to face a similar judgment. The Lord interpreted this as making unreasonable spiritual demands of our fellow believers (Mt. 23:4).

Exo 5:10 The taskmasters of the people went out, and their officers, and they spoke to the people, saying, This is what Pharaoh says: ‘I will not give you straw-

They "went out" the same day (:6). The immediacy and extremity of the behaviour reflects how a raw nerve had been touched within Pharaoh. He had a conscience, which God sought to work with towards his eventual conversion.

Exo 5:11 Go yourselves, get straw where you can find it, for nothing of your work shall be diminished’-

Pharaoh had insisted that nothing should be "diminished" from the quota of bricks he had set (Ex. 5:11), and the same word is later used of how Israel were not to "diminish"

from obeying Yahweh's commandments (Dt. 4:2; 12:32). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Exo 5:12 So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble for straw-

This may have been a way of making a witness to the entire land of Egypt. Hebrew slaves foraging for straw, pulling up stubble... would have made all Egypt aware of the abuse of God's people, and thereby responsible to judgment. The language of mud bricks and people spread throughout the land recalls the account of Babel in Gen. 11:34. Thus the hint is given that all Pharaoh builds is to be destroyed.

Exo 5:13 The taskmasters were urgent saying, Fulfil your work quota daily, as when there was straw!-

Ex. 5:13 speaks of the 'daily work quota' of Israel under Egyptian abuse. But the phrase is used of their daily work for Yahweh, in collecting manna (Ex. 16:4) and serving in the tabernacle (Lev. 23:37). They had changed masters, but still there was a requirement for daily service; see on :11.

Exo 5:14 The officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh’s taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and questioned: Why haven’t you fulfilled your quota both yesterday and today, in making brick as before?-

"Yesterday and today" could mean that this happened just two days after the command was given, and it was given the very day Moses and Aaron had asked Pharaoh to release the people. This situation would have made Sabbath observance very difficult (Ex. 31:15). Those who were sensitive to God's ways would have seen that they faced death

for Sabbath breaking, or death at the hands of the Egyptians. They would have been desperate for release from this situation, so that they could serve God acceptably.

Exo 5:15 Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried to Pharaoh, saying, Why do you deal this way with your servants?-

Their question of course begged the response from Pharaoh: 'Because of your desire to be loyal to your God, as this Moses is teaching you'. The whole thing was set up in order to elicit their solid commitment to Yahweh, or to turn back to accepting their lot in Egypt. They failed in this choice- but still God saved them, by grace. The Hebrew officers of Ex. 5:15 refused to beat their brethren and so were beaten. In Num. 11:16, a point soon after the time of the exodus in Ex. 5:15, there is the assumption that there was already a group of 70 elders or officers over Israel. Presumably these 70 were the 70 Hebrew officers who were placed over the Israeli team slaves. So their taking beating for their brethren became the qualification for eldership in the new Israel who emerged from the Red Sea. This is the real qualification for leadership...

In their desperation, the people cried to Pharaoh to help them, just as the Egyptians cried to Pharaoh during the famine years [s.w.]. They acted like Egyptians; they didn't cry to Yahweh. But still Yahweh saved them; Ex. 2:23 summarizes: "the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and the cried out; and their cry came up to God because of their bondage". Yahweh saw their cry to Pharaoh as a cry to Him. Moses liked to perceive their cry in this positive way: "When we cried to Yahweh, He heard our voice, and sent an angel, and brought us forth out of Egypt" (Num. 20:16); "we cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers and Yahweh heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression" (Dt. 26:7; also Neh. 9:27). But this is really how God sees 'prayer'; our crying out is graciously seen by Him as a cry out to Him.

Exo 5:16 No straw is given to your servants, and they tell us, ‘Make brick!’ and behold, your servants are beaten; but the fault is in your own people-

The Hebrew grammar here is apparently wrong, so we would go with LXX "and thou sinnest against thine own people". This was a protestation of loyalty to Pharaoh, asking him to remember that they were his people, and considered themselves like this. It is unlikely that they would have come asking a favour from Pharaoh, and then criticized his people. It was a tacit statement that they rejected the teaching of Moses, that they were

Yahweh's people and therefore Yahweh was going to save them. They sinned against Him from Egypt onwards, as the prophets lament; they wanted to be Egypt's people, not His.

Exo 5:17 But he said, You are idle! You are idle! Therefore you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to Yahweh’-

Pharaoh refuses to accept their protestation of loyalty to Pharaoh as "his people" (:16 LXX). See on :16. He claims that they were loyal to Yahweh, although they have just effectively denied that, as explained on :16.

Exo 5:18 Go therefore now, and work, for no straw shall be given to you, yet you shall deliver the same number of bricks!-

At Tell el-Maskhuta, the site of Pithom (Ex. 1:11), Egyptologists have found bricks, some made with chopped straw or reed, and some without it.

Exo 5:19 The officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble, when it was said, You shall not diminish anything from your daily quota of bricks!-

Pharaoh had probably ordered straw not to be given to the Israelites without realizing quite what that meant in practice. As he saw men with wheal marks standing before him, the appeal to conscience would surely have been to somehow reduce his demand. But he didn't. We see here God's appeal to his conscience yet again, and how he so persistently resists it.

Exo 5:20 They met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came out from Pharaoh-

Perhaps Moses and Aaron had gone again with the people to ask Pharaoh to reduce the brick quota. God first of all taught Moses that if he explained the power of God’s Name to Israel’s elders, then they would hearken unto him (Ex. 3:18). But they didn’t hearken unto Moses (Ex. 5:20), perhaps because he didn’t bother expounding the Name to them, or perhaps because he did but they refused to believe it. Therefore he did explain it to them again (Ex. 6:1-9 = Ex. 3:14-17); but then again they refused to hearken to him (Ex.

6:9 cp. Ex. 3:18). He learnt that what was proclaimed by God as possible all the same depends on human effort to believe. And this lead him on even further, to realize that through his spirituality, he could bring salvation for others. In this spirit, Moses' faith in keeping the Passover led to Israel's salvation, they left Egypt by him (Heb. 3:16; 11:28); and when Aaron deserved death, he was redeemed by Moses' prayer on his behalf (Dt. 9:20). Moses' prayer, with uplifted hands, resulted in Israel's victory over Amalek; without his prayer, and the intensity of it, there would have been no victory for them. However, he had to learn this lesson at this early stage.

Exo 5:21 and they said to them, May Yahweh look at you, and judge, because you have made us a stench to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants-

They are quoting the words of Jacob in Gen. 34:30, perhaps unconsciously. Yet by grace Jacob was saved out of the position of having been made a stench to the Gentiles. If they were familiar with the Biblical text of their own history, they would have perceived this encouragement. If they weren't, then the potential encouragement wouldn't have been received. And so it is true for us.

Moses' attempts to save Israel have apparently failed. His initial request to Pharaoh to release Israel was refused. He then offers a compromise- Israel will go three days' journey to worship and then return. This is turned down. And then this request to worship leads to the accusation that the Israelites are lazy, no straw is given to make bricks but the quota must still be met. The foremen appeal against the unreasonable demand, but are refused; and then the foremen are beaten, and they turn against Moses. Indeed, the Hebrews conclude that Moses has "put a sword in their hand to kill us" rather than to deliver them. It seemed all abject failure. Just like his nervous attempt to save Israel 40 years previously had failed. Just as Paul's first missionary journey to Cyprus seems to have failed initially. He went around the island and made no converts until the day he left the island, it seems. Initial failure, when we were expecting success, is an experience built in to most human lives. I recall pacing the halls of the first two churches I opened in Latvia when nobody turned up. This experience is to develop our humility and our trust / faith. And above all this principle came to full term in the magnificent defeat of the Lord upon the cross, through which came the ultimate victory. Temporary failure will not thwart nor ultimately foil the "I will..." of the Yahweh who "will" save us. But the people had to be brought to this utter nadir of desperation before God can say "Now [when they were at their depth of despondency] will I deliver..." (Ex. 6:1).

To put a sword in their hand to kill us-

They were so wrong, as we are in our moments of desperation. The very opposite works out to be the case. The same phrase is used of how finally God was to put a sword into the hand of Babylon to slay Egypt (Ez. 30:25).

The Israelites are presented as being in an absolutely awful situation. Perhaps this is to help us appreciate how awful were their later pleas to return to Egypt because all had been so good there (Ex. 16:3 very soon afterwards; Ex. 17:3 "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us", as if there was no threat of death in Egypt; Num. 11:4,5). And in their hearts, they did return to Egypt. We see for all time how human memory is so biased by present circumstances. And how strong is the sense that the former days are better than these; the past was better than the present and our projected future. The way of faith sees the past for what it was, slavery and suffering in Egypt / the world; the present is far better, and the future is eternally glorious. This difference in worldview is profound.

Exo 5:22 Moses returned to Yahweh and said-

"Moses returned to the Lord"- the Angel of the bush? It sounds as if he went to a specific place to meet the Lord- i.e. the Angel. Moses asks why He had sent him- and it was the Angel at the bush who had sent him. Moses complained about the Angel, and so God reminded him that 'Yahweh personally will be your Elohim Angels', and that because of his questioning of the Angels he was in fact doubting God Himself personally.

Lord, why have You brought evil on this people?-

We note that "evil" is seen as always coming from God in the Hebrew Bible. This was a deconstruction of the popular misconception that only good comes from God, and "evil" comes from a supernatural 'Satan' being. But the Bible carefully teaches the very opposite. There is no such 'Satan' in that sense. And Yahweh is all powerful. As discussed on :21, Moses' attempts appeared to have failed; instead of delivering the people, his efforts had resulted in evil coming upon them. But he attributes his own failures to God. He cannot see that there must be initial failure before victory. Yet it was exactly because he and Israel were at such low ebb, that God could say that "Now" He would deliver them (Ex. 6:1).

Moses uses the same word at the end of his life, in saying that the Egyptians "brought evil" on Israel (Dt. 26:6). As if in maturity, he recalled the sins and failures of 40 years ago and puts the matter right. We ought to live like this, rather than assuming that time somehow automatically atones for sin.

Why is it that You have sent me?-

“Why is it that thou hast sent [s.w. “put forth” and “let go”] me?”- i.e., why don’t You use Messiah, the man of Your right hand? And this, subconsciously and unexpressed, is so often our view; He must do it, not me. I’m just a shepherd, God ought to leave me alone in the comfortable monotony of my working life. But He has called us to greater things, to realize as Moses finally did that we, you and me, are the ones through whom God truly will work in this world. See on Ex. 4:4.

Moses repeats the same question in Num. 11:11. He struggled with God not doing what He promised straight away. He wanted it right away, and failed to see that any delay which allowed evil to continue could be legitimate. This question lurked within Moses, and it seems at times he only wanted to be part of God's plan if it was going to work out when and how he expected and assumed. This is why Israel rejected a suffering Messiah, and why so many stumble at God today. Because they lack the humility to trust in God and accept their own assumptions of how things should be may be very wrong and short termist.

Exo 5:23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has brought trouble on this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all-

Moses was weak and discouraged, accusing God of wanting to do them evil rather than save them. This was what the people concluded in the desert, when they complained Yahweh had brought them into the desert to slay them. Moses would have found patience with them, because he would have realized that this same desperate conclusion, in the heat of desperation, was what he too had been guilty of. It is awareness of our own failures which provides the basis for others in theirs. God is without that aspect; His patience with human sin is therefore the more wonderful than ours.

EXODUS CHAPTER 6

Exo 6:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh, for by a strong hand he shall let them go, and by a strong hand he shall drive them out of his

land-
See on Ex. 5:22,23. God doesn't give up with Moses' pathetic loss of faith in Ex. 5:23. He assures him that His saving purpose will indeed work out. Because He is Yahweh, the saviour God, and His purpose "will" work out, because "I will be who I will be". See on :2. **The point is that "now", now both Moses and Israel were at rock bottom in faith, God would act to save. It was not that He turned away from them because of their poor response to Him, thinking 'OK then, well I won't do it then'. We see here His saving grace.**

Exo 6:2 God spoke to Moses, and said to him, I am Yahweh-
The Name speaks of the Father's desire to respond to His children, despite their weakness of faith; see on :1. The root word *ehyeh* from which 'Yahweh' is derived occurs 50 times, mainly in the context of God's help and comfort in real situations. This is the practical nature of the things expressed in the Name. The repeated references to God's Name in Ex. 3 and 6 had a very practical context. Israel needed to summon all their faith to believe that actually, they were not in a hopeless situation there in the concentration camps of Egypt. Even when they were given no straw and told to make the same number of bricks, the comfort they are given is to remember the *Name* of their God, who had acted according to that Name in the past, and would do so in the future for them- because He is and will be who He has been.

God's answer to Moses' complaint [that He was not saving Israel] is that His Name means "I will...". And now again seven times in the next verses we will read of how He "will" save. YHWH essentially means that God "will" save, as He did historically, as He does, and will eternally do. And so Yahoshua, "Jesus", is the quintessence of His Name- 'Yah saves'.

Exo 6:3 and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty; but by My name Yahweh was I not known to them?-

The idea may be that "I am" is also "I was". The Yahweh who had come through for the fathers, was just as much going to come through for Israel in abusive slavery in Egypt.

See on Ex. 5:22,23. At the time of the burning bush, the people knew Yahweh's Name as a word- because "By My name Yahweh was I not known?" (Ex. 6:3), and clearly enough the patriarchs had been aware of the Yahweh Name. But the point was that they didn't see from His Name, just as a word, what He was really like, and what He could do for them. The Egyptians and others with whom Israel had had contact invoked their gods by pronouncing their name, and expected a miracle to happen. Presumably Israel had tried

doing this with the word 'Yahweh'- and nothing happened. Moses put the problem to God in Ex. 6, and the response was "*Ehyeh asher ehyeh*". "I am that I am" isn't a purely correct translation, because the Hebrew verb used doesn't mean simply existence in an abstract sense. It refers rather to being there / present / being someone or something for someone. Martin Buber, in my judgment one of the finest of the many fine Jewish minds to have engaged with this matter of the Name, concluded: "'I am that I am' could only be understood as an avoiding of the question, as a statement which withholds any information". I would put it somewhat more gently, in saying that God was saying that He will be present with us, will be what Israel ultimately needs, without defining precisely in what sense. Because we're mere humans, we don't know what to ask of God as we should; and His very Name is the comfort that He will be for us as we need, with our eternal salvation in mind. God seemed to have encouraged Israel to understand this by going on to promise simply that "I shall be [*ehyeh*] present" (Ex. 3:12; 4:12). At this point it seemed Israel were doomed to make bricks without straw, and to be worked to death literally. But through the revelation of His Name, He wanted them to trust that He knew best how to bring them to salvation; He didn't want them to invoke His Name in the primitive way the Egyptians did with their gods, hoping for a quick-fix miracle. God is only ehyeh for His people; and there came a terrible moment when He had to tell them through the prophets that "You are not my people and I am not ehyeh for you" (Hos. 1:9). Israel lost this 'presence' of their God. And we know that we are His people by the constant sense we have of the hand of Providence in our lives, even through the unanswered prayers that reveal an altogether higher and ultimately Divine game plan in place in our lives. But like Israel before Moses, we wish for the quick fix, the waving of the wand to resolve the issues, the sense of the saving presence of God in our experiences, working out His ultimate plan of delivering us from Egypt / this world and from ourselves.

God had revealed Himself as Jehovah previously (thus Abraham could speak of 'Jehovah Jireh' in Gen. 22:14, **and God clearly tells Abraham and Jacob "I am Yahweh...", Gen. 15:7; 28:13). One take on this is that** the patriarchs conceived of God as a singular Angel- "God Almighty" (as Jacob: "The Angel that redeemed me from all evil"). Now Yahweh says "you shall know that I am Yahweh your Elohim which brings you out from under the burden of the Egyptians" (Ex. 6:7). God is saying, 'I will be Elohim; I will be manifested not in just one Angel, but in many'.

Another reading is to accept the AV translation "But by My Name Yahweh I was not known to them", but to enquire what it means to "know Yahweh". Verse 7 states that Israel would "know Yahweh" through their experience of the Exodus from Egypt [cp. "My people shall know My Name", Is. 52:5 and often]. So to "know Yahweh" is to have relationship and experience with Him. The idea may therefore be that even Abraham did not "know Yahweh" to the extent that Israel were to "know Yahweh" through what they were about to experience. The intimacy of relationship that He

was offering them far surpasses even the experience of the patriarchs. So the idea would be "I was not known to them [compared to the extent to which I shall be known to you]". They had perceived Yahweh as El Shaddai, a powerful God. But now God was offering intimate relationship. This is the same development seen in those who in immaturity see God as merely a powerful source of answered prayer, to give them something, to sort out life for them. But these should lead to relationship.

Exo 6:4 I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their travels, in which they lived as aliens-
"I am that I am" can equally mean 'I was who I was', and implies that He will be who He was historically. And historically, He had been their saviour God. And although with the cry of the slave drivers fresh in their ears it seemed this was all irrelevant, the point was that the God of historical salvation was going to come through for them now. Because that was what His Name was all about.

Exo 6:5 Moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant-
The "groaning" was that just described at the end of Ex. 5, where the Israelites groan because of having to now make bricks without straw. To try to alleviate the burden, they even plead with Pharaoh that they are his people and not Yahweh's (see on Ex. 5:16). But despite that, God's grace was such that He simply felt sorry for them in their affliction. He likewise saved them at the time of the judges, not because they had repented or were suddenly faithful to Him- but simply because of His pity for them in their sufferings (likewise Jud. 2:18 "When Yahweh raised up judges for them, Yahweh was with the judge and saved them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge, for it grieved Yahweh because of their distress because of the oppression".).
God's pity was because of His covenant relationship with them, even though they were bitter with Him, wanted to stay in Egypt, worshipped Egyptian gods, and carried the star of Remphan and tabernacle of Moloch with them through the Red Sea. We are in that same covenant and know that same grace.

But we can also understand from the context that their groanings were against God. But in His love and understanding, He even pitied them that they felt that way about Him, and wanted to save them rather than turn away from them because of their groaning.

Exo 6:6 Therefore tell the children of Israel, 'I am Yahweh, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments-
The three "I will"s clearly allude to 'I will be who I will be / who I was and have been'. This

assurance of salvation was and is part of God's most essential characteristics bound up with the very essence of His Name. Those who bear that Name should therefore be able to say that they are assured, at this moment, of final salvation. For this is so much part of God's purpose and essence. **The Divine assurance "I will... [save, deliver, redeem, take you out, free] is found seven times, completely, in :6-8. Seven sentences, with seven verbs in the first person ["I will..."]. This is the significance and comfort of baptism into that Name. For in this sense the Name of the Father is the name of the Son, in functional terms. We note the large number of personal pronouns used in these verses: "I... My...". We sense the very personal essence of God, bound up in His Name, very intensely articulated. This is God's insistence that He *will* save, despite our lack of qualification and in the face of every apparent impossibility of that plan. Hence Yah-hoshua, 'Yah Saves', was the name of His Son, 'Jesus'. For in Him we see the supreme articulation of all that God is- a saviour God. Our doubts about our personal salvation are therefore pitted, pitifully, against the absolute essence of who Yahweh is. "Redeem" is the word used of what a relative does to save another relative, the word of the kinsman redeemer, who 'redeemed' a relative who had fallen into slavery, debt or hard times, or who had died without seed. Israel, like us, were being told that this Divine "I will..." was on the basis that we are His very own kith and kin; and we now understand that the more because of the work of the Lord Jesus. We are no longer merely servants, but actual sons; through the Spirit sent forth into our hearts, we cry "Abba, Father", a relationship far beyond being adopted children. We are His actual children if we are in His Son (Gal. 4:4-6). And it was well understood that an adopted child could never be disowned by the adoptive Father. This is the force of "You shall know [Me]" (:7, unlike Pharaoh who refused to know Yahweh, Ex. 5:2); to know, in the Hebraic sense, means to have a relationship with. And that relationship is one of family, because Yahweh will be our redeemer, the kinsman redeemer. This is why the ten commandments begin with the command to accept that "I am Yahweh your God". All this is really true. "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:2,3). This is so much more than 'You must believe that God is one'. It is a command to accept the wonder of the fact that this one God is our God. And so to achieve this, God would bring them out from under the burdens of Egypt, just as His Son saves those who are under heavy burdens. On a spiritual level, we are even now freed from the ties that bind; we have changed masters and are no longer slaves to sin (Rom. 6). We are to respond to this gracious salvation, by doing to others what God did to us. And so these ideas are alluded to later in the law: "If a resident alien among you has prospered, and your brother, being in straits, comes under his authority... he shall have the right of redemption... One of his brothers shall redeem him" (Lev. 25:47,48).**

Israel were brought out by "great judgments" (Ex. 6:6; 7:4), i.e. by God's stretched out arm (Ex. 6:6). The way He acted with His “arm” was a manifestation of His judgment principles which are part of His Name. Therefore the Red Sea deliverance is described as the judgment of God, the day of the Lord etc. because God's people exited from the world whilst judgments came upon it; the Name of God was revealed through this process (Ps. 76:6-9; 103:6,7). For "redeem" see on :7.

Yahweh "purchased" His people from Egypt (Ex. 15:16) in the sense that He "redeemed" them (Ex. 6:6), alluding to the idea of buying a close relative out of slavery to a Gentile. God's people were in slavery to Egypt and wished to remain like that (Ex. 14:12); and had accepted their idols, rather than Yahweh (Ez. 20:8). Yet God bought them out of that slavery, He redeemed them only thanks to His love and pity (s.w. Is. 63:9); so earnest was He to have them as His own. We cannot push the metaphors too far, but the price paid was perhaps represented by the blood of the Passover lamb. For this finally was the price He was willing to pay to redeem us, similarly weak as they were. For we are redeemed (s.w.) by Him from the power of sin and death (Hos. 13:14).

Exo 6:7 and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and you shall know that I am Yahweh your God, Who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians-

Literally, 'I will take you unto Myself as a people', as in Ex. 19:4. This is similar to the formulae used for adoption of children into a family. This could continue the family allusion of :6, where we read that God would redeem / act as a family redeemer, a *ga'al*, for His people. The idea may not be that they became His people at the point of the exodus, but rather that He took them to Himself "as a people", they received a collective redemption, not one of them was left behind, not even the most faithless. But the collective nature of Yahweh's salvation, in our times seen in Jesus, Yehoshua, Yah's salvation, must be responded to on an individual level.

But "to take", especially when followed by "to know...", is the language commonly used in the Bible for how a man takes a wife and then knows her and they bring forth fruit. The conception of intimacy is amazing. The sex act, when a man knows a woman, is alluded to in seeking to reflect the intended intensity between Yahweh and His people. The ideas alone make slavery in Egypt / the world of such little moment, compared to such intimacy with God Almighty. We note the absence of conditions. God "will" do all these things. It is the image of the man who wants to force through his relationship with a woman until marriage, in the spirit of Boaz having no rest until he had made Ruth his own, and redeemed her. God likewise is not at rest until He has redeemed His Israel. All we have to do is say yes; that, from one viewpoint, is the only condition. The marriage allusions are continued in :8; having taken and known Israel, "I will bring you..." is also a marriage allusion. A man

desired a woman, then took her and brought out her into his house: "[If] you see among the captives a beautiful woman and you desire her and would take her to wife, you shall bring her into your house..." (Dt. 21:11,12).

Exo 6:8 I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for an inheritance: I am Yahweh'-
This promise was solemnly made, with uplifted hand as it were (Num. 14:30), to that generation who left Egypt (Ex. 6:8). But they did not enter the land, as Num. 14:30 makes clear. This was because Israel broke their side of the covenant, and did not in fact want to enter the land; and continued serving the idols of Egypt, which they took with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8; Acts 7:43). But that promise was guaranteed by the fact that "I will bring you into the land... I am Yahweh" (Ex. 6:8). The very essence of Yahweh, that 'I will' save, as surely as 'I will be who I will be', a saviour God, was fought against by Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to the covenant. And because 'Yahweh' involves His character, which includes His judgment of sin and not turning a blind eye to it (Ex. 34:4-6), human intransigence and faithlessness was allowed to as it were even counteract His most essential 'being' a saviour God for His beloved people.

God lifted up His hand, as men lift up their hand towards Heaven to swear by God that they telling the truth. And so as Paul notes, God swore by Himself as He could swear by no greater. We feel His almost desperation, certainly His zeal, in seeking to persuade man that He will perform His promise of the Kingdom. But despite the sevenfold "I will..." save you, the generation that heard these words did not enter into Canaan. They thwarted even God's "I will" by their extreme refusal to accept His word of sovereign promise. Likewise God had told Pharaoh to 'let My people go" as if they were His people. But they were still worshipping Egyptian idols and did not fulfil the conditions of Ex. 19 to be His people. But God presents here as the lover who so wants it to work out and dreams of entering marriage covenant with them at Sinai and taking them to live with Him in a new land. But they spurned such live in their hearts returned to Egypt.

The following verses are an intentional anticlimax to this intense protestation of saving love by Almighty God. Israel were too narrow minded and obsessed by their immediate horizon (:9), to believe it or feel it. And Moses still felt a failure because of his uncircumcised lips. And in countless millions of cases, God's love and desire to 'make it work' has been spurned by short sighted people. We have the genealogy of Moses and Aaron as if to highlight their weakness; and as well as the genealogy of their tribe Levi, we have that of Reuben and Simeon as well. These were the three tribes cursed by Jacob on his deathbed. We are given the overall impression of human weakness.

Exo 6:9 Moses spoke so to the children of Israel, but they didn't listen to Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage-
Literally, from shortness of breath. We imagine them panting under their burdens. But "anguish of spirit" is literally 'narrow spirited / minded'. Like so many, they only saw the narrow cllimits defined by what we are seeing and experiencing at this moment.

Yet still they later thought Egypt was better than the path to the Kingdom. In Ex. 4:31 we read that the people believed Moses, but now they disbelieve. The Lord's challenge "DO you now believe?" comes down to us all. Fickleness in faith has so often characterised God's people.

The Hebrew behind "cruel bondage" has a numerical value of 430, the number of years Israel were to be in Egypt (Ex. 12:40,41). This is a good example of how implicit deep within the experience of suffering is the certainty of ultimate deliverance. The cloud truly has within it a silver lining.

This appears to be God, through the inspired narrative, being generous to them. Rather like the sleeping disciples in Gethsemane being excused because they supposedly 'slept for sorrow'. The good news of the Gospel is for those afflicted by bondage and anguish of Spirit, as the Lord makes clear in the beatitudes. But here, the weight of the bondage is used as an excuse for their disbelief and disobedience- which later the prophets were to deeply lament. We marvel at God's grace.

Exo 6:10 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
It seems that Yahweh now tells Moses to speak directly himself to Pharaoh; although He does take account of Moses' excuses about his stammer and poor knowledge of Egyptian. And He provides Aaron as a concession to that weakness. But His ideal intention was that Moses should speak to Pharaoh; because He loves to use the stammering, nervous tongue through which to speak His word.

Exo 6:11 Go in, speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land-
There is no contradiction here with the requests to let them go and keep a feast to Yahweh for three days (Ex. 3:18; 4:23). For that still required the people to "go out of his land". But it could also be that once Pharaoh turned down that initial request, for the men to go and keep a feast and return, then the demands upon Pharaoh got progressively larger- not just the men, but all Israel, along with their children and animals, and not for three days but permanently. God clearly was working according to

a carefully devised program with Pharaoh. Those who refuse God's requests likewise find that to avoid condemnation, the requests become larger and larger.

Initially, God had told Moses to take the elders with him and speak to Pharaoh (Ex. 3:18). Then, He had told Moses to take Aaron with him as his spokesman to Pharaoh. Now, He tells Moses to go and talk directly himself with Pharaoh- leading to Moses' outburst about his speech impediment in :12. We see the same God working in our lives; making concessions to our weakness, but ever seeking for us to live up to our personal callings, stripping us of all our crutches and excuses.

Exo 6:12 Moses spoke before Yahweh, saying, Behold, the children of Israel haven't listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, who am of uncircumcised lips?-

We noted earlier that Pharaoh's daughter immediately knew that the baby Moses was a Hebrew boy because she noticed he had been circumcised. But here, Moses argues as if he is uncircumcised. He means "I am a man of impeded speech, with a speech impediment", but he expresses this in terms of being uncircumcised of lips. This is Moses at a weak point.

Uncircumcised lips may imply he had superfluous skin on his lips, another hint that Moses had a cleft palat. And yet through that came the words of Yahweh. This is typical of the God who ever seeks to hide pride from man. And yet Moses concludes that Israel hadn't listened to him because of his lips- assuming that if he were a better spokesman, then they would have listened to him. He is tacitly criticizing God's choice of him, and overlooking how God had used Aaron in deference to Moses' complaint about his lips. And he is failing to believe that God stands for "I will...". Moses is also assuming that the only way Israel can get out of Egypt is if Pharaoh listens to him. But God had said that Pharaoh would not listen- and that was to be the basis of their salvation. Moses is still fixated on his own plans and assumptions about how Israel could be saved. Again forgetting the "I will..." implicit in Yahweh.

God had explained that His Name means "I will...", and Moses is effectively denying the power of the Name. God had promised Moses earlier that Israel *would* hear him (Ex. 3:18). God solemnly told him to go and speak to Pharaoh, because God had told him to do so. But Moses has the nerve to say exactly the same words to God a second time. In a chapter which speaks much of Moses' reluctance, the record encourages us: "These are that Aaron and Moses... these are they which spake to Pharaoh... these are that Moses and Aaron" (Ex. 6:26,27). They who were so weak, full of excuses, incomplete fulfilment of what they were commanded to do...

Exo 6:13 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, and gave them a command to the children of Israel, and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt-
This summary statement appears to be reminding us that they were given a commandment and potential power to bring Israel out of Egypt. But Moses made every excuse not to, and railed against this command. And thus this section concludes in :26,27 that these are that Moses and Aaron. This was the extremely weak moral material which God used to save His people; and out of their weakness they were indeed made strong.

Exo 6:14 These are the heads of their fathers' houses. The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben-
Hanoch [s.w. Enoch] was named after the son of Cain (Gen. 4:17) and means "initiated", rather hinting at unspirituality and paganism.

Exo 6:15 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon-
But 1 Chron. 4:24 simply has "The sons of Simeon were Nemuel, Jamin... and Shaul"; but here and Gen. 46:10 shows that Shaul was Simeon's son by a wrong, casual relationship. Yet this is not recorded in Chronicles, even though so many other weaknesses are. Surely this is to demonstrate how if God imputes righteousness for a repented of sin, there really is no record of this kept by Him. This and other such lessons from Chronicles only come from digging under the surface.

Exo 6:16 These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari; and the years of the life of Levi were one hundred thirty-seven years-
"Gershon" means 'expelled', maybe meaning that like Reuben he was expelled from the role of firstborn [he is mentioned first as if he was the firstborn]. This is a theme of the Genesis record. But perhaps because of these weaknesses, the line to the high priest ran through Kohath. See on :20.

Exo 6:17 The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, according to their families-
We note that both Moses and Aaron had sons called Gershon (Ex. 2:22). Such repetition of names within families and in the same generation was quite common, and is one thing which makes the study of the genealogies difficult in places.

Exo 6:18 The sons of Kohath: Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel; and the years

of the life of Kohath were one hundred thirty-three years-
We note the lack of emphasis upon the children of Moses and Miriam, the great wilderness leaders of Israel. There was to be no cult of personality nor nepotism, no riding on the name of a forefather in order to be a leader of God's people. Spiritual leadership in the Bible was intended to be based upon spiritual qualification. **The sons and relatives of Aaron all feature at various points in the narrative. Those of Moses don't. He divorced with his wife and she took the kids back home to her father. Moses married again but with no record as to how their children turned out. "This is that Moses..." may require us to assume that he had a failed family life. But still God used him. His family life contrasts with Aaron, who married well, into the kingly line of Judah, and whose children and descendants appear again in the record as serving God.**

Exo 6:19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their generations-
"Mahli" and "Mushi" mean 'sickly' and 'sensitive' respectively. This confirms the suggestion I have often made, that names were given in response to later character and life experience. Sometimes in these genealogies we read the birth names, at others, the names they were given later in life. And therefore the same person can have more than one name.

Exo 6:20 Amram took Jochebed his father's sister to himself as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were a hundred and thirty-seven years-
Amram lived to the same age as Levi (:16). Numbers and ages are used in Semitic literature often in a non literal sense, in order to make some point. Perhaps the idea here is that Amram was indeed a true son of Levi; despite Israel's general apostacy in Egypt, he married within his own tribe, as if seeking to keep the spirit of the later legislation to this effect. **We note that Moses' father Amram married his own aunty, a relationship Moses was later to define as incestuous [Ex. 6:20 "Amram took Jochebed his father's sister to himself as wife; and she bore him Aaron and Moses"]. Moses' beginnings were therefore rooted in weakness and his survival as a healthy child was spiritually and physically against all odds.**

Exo 6:21 The sons of Izhar: Korah, and Nepheg, and Zichri-
The theme of this section, as explained on :13,26,27, is how the leaders of Israel, Moses and Aaron, were so weak. And with the benefit of our knowledge of Korah's later apostacy, we see the theme repeated here.

Exo 6:22 The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, and Elzaphan, and Sithri-

The recording of four generations is surely to prove how the prediction of Gen. 15:16 came true- in the fourth generation they were to return to Canaan.

Exo 6:23 Aaron took Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab, the sister of Nahshon, as his wife; and she bore him Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar-
The theme of this section, as explained on :13,26,27, is how the leaders of Israel, Moses and Aaron, were so weak. And with the benefit of our knowledge of Nadab and Abihu's later apostacy (Lev. 10:1-4), we see the theme repeated here.

We also see here how Aaron married a woman from the tribe of Judah. The connection between the kingly and priestly lines was made right at the start of Israelite history.

Exo 6:24 The sons of Korah: Assir, and Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the families of the Korahites-
1 Chron. 6:22,23 defines the relationships more closely; , Elkanah was the son of Assir, and only a "son of Korah" in the sense of being a descendant of him. The sons of Korah didn't perish with their father (Num. 16:32; 26:11), and became authors of some of the Psalms, working as gate keepers in the temple (1 Chron. 9:19; 26:1-19).

Exo 6:25 Eleazar Aaron's son took one of the daughters of Putiel as his wife; and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites according to their families-
Putiel isn't mentioned elsewhere, but it appears to be a common Egyptian name, "He whom God gave". This continues the theme of spiritual weakness (see on :23)- even the mother of Phinehas was an Egyptian, whom his father ought not to have married. Although we could argue the other way- that for an Egyptian to marry one of the slave Hebrews could be a reflection of this woman's acceptance of Yahweh as her God, even though most of His people were very far from Him. Just as it seems the daughter of Pharaoh who adopted Moses married into the Israelites.

Exo 6:26 These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom Yahweh said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies-
This summary statement appears to be reminding us that they were given a commandment and potential power to bring Israel out of Egypt. But Moses made every excuse not to, and railed against this command. And thus this section concludes in :26,27 that these are that Moses and Aaron. This was the extremely weak moral material which God used to save His people; and out of their weakness they were indeed made strong.

Exo 6:27 These are those who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt. These are that Moses and Aaron-
The point of :26 is laboured here a second time- that "these are those...", these weak ones, stubbornly not wanting to be used by God, initially little better than Pharaoh, resistant to His word of salvation... who were used, and out of their weakness they were indeed made strong.

Exo 6:28 It happened on the day when Yahweh spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt-
There is solemn emphasis in :28,29, stating the same thing twice, that Yahweh really spoke to Moses. And he had resisted this Divine calling.

Exo 6:29 that Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, I am Yahweh. Speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I speak to you-
As explained on :1-4, the Yahweh Name promised that "I will..." redeem Israel, and yet Moses refused to believe that. And a comparison of what God told Moses to tell Pharaoh, and what he is recorded as telling Pharaoh, would suggest Moses was not fully obedient to this solemn calling.

Exo 6:30 Moses said before Yahweh, Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh listen to me?-
Because of his weakness, we are able to relate to Moses, and see him as our example. It is possible that Moses was not circumcised (Ex. 6:12,30); which would make him even closer to us. As noted on :26,27, this refusal of Moses to respond to God's word, and his making of pathetic excuses, is being laboured. For "these are those" (:27) who were used. That we might glorify God for His patience, and soften ourselves to work with Him without resistance. **The genealogy just provided shows that Moses was the offspring of an aunty and her nephew; and I have suggested that this made it likely that Moses had a cleft palate. Hence his description of himself as of uncircumcised lips, as if he had superfluous flesh that needed cutting off. And this is how we all feel, that we have flesh that ought to have been cut off by now. And yet God still speaks and works through us. This is His style and way with men.**

EXODUS CHAPTER 7

Exo 7:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, I have made you as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet-
A prophet is thus defined as someone who is as a mouth for someone else (as in Dt.

18:18). Here we have another window into the meaning of the Divine inspiration of the scriptures. His prophets were as His mouth to their audiences. And we note that Moses, a man, can function as God. And yet he was not God. There should therefore be no reason for thinking that the Lord Jesus is "God" in the misguided Trinitarian sense. Like Moses, He could bear the Name of God and function as God, without being God Himself.

The amazing promise that Moses had been made as God to Pharaoh comes as response to his feeling he was unable to engage with Pharaoh, because of his cleft palet or speech impediment. But Yahweh is manifested through that. And that is the answer to Moses' inadequacy. His impediment was not healed. But God was manifest through it. However the point may be that Pharaoh perceived Moses as an incarnation of a God- which explains why Pharaoh doesn't simply have Moses executed.

Exo 7:2 You shall speak all that I command you; and Aaron your brother shall speak to Pharaoh, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land-
And yet throughout the record of the plagues, Aaron says nothing. This concession to Moses' weakness was not in fact required. Or it could be that God's 'plan B' didn't work out because Aaron failed to speak as required. And so Moses did the speaking, despite his concerns about his stuttering. These kinds of chops and changes between possible potential plans fill the entire Divine - human interaction which we are part of.

Exo 7:3 I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt-

Hardening isn't a negative, bad idea of itself. The same word is used of how God "strengthens" the hearts of the righteous. Idea is that we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we ourselves choose to adopt.
It is Israel who were to later be often described as of hard hearts. They ended up acting as the Egypt which they loved. And this went too for their most religiously fanatical people. The Lord Jesus grieved for the hardened hearts of the Pharisees (Mk. 3:5), and we note the similarity between the Greek words *Pharao* and *Pharisaios*.

Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant. Summing up, our covenant relationship with God is a "living intercourse"

as Abraham Heschel put it; it's not merely knowing a set of doctrines and information about the covenant promises, the terms of the covenant etc. In that case the covenant would be a tether or chain; but instead it is a relationship.

Exo 7:4 But Pharaoh will not listen to you, and I will lay My hand on Egypt, and bring out My armies and My people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments-

He will not, but I will... is an allusion to the "I will be who I will be" theme of Yahweh's Name just explained to Moses. In Ex. 6, Moses has lamented that Pharaoh will not listen to him, because he has uncircumcised lips, he had flesh that had not been cut off. He was missing the point; that Yahweh, "I will be who I will be", would release Israel exactly because Pharaoh would not listen to him. This is in response to Moses complaining that Pharaoh wouldn't hearken to him because of his speech impediment. God is saying that exactly because Pharaoh would not hearken, He would deliver Israel. And so no persuasive eloquence was required from Moses.

It would appear that all the people of Israel had a guardian Angel- this seems to be implied by Ex. 7:4 "(I will) bring forth Mine armies (of Angels), and My people the children of Israel", implying that there were two armies leaving Egypt- one of Angels, another of their charges. Thus we read in Ex. 12:41 "it came to pass that *all* the hosts of the LORD (a phrase often used about the Angels- but here concerning the Israelites too) went out from the land of Egypt". In the same way as the Angels were especially Israel's guardians in guiding them out of Egypt, it may be that the Angels minister in a guardian capacity to us especially in leading us out of the world to baptism (cp. the Red Sea). Heb. 1:14 offers tentative support in that the Angels are said to "minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation". At baptism we become heirs of salvation (Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:27-29)- those who "shall be heirs" are those as yet outside the promises of salvation. Confirmation of all this is provided by a careful reading of Dt. 33:2,3. This describes God coming "unto them" (Israel) "with ten thousands of saints"- i.e. Angels- and giving them "a fiery Law". The next verse records: "Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy Hand (Angelic language)... every one shall receive of Thy words". Here the saints appear to be the people, thus showing that God's love to Israel was shown by each of them having an Angel (thousands of saints for thousands of people), who individually taught them the word of God, albeit all at the same time. The Angels in the court of Heaven are watching us, almost with baited breath. We are made a theatre unto the Angels, as if they are in the audience as we act out our lives (1 Cor. 4:9 RVmg.).

Israel were brought out by "great judgments" (Ex. 6:6; 7:4), i.e. by God's stretched out arm (Ex. 6:6). The way He acted with His “arm” was a manifestation of His judgment

principles. Therefore the Red Sea deliverance is described as the judgment of God, the day of the Lord etc. because God's people exited from the world whilst judgments came upon it; the Name of God was revealed through this process (Ps. 76:6-9; 103:6,7).

Exo 7:5 The Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them-
This could continue the theme of God's hopeful intention that Egypt would be converted to Him by the whole process of Israel's redemption from Egypt. Just as the prophetic hope was that the surrounding Gentiles would be converted by Judah's redemption from the lands of their exile.

Or we could read this as meaning that all too late, having received God's judgments, the Egyptians would know Yahweh. The rejected will not only see how they could have been in the Kingdom; judgment results in men knowing God's Name / character. When God's judgments had been poured out on Egypt, then they knew God's Name. The rejected will come to appreciate true spirituality- but tragically all too late.

God remembers mercy in wrath, and His judgments are always creative. The plagues soon stopped applying to the Israelites; as evidence that they could be avoided by identification with Israel. And the later plagues included pleas to the Egyptians to avoid experiencing them, e.g. by bringing in their cattle from the field. Yet there was no warning in the third plague in the three cycles of 3 plagues [which preceded the killing of the firstborn]. The message was that they indeed deserved judgment and God could afflict them legitimately. The endings of the plagues often teaches that God can intervene and end judgment in response to human desire ['Please say the time when the plague shall end?'- again, a nudge towards Egyptian repentance]. The penultimate plague of darkness simply gave the Egyptians some time to reflect, to sit at home and think. And the final plague was completely avoidable if they shared in the Passover lamb.

Exo 7:6 Moses and Aaron did so. As Yahweh commanded them, so they did-
Moses and Aaron agreed to continue speaking to Pharaoh and Israel; they "did as the Lord commanded them, so did they". This is saying the same thing twice- stressing their obedience. **This could be a notice inserted to make the point that Moses had previously not been at all obedient. Now he was, and indeed fr.now on he would be. It's as if he has gone a rung up the ladder.**

Exo 7:7 Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh-
Aaron would have been only say seven years old at the most when Moses disappeared into the court of Pharaoh. He hardly knew Moses, so his obedience to the Divine call to

make a long desert journey to meet his brother at a remote mountain was therefore the more commendable.

Exo 7:8 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
The trumpets of Rev. 8-11 are clearly based upon the plagues of Ex. 7-12. Yet those plagues were each one designed to induce repentance in Egypt; there were various possible futures and outcomes related to each of them. If, e.g., after plague eight, Pharaoh had truly repented- then the other plagues wouldn't have happened. And perhaps it will be the same with the trumpets of the last days.

Exo 7:9 When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Perform a miracle!' then you shall tell Aaron, 'Take your rod, and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it become a serpent'-
There is no mention here of the serpent turning back into a rod. A man's rod was his personal possession and indicative of his power and standing; we recall Judah giving his rod as a guarantee to Tamar and being humiliated by losing it. It is significant that the rods of Pharaoh's courtiers were gobbled up by Aaron's rod / serpent- and they were left, as it were, without their symbols of power. Even if the snakes produced by the magicians were just let out of a bag, all the same, the courtiers could not then suddenly claim their rods had returned to them. They would have had to at least conceal them.

There was serpent imagery on Pharaoh's head dress and crown. Serpents bend and twist (and Ez. 29:3 uses the term to describe Egypt as a serpent of the waters), so he was being warned in this sign that God could both harden and unharden him. And that is to be our take away lesson. The word for "sign" also means "portent". This was a portent of what would be if he didn't repent.

Exo 7:10 Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, as Yahweh had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent-
Despite the stress upon the impudence of Moses and his refusal to obey his Divine commission, the record now emphasizes his obedience to God's commands.

Exo 7:11 Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers. They also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same thing with their enchantments-
Surely they used trickery, releasing serpents out of a bag. But it is recorded here and in :12 as if they really succeeded in doing this 'miracle' (:9). Likewise the language of demons is used in the New Testament, as if they really existed as radically evil spirits, and were responsible for sickness; when the rest of the Bible denies this.

Exo 7:12 For they each cast down their rods, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods-

This was to warn the perceptive Egyptians that Yahweh could easily swallow them up if He wished; and He did so at the Red Sea, to those who refused to learn this lesson (Ex. 15:12). **This is the only other usage of "swallowed". The account of the plagues starts and finishes with this idea of 'swallowed'.** There is no record that their 'serpents' turned back into rods. They were left without their rods; and perhaps Aaron's rod / serpent literally gobbled up their rods, thus taking their symbols of power and authority away from them.

We don't read that Aaron's serpent swallowed their serpents, but that his rod sowed their rods. After they had supposedly turned back into rods. Rods symbolising power, this was a statement of dominance over them. Seeing they used their rods as wands, the magicians were effectively rendered powerless. These were all nudges intended to lead them and all Egypt to repentance.

Exo 7:13 Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken-

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

Exo 7:14 Yahweh said to Moses, Pharaoh's heart is stubborn. He refuses to let the people go-

"Stubborn" is used of how ears of hearing are dull [s.w. stubborn; Is. 6:10; 59:1; Zech. 7:11). He was consciously refusing to hear God's word.

Exo 7:15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning. Behold, he goes out to the water; and you shall stand by the river's bank to meet him; and the rod which was turned to a serpent you shall take in your hand-

The idea was that God, the "I will be who I will be", can change things; a rod to a serpent, and now water into blood. He can and will change things on earth; that is part of the declaration of His Name and the salvation and redemption which are the lead characteristics of His Name. Pharaoh likely went to the Nile to worship the gods he

believed to be there. And the changing of water into blood was therefore a judgment of his gods. Seeing that Pharaoh considered himself a divine figure, and related to the gods, this was therefore a judgment upon himself personally.

Pharaoh would be alone by the river, without pressure to maintain appearances before his courtiers. Moses was to meet him there privately. We see here God's desire to convert even Pharaoh and His sensitivity to the role of peer pressure on men.

Exo 7:16 You shall tell him, 'Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying, Let My people go, that they may serve Me in the wilderness, and behold, until now you haven't listened-
See on Ex. 34:27. Ex. 7:16 brings out the unity between Moses and Israel by a play on words: "The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me [lit. 'let me go'] unto thee, saying, Let my people go". "Let go" translates the same Hebrew word as "sent me". Just as Moses had been let go by Yahweh, so Israel were to be. Likewise, both the Lord Jesus and Israel are called "the elect" (Is. 42:1; 45:4); both are fulfillments of the servant songs in Isaiah.

"Serve Me" could refer specifically to the initial request to keep a feast to Yahweh. But the call was for Israel to be allowed to change masters, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Exo 7:17 Thus says Yahweh, In this you shall know that I am Yahweh. Behold, I will strike with the rod that is in My hand on the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood-
The signs done by Moses before Pharaoh have evident connection with the later plagues brought upon him- they were all "that you may know" (Ex. 7:17 etc.). The staff, stretched out right hand, snakes, the rod "swallowing" the serpent rods of Egypt (symbols of Pharaoh- Ez. 29:3-5; 32:2) just as the Egyptians were to be swallowed at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12), leprosy / boils, water / blood all repeat. The signs were thus both an encouragement to believe as well as a warning of judgment to come. Pharaoh was presented with the possibility of either faith, or destruction. Note in passing that God's hardening of that man's heart didn't mean that He made no effort to save him nor appeal to him. It was God's desire that he repent. I suggest the Lord Jesus had God's

intentions with Pharaoh in view when He said that He was doing miracles "that you may know that the Son of Man has power to forgive sins" (Mk. 2:10).

"My hand..." again shows how Yahweh's hand is that of Moses, his rod, the symbol of an obscure workaday life working for his father in law, like a paintbrush or roller for a house painter, becomes God's instrument and the path to salvation.

"You shall know" can be read as a command more than a prediction. It parallels "that you may know that I am Yahweh" (Ex. 9:14). It is even a plea for their repentance and entering relationship with Yahweh along with Israel. For Yahweh has said in Ex. 6 that *His people* would "know" Him in relationship. His intention was that Egypt and Pharaoh came to relationship with Him. This is certainly how the idea of 'Egyptians coming to know Yahweh' is used in Isaiah: "When they [the Egyptians] cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior, and will defend and deliver them. The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the LORD on that day... The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the LORD" (Is. 19:20-22). To "know Yahweh" is to repent, to "return to Yahweh". Yahweh revealed in Ex. 3 and 6 that He wanted His people to "know" Him, to be in relationship with Him, and the plagues show that He wished this for Egypt and even Pharaoh too.

The magicians and surely all Egypt got to a point of recognizing that "this is the finger [power] of God" (Ex. 8:19), but they generally did not come from that to know Yahweh. This recalls how God said in Ex. 6 that He was previously known as God Almighty, El Shaddai, the God of power- but now He was revealing Himself as Yahweh, the God who could be intimately known. The plagues were intended to make Pharaoh know Yahweh (Ex. 8:22); as if God wanted the persecutor of His children to become a repentant member of the family and enter covenant relationship with Him. And there was an overall increase in the gradation of the plagues. Striking with death is used in the death of the livestock [plague 5] and then plague 6 brings boils on men, as if to show that people can also be judged. Egypt are being set up to expect that soon the plagues will mean striking people dead, and not just animals. But the increasing gradation of the plagues appears to stop with the penultimate plague of darkness- because that was in order to make the Egyptians stop and sit at home in darkness and meditate, before the final slaying of the firstborn. All through, God wanted their repentance.

So we can read the plagues as the articulation of the Yahweh Name, which seeks to save as well as uphold integrity. Grace and desire to save is seen all through the plagues, because that is what God's Name is all about. The plagues destroyed all the harvests of the Egyptians. But Goshen wasn't affected, and so when the Israelites left, the Egyptians would have gone to the place of the Hebrews for food. In this we see God's grace.

Exo 7:18 The fish that are in the river shall die, and the river shall become foul; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink water from the river'-
"Foul" has the sense of being morally obnoxious. The use of this word, with its moral overtones, is appropriate once we perceive that the god represented by the river was being targetted. The intention of the plagues was to turn the people against their own gods, and to Yahweh. The god of the Nile became odious to them, and it was seen to have failed to provide them with water. **We see the power of selective memory in that Israel later lamented how they had eaten fish in Egypt, and so wished to return there.**

Exo 7:19 Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron, 'Take your rod, and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone'-
"Ponds of water" is NIV "reservoirs". The destruction of the water was a case of "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Yahweh" (Ex. 12:12; 15:11; Num. 33:4). The "gods" are spoken of for a moment as real and existing, in order to show Yahweh's total superiority over them to the point that they didn't exist. Note how it was the Egyptian people who were judged (Gen. 15:14); their idols ("gods") are used by metonymy to stand for those who believed in them. Likewise "demons" is sometimes put by metonymy for those who believed in them (e.g. Mk. 2:32,34). The judgment upon Egypt's gods is brought out by an otherwise obscure reference in Ex. 7:19 to how "there shall be blood in all the land of Egypt on wood and in stone". "Wood and stone" is a term usually used in the Bible for idols; and "the Egyptian priests used to wash the images of their gods in water every day early in the morning". Thus the gods were shown to be effectively dead and bleeding.

Exo 7:20 Moses and Aaron did so, as Yahweh commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood-
Blood implies death, and the idea was that the gods associated with the Nile had been effectively slain. All the plagues were intended to lea the Egyptians to ditch their faith in their gods, and accept Yahweh. There is always ultimate spiritual purpose in all God's judgments; they are never to be seen as the lashing out of an offended deity. **Yet without doubt this was to remind the Egyptians of their policy 40 years previously of murdering the Hebrew babies in the Nile. They were being shown that effectively, they had turned the river into blood by what they had done. They were being shown what their sins of 40 years ago really looked like. And so God works with men to this day.**

Exo 7:21 The fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the Egyptians couldn't drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt- As noted on :18, "foul" has the sense of being morally obnoxious. The use of this word, with its moral overtones, is appropriate once we perceive that the god represented by the river was being targetted. The spiritually perceptive were intended to realize that if God could manipulate the Nile as He wished, He could do so with the Red Sea. Those who charged into it pursuing the Israelites had refused to learn this obvious lesson. The drying up of waters and death of fish is the language of Babylon's destruction; Judah were asked to believe that as God had acted with Egypt in order to release God's people, so He could do so with Babylon (Is. 50:2).

Exo 7:22 The magicians of Egypt did the same thing with their enchantments; and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken- Their claims would have been almost comical; because *all* the Nile water was made blood, it was impossible for them to take some of it and turn it to blood. But the record does not record a word of this *explicitly*. Their false claims are recorded uncorrected – to bring home (to the sensitive reader) the power of Yahweh's triumph over them. It's the same with the language of demons in the NT. And the miracle was clearly aimed at showing that the gods of the Nile had been slain by Yahweh; for the magicians to seek to replicate this was therefore driving them to as it were slay their own gods.

"Pharaoh's heart was hardened," is linked grammatically with the previous clause, "the magicians did so". The fake miracles by the magicians were laughable. But Pharaoh's heart was hardened because he thought that at least something had been said or done in response to Yahweh's claims. And that is the mentality today. It is vaguely hoped or thought that "science" has some answer to theism. The fact that there is some counter argument, no matter how pathetic, hardens unbelievers. So the Biblical account is so absolutely psychologically credible and true to experience today.

There were so many similarities between Elijah and Moses; Dale Allison points out:
Confronted Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) = Confronted Pharaoh (Ex. 5:1)
Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (1 Kings 19:3) = Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (Ex. 2:15)
Miraculously fed "…bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening…" (1 Kings 17:6) = Miraculously fed "…meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning…" (Ex. 16:8, 12)
Gathered all Israel to Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19)=Gathered all Israel to Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:17)
Combated the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40) = Combated the magicians of

Pharaoh (Ex. 7:8-13, 20-22; 8:1-7)
Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (1 Kings 18:36-39) = Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Ex. 32:11-14)
Elijah took twelve stones at Carmel "…according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob…" (1 Kings 18:30-32) = Moses had twelve pillars set up at Sinai "…corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel…" (Ex. 24:4)
The Lord accepted Elijah's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (1 Kings 18:36-39) = The Lord accepted Moses and Aaron's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (Lev. 9:22-24)
By Elijah's authority 3000 idolatrous prophets were slain (1 Kings 18:40) = By Moses' authority 3000 idolaters were slain (Ex. 32:25-29)
After killing the prophets of Baal Elijah climbed Carmel to pray. (1 Kings 18:42) = After killing the idolaters Moses climbed Sinai to pray (Ex. 32:30)
Went without food for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8) = Went without food for forty days and forty nights (Ex. 34:38; Dt. 9:9)
Elijah was in "the cave" on Horeb (=Sinai) when the Lord "passed by" (1 Kings 19: 9-11) = Moses was hidden "in the cleft of the rock" when the Lord passed by Sinai (Ex. 33:21-23)
Elijah saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Horeb (=Sinai). (1 Kings 19:11-12) = Moses saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Sinai (Ex. 19:16-20; 20:18; Dt. 4:11; 5:22-27).
Prayed that he might die (1 Kings 19:1-4) = Prayed that he might die. (Num. 11:10-15).
The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon his enemies (2 Kings 1:9-12) = The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon those who rebelled against him (Num. 16; cf. Lev. 10:1-3)
Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan by striking the waters with his cloak and passed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8) = Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea by stretching out his staff and passed over on dry ground (Ex. 14:16, 21-22)
His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had (2 Kings 2) = His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had the Red Sea. (Josh. 3)
Was taken away in the Transjordan (2 Kings 2:9-11) = Died in the Transjordan (Dt. 34:5)
Mysteriously translated (2 Kings 9-18) = Died mysteriously and buried in a valley, but his burial place was unknown. (Dt. 34:6)
The point of these similarities was that the Angel wanted Elijah to be like Moses; to pray for the peoples' salvation, to return to the people and lead them and teach them. Moses had begged for God's mercy for His people; but Elijah was so full of self-justification that he prayed against Israel. And so with us, we are potentially led into situations where we are to discern the similarities between us and Bible characters; we are set up with

opportunities to respond in a way that reflects how we have learnt the lessons from them. The way the Lord Jesus perceived this in His wilderness temptations is a great example.

Exo 7:23 Pharaoh turned and went into his house, and he didn't even take this to heart-
Because God had hardened his heart (:22), meaning He had removed sensitivity from his conscience. His heart was turned by God, because that was the direction he himself wanted (Ps. 105:25). Pharaoh's response gets increasingly better, confessing sinfulness, asking for prayer, etc. And yet we have to read this as his conscience being increasingly touched, and yet he refused to act upon it. The movement of conscience within him was overcome by the movement of hardness; and as hardness was his dominant desire, it was that which Yahweh confirmed.

The first plagues were intense forms of what was well known in Egypt. At times the Nile did appear reddish because of sediment colorization after flooding. But now it turned to actual blood so that the fish died. After the flood season, frogs appeared around the Nile every year. But now they appeared in huge numbers. God was nudging Egypt to accept Him, although testing Pharaoh as to whether he would just explain away the first plagues as mere natural phenomena. He does the same today. But if ignored or rationalised away, the nudges get louder, harder and more intrusive and painful. Like Pharaoh, they refuse to "fix his attention even on this thing" (:23 LXX). Spiritual focus is in short supply in the natural man. But if we do make the effort to focus, and that is one purpose of the breaking of bread, then the message is clear and powerful.

Exo 7:24 All the Egyptians dug around the river for water to drink; for they couldn't drink of the water of the river-
Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6). **The God who knows the future knew all this. So we see that He didn't save Israel because they were soft hearted, and Egypt were hard hearted. Most were hard hearted, but God therefore saved Israel by grace.**

Exo 7:25 Seven days were fulfilled, after Yahweh had struck the river-
This period was intended to allow the Egyptians to meditate upon what had been done.

The language of Yahweh striking is appropriate to the striking of a person; the idea was consistently that the gods supposedly behind the Nile had been slain.

EXODUS CHAPTER 8

Exo 8:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, and tell him, This is what Yahweh says, 'Let My people go, that they may serve Me-
"Serve Me" could refer specifically to the initial request to keep a feast to Yahweh. But the call was for Israel to be allowed to change masters, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Exo 8:2 If you refuse to let them go, behold, I will plague all your borders with frogs-
The land was 'smitten' in Ex. 8:2 as a foretaste of the 'smiting' of the Egyptian firstborn (Ex. 12:23,27). It was an appeal for Pharaoh's repentance, in the hope that the final smiting of the firstborn would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save Pharaoh, but he would not.

The Nile floods, with reddish sediment brought from as far south as Uganda- but instead the water was turned to actual blood and the fish died. After the annual flooding, frogs come out of the river. But now there was a plague of frogs, throughout the land. The mounds of dead frogs led to the plague of gnats [plague three]; and gnats grow into flies [plague four]. But the scale was unprecedented, and from plague four onwards, the Israelites were not affected. Gnats and flies bite animals and humans, leading to plague five [disease of cattle] and plague six, boils breaking out on people. This is typical of how God works- exaggerating natural process to an extreme point. He works through us, and above all through the Lord and His human nature; through the words and deeds of a man with the larynx of a Palestinian Jew, whose body sweated and secreted and excreted just like any other human being. And with us too. We are of human nature and appear as one of the herd of humanity; but He works powerfully through us and above all in His very human Son.

In Robert Roberts' terms, the hand of providence as it were turned into the visible hand of God in the plagues which followed- hail [plague seven] that killed people

and animals unless they were brought under cover. The first six plagues could therefore have been written off as just bad luck, extreme natural events. But this was the temptation to the Egyptians- to desperately try to rationalize the visible hand of God. We see the same in those who try to rationalize obvious miracles like the crossing of the Red Sea as mere freak natural events. And this is our temptation, for Pharaoh's mind can easily be in us too. We tend to want to rationalize God's hand- maybe that meeting with an 'Angel' was just because I was tired and imagined it, it was my subconscious. Like Pharaoh we have moments of spiritual reality, but we slump back into rationalizing things instead of the total surrender required. In all the plagues, there was something clearly of the Divine- e.g. heavy rain occurs *before* the Nile floods and turns slightly reddish. But the hail comes well *after* that in God's sequence of plagues. And seeing the last plague was at Passover time, Easter, the timing of the sequence was not at the right time. Plague eight, the locusts, is a clear example- the Nile floods in Spring and locusts come to Egypt in Summer, but the plague of locusts came soon after the 'flooding' of the Nile, when it turned red as blood. And then the plague of darkness was, I suggest, totally unnatural and was to give Egypt pause to sit at home and consider. The death of the firstborn, the family priest, was then totally beyond any natural explanation.

Exo 8:3 and the river shall swarm with frogs, which shall go up and come into your house, and into your bedroom, and on your bed, and into the house of your servants, and on your people, and into your ovens, and into your kneading troughs-
What God did at creation, He can do at any time. As He made the waters "swarm" in Gen. 1:20, so He made the waters of the Nile "swarm" with frogs in order to save His people from a no-hope, chaotic, disordered, hopeless situation. **The language of creation is here used about judgment; but the idea is that God's judgments are creative, not destructive in the way that human judgment is destructive. From judgment He brings new life**.

Heqt, the Egyptian god symbolized as a frog, abounded to such an extent that the Egyptians wanted no more of him. And then he died and stunk. Truly "I will bring judgment upon all the gods of Egypt" (Ex. 12:12). Egyptian priests weren't allowed to do their work with any lice or gnats on their bodies; frogs were sacred and not to be stepped on. But inevitably every Egyptian trod on a frog during the plague. All the way through, the Egyptians found their religious system targetted. The Nile was supposed to be the God who blessed Egypt. But now from the Nile, from their god, comes the cursed plague of frogs.

Exo 8:4 and the frogs shall come up both on you, and on your people, and on all your

servants'-
"On you" shows how the plagues were specifically aimed at Pharaoh. We marvel at God's repeated efforts to bring this man to accept Him. It is a parade example to us of how we should never give up with anyone, not even the most apparently unlikely candidate for the Kingdom.

Exo 8:5 Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your rod over the rivers, over the streams, and over the pools, and cause frogs to come up on the land of Egypt'-
All these water courses were part of the Nile system. Again, the gods supposed to be associated with the Nile are being targetted, as well as the god associated with the frog.

Exo 8:6 Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt-
The 'covering' of Egypt with frogs in Ex. 8:6 and locusts in Ex. 10:5,15 looked ahead to the 'covering' of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:28; 15:5,10). It was an appeal for repentance, in the hope that the final smiting would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save the Egyptians, but they would not.

Only the very short sighted and superficial reader will read the Red Sea destruction of the Egyptians, and indeed all the sufferings caused by the plagues, as the actions of a hard God. Every opportunity was given for people not to die. But they chose otherwise.

Exo 8:7 The magicians did the same thing with their enchantments, and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt-
Their claims would have been almost comical; because *all* the country was full of frogs anyway. **The obvious miracle that Pharaoh wanted was to take the frogs away, but they couldn't do that.** But the record does not record a word of this *explicitly*. Their false claims are recorded uncorrected – to bring home (to the sensitive reader) the power of Yahweh's triumph over them. It's the same with the language of demons in the NT. The miracle was clearly aimed at showing that the gods of the Nile had been slain by Yahweh, and their frog god was actually turned into a curse for them; for the magicians to seek to replicate this was therefore driving them to as it were slay and disparage their own gods.

Exo 8:8 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat Yahweh, that He take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to Yahweh-
The frogs "destroyed them" (Ps. 78:45), and they even appeared in the bedroom of the

king (Ps. 105:30). Pharaoh had made no response to the first plague, but now he is forced to make some response. He freely uses the Yahweh Name; he was being led to "know" Him.

Exo 8:9 Moses said to Pharaoh, I give you the honour of setting the time that I should pray for you, and for your servants, and for your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, and remain in the river only-

The record of the miracles is framed to show God commanding Moses to do certain things to bring and end the plagues, and him obedient to this. But Ex. 8:9 RV contains a strange sentence: “Have thou this glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee… to destroy the frogs?”. It could be that, in the words of Bro. Mark Vincent, “Moses with an excessive and sarcastic politeness, is asking, ‘And (pray tell me!) when exactly would you like the frogs to be gone?’, as though Pharaoh might miss them and fondly wish them to stay around for a couple more days”. This sarcasm on Moses' part surely doesn’t score very highly in spiritual terms; and neither does Elijah's mockery of Baal's absence as being because he was going to the toilet. And yet God worked through him. **'Glory over me' could be read as Moses sarcastically saying that if Pharaoh is really his superior, then he can glory over Moses by commanding him when to remove the frogs. In this case, we see Moses at this point still had some travelling left to do to get to the point where he would be the meekest man on earth.**

Moses offers Pharaoh the destruction of the frogs. Pharaoh likely didn't realize that his agreement with Moses' offer would mean huge mounds of stinking frogs everywhere, underscoring Yahweh's supremacy over the frog god.

Exo 8:10 He said, Tomorrow. He said, Be it according to your word, that you may know that there is none like Yahweh our God-

Pharaoh naturally wanted to say "Right now!". But he was given the chance to define a time in order to coax him toward repentance, and the realization that God was in absolute control of all this.

Exo 8:11 The frogs shall depart from you, and from your houses, and from your servants, and from your people. They shall remain in the river only-

The whole situation here shows the development of Moses. He had departed from the Divine script by asking Pharaoh sarcastically when he wanted the plague removed. And Moses had given him a time. But he had to pray for this to happen (:12), and so his confident statement was made in faith.

Exo 8:12 Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to Yahweh concerning the frogs which He had brought on Pharaoh-
This is the language of intense prayer. **This crying to God is significant. It's the only time that his prayers for the plagues to be removed are described in this way. Perhaps he had to pray this intensely because of the pride and over confidence that had crept into him, as noted on :9. Again we have an example of where the Bible is so psychologically credible.** The removal of the frogs was far from automatic. As noted on :11, although Moses gave way to inappropriate sarcasm and over confidence in :10, he is starting to flourish spiritually. No longer is he the unsure, unwilling participant in the coalition with Yahweh which he had felt almost railroaded into. He is taking initiative, and stating things which can only come about through his own intense prayer.

Exo 8:13 Yahweh did according to the word of Moses, and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the courts, and out of the fields-
The frogs were being slain by the word of Moses which was as it were a command to Yahweh. The Egyptians saw their frog god being slain by Yahweh, at the word of His servant Moses. And Moses in turn was being led to understand the power of prayer, how our words can become a word of command to Yahweh; such is His earnest, even humble desire to respond to the words of men to Him.

Exo 8:14 They gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank-
The smell of the death of their frog god would have been an abiding testimony to the idea that their god was totally dead- and they had buried him. "Heaps" is s.w. clay or mud. There is no record that the water turned to blood was reversed, so perhaps the land was still covered in "blood", now with heaps of putrid frogs in it. It would have been a terrible scene and experience.

Exo 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart, and didn't listen to them, as Yahweh had spoken-
Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant. Summing up, our covenant relationship with God is a "living intercourse" as Abraham Heschel put it; it's not merely knowing a set of doctrines and information

about the covenant promises, the terms of the covenant etc. In that case the covenant would be a tether or chain; but instead it is a relationship.

This is a case of "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness" (Is. 26:10). People like this "despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance". And so they "treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:4,5). Paul surely wrote this in conscious allusion to Pharaoh, as a representative of all who will ultimately fail of God's grace.

Moses had complained that Pharaoh would not hearken to him because of his speech impediment. Yahweh's reply was that it was through Pharaoh not hearkening, that He would save Israel. We see how His plan of salvation is so different from ours. He revels to work through human weakness.

Exo 8:16 Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod, and strike the dust of the earth, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt'-
LXX "mosquitoes". The plagues and miracles often involve a transformation of one thing to another, in this case, dust to lice. Man is made of "the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7). God can transform man, in all his lowliness and earthiness, as He wishes. That is the simple take away.

Exo 8:17 They did so; and Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and struck the dust of the earth, and there were lice on man, and on animal; all the dust of the earth became lice throughout all the land of Egypt-
"They did so" shows again the careful obedience now manifest in these men. Moses spoke to Aaron just as commanded, and Aaron did exactly what he was told. This is all a far cry from Moses' grudging struggle to be obedient when he was first commissioned.

This too was a hit at the Egyptian priests, who shaved their bodies closely lest they have any lice, which made their service unacceptable. So Egypt were left unable to serve their gods, without a priesthood. But they didn't learn, and so all their firstborn were slain. Only firstborn sons could be priests, and now they were all slain. God seeks to remove all our excuses, our religion, our attempts to rationalize His hand, our partial surrenders to Him... but even so, He will not totally force us.

Exo 8:18 The magicians tried with their enchantments to produce lice, but they couldn't. There were lice on man, and on animal-
Their previous attempts to replicate the plagues had been apparently successful. But apparently something went wrong with their usual trickery, and they failed to replicate

this one. And it would only have been creating yet more judgment and suffering for themselves if they had succeeded. The folly of trying to mock Yahweh was increasingly apparent.

Exo 8:19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, This is the finger of God-
Grammatically this implies a singular God, whereas the Egyptians were polytheists. But they were being led toward monotheism; Yahweh alone could do such things, and all their gods were being systematically deconstructed.

We note God's response to their comment that this was the finger of God, elohim. It was that the entire *hand* of *Yahweh* was upon them now, Ex. 9:1. We see here the continual upping of the tempo. And so it is with every man who resists God's call and only partially surrenders to it.

It was the plague using the smallest, tiniest elements, dust and lice, that was to persuade the Egyptians that this was the finger of God, i.e. done by Him. And this is indeed God's style.

And Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he didn't listen to them; as Yahweh had spoken-
Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35). And yet God hardened his heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8). The references to God hardening Pharaoh's heart generally occur after Pharaoh had first hardened his own heart. The fact Pharaoh hardened his heart was a sin (Ex. 9:34), and yet God encouraged him in this. God offered Pharaoh a way of escape after each of the plagues; all he had to do was to agree to let Israel go. But the conditions got tougher the longer he resisted God's demand: he finally had to not only let Israel go, but also provide them with sacrifices (Ex. 10:25). Likewise when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his heart up, God hardened it (Dan. 5:20).

Exo 8:20 Yahweh said to Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; behold, he comes out to the water; and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh says, Let My people go, that they may serve Me-
See on :1. Pharaoh was still going to worship at the Nile, despite the effective destruction of all the gods associated with it.

There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is.

5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Exo 8:21 Else, if you will not let My people go, behold, I will send swarms of beetles on you, and on your servants, and on your people, and into your houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of beetles, and also the ground whereon they are-
The beetle god was now to be deconstructed. This god was presented as effectively the destruction rather than the salvation of Egypt. They were to have so much of their 'god' that they came to detest him. **Just as men become tired of sin, it never satisfies; and some deliver themselves to satan [the flesh] for the destruction of the flesh.** Again, the whole exercise was to lead them to ditch their gods and accept Yahweh.

Exo 8:22 I will set apart in that day the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell, that no swarms of beetles shall be there; to the end you may know that I am Yahweh in the midst of the earth-
The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. **Their setting apart was by grace; and so Paul in Romans uses the calling of Israel as the parade example of God's grace. Our own calling is another example; for we were not called because we were better than the man next to us.** The word is used in this sense in Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart Israel from all other peoples: "how would people know that I have found favour [grace] in Your sight, I and Your people? Isn't it in that You go with us, so that we are separated, I and Your people, from all the people who are on the surface of the earth?". And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing characteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

Exo 8:23 I will put a division between My people and your people: by tomorrow shall this sign be'-

This implies that outside Goshen, when an Egyptian and Hebrew were together, the Hebrew would not be hurt by the beetles. It was all another nudge to join the people of God. Ps. 78:48 says that the swarms of flies "devoured them", so we can imagine some Egyptians dying.

This "division" was the setting apart of God's people for Himself, by grace; see on :23. Egypt were being led to realize that salvation was through identifying with Yahweh's people. And the fact a mixed multitude left Egypt with Israel is evidence that some did respond to this. The Hebrew for "division" is elsewhere always translated "redemption". In the exodus context, "He sent redemption unto His people" (Ps. 111:9). Our redemption involves our separation from our 'Egypt'. Separation, holiness, being separated both from the world and unto the things of God, is therefore part and parcel of our redemption process. It is this which is the basis of our separation from the world. Not simply in a negative sense, of being separated from the world, but more importantly, separated unto the things of the new life and redemption.

Exo 8:24 Yahweh did so; and there came grievous swarms of beetles into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses: and in all the land of Egypt the land was corrupted by reason of the swarms of beetles-

"Corrupted" has a moral sense. The same word means both morally corrupt, and destroyed. Thus the land / earth was "corrupt" before God at the time of the flood, and was "destroyed"; the same word is used (Gen. 6:11,13). The religious sense of the word is relevant here- for the plague was to show that Egypt's beetle god had corrupted the land of Egypt unto destruction. Their gods were the cause of their destruction; they needed to quit those gods and accept Yahweh.

Exo 8:25 Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go, sacrifice to your God within the land!-

Pharaoh again has to make some concession here, but he struggles with all his might against the total capitulation to Yahweh which is required. And we do the same. **We sense the parallel movements within him- of conscience toward God, finally admitting he has sinned and asking for forgiveness; and yet hardening of heart.**

Exo 8:26 Moses said, It isn't appropriate to do so; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to Yahweh our God. Behold, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and won't they stone us?-

Cows were sacred to Apsis, rams to Jupiter, goats to Bacchus, heifers to Juno. Indeed all

animals were likewise thought to be sacred to various other deities. Clearly there were principles of sacrifice established for Yahweh's people well before they were codified in the Mosaic law. To sacrifice those animals to any other god apart from the deity of those animals was considered blasphemy by the Egyptians. And stoning was the punishment for religious apostacy. They considered that offering e.g. a cow to a deity other than Apsis meant a rejection of Apsis as unworthy to accept sacrifice. And that indeed was the message being taught to the Egyptians- that their gods were dead and to be rejected, and Moses is now manipulating Pharaoh to a position whereby he had to accept the blasphemous dismantling of his entire religious system.

Exo 8:27 We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to Yahweh our God, as He shall command us-
The three days connects with the time the Lord was dead before His resurrection. The people of Israel as a body were going through the death and resurrection experience of the Lord Jesus, through the process of the Passover and Exodus through the Red Sea. Israel ate Passover (Ex. 12:6) [14th Abib], as the Lord died on the cross as the Passover lambs were slain; Israel left Egypt the next day (Num. 33:3) [15th Abib] and journeyed three days (Ex. 8:27) [15th-17th Abib], and the Lord Jesus was three days in the tomb. Israel then came through the Red Sea [17th Abib], connecting with the Lord's being resurrected. As we come out of the baptismal water, we really are united with the resurrected Lord- a new creation. His newness of life, His deliverance and successful exodus from the world- all this becomes ours.

Exo 8:28 Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that you may sacrifice to Yahweh your God in the wilderness, only you shall not go very far away. Pray for me-
Pharaoh is clearly no longer in control of the situation. No longer is this the man who barked out the order that the Israelites should be given no straw for their bricks. "Pray for me" is pregnant with possible meaning. For it is not simply a request to pray that the beetles be removed. It sounds like he realizes his own moral need. The probing and prodding of his conscience was partly succeeding, but he keeps going back from where he is being led. Just as so many do.

Exo 8:29 Moses said, Behold, I go out from you, and I will pray to Yahweh that the swarms of beetles may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow; only don't let Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to Yahweh-
Moses emphasizes that it is his own prayers to Yahweh which are critical in saving Egypt. We note again that the beetles specifically targetted Pharaoh personally.

Exo 8:30 Moses went out from Pharaoh, and prayed to Yahweh-

The plagues were not removed by a mere wave of a rod, or some other formalism. They required Moses to sincerely pray for them to be removed. This was both to teach Pharaoh the power of Moses' prayers; and also to teach Moses that prayer changes things, and he really had the power to change things through his prayers. He learned that lesson to its ultimate term when he successfully prayed that God would not destroy Israel as He intended. But faith in prayer is developed through experiences, and we see this happening with Moses.

Exo 8:31 Yahweh did according to the word of Moses, and He removed the swarms of beetles from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. There remained not one- "There remained not one" beetle (Ex. 8:31), locust (Ex. 10:19) nor Egyptian who pursued the Israelites (Ex. 14:28). The same phrase is used. Again we see how both Egyptians and Israelites were intended to learn from the plagues, and how this came to full term when "not one" of their enemies was left- thanks to the prayer of Moses.

Exo 8:32 Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and he didn't let the people go- Because God had hardened his heart (Ex. 7:22), meaning He had removed sensitivity from his conscience. His heart was turned by God, because that was the direction he himself wanted (Ps. 105:25). Pharaoh's response gets increasingly better, confessing sinfulness, asking for prayer, etc. And yet we have to read this as his conscience being increasingly touched, and yet he refused to act upon it. The movement of conscience within him was overcome by the movement of hardness; and as hardness was his dominant desire, it was that which Yahweh confirmed. **The final question of self examination must always be: What is my dominant desire?**

EXODUS CHAPTER 9

Exo 9:1 Then Yahweh said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let My people go, that they may serve Me- Yahweh is now fully defined as the God of the Hebrews. It was His intention that Pharaoh should come to know Him, in relationship with Him.

Exo 9:2 For if you refuse to let them go, and hold them still-
Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 emphasize the real choice before Pharaoh; he was refusing to let Israel go and "held" them. Babylon was warned that no nation could "hold them fast [and] refuse to let [Israel] go [because] their redeemer is strong" (Jer. 50:33,34). The Hebrew for "strong" is that translated "hold". God had a stronger grip and claim on them than did

Pharaoh. They were Yahweh's, not Pharaoh's. And it could be argued that Babylon-Persia did listen to this message, and allowed and encouraged the exiles to return. We too are to learn from all this historical precedent; that our hand is not stronger than God's.

Exo 9:3 behold, the hand of Yahweh is on your livestock which are in the field, on the horses, on the donkeys, on the camels, on the herds, and on the flocks with a very grievous pestilence-

We see here how God works. His hand was already on their animals- but the destruction didn't need to happen. It was conditional upon their disobedience. The "pestilence" which was the plague upon Egypt (Ex. 9:3) was to come upon a hard hearted Israel (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Num. 14:12; Dt. 28:21; Jer. 21:6). The plagues upon Egypt form the basis for the vials and seals of Revelation, which speak of judgment to come upon the land of Israel. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

Exo 9:4 Yahweh will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt; and nothing shall die of all that belongs to the children of Israel'-

The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. And it is used of God's special grace, 'set apart', a grace known by no other people (Ps. 17:7). The word is used in this sense in Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart Israel from all other peoples. And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing characteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

Exo 9:5 Yahweh appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow Yahweh shall do this thing in the land-

The plague upon cattle was clearly prophesied as going to happen at a specified time: "The Lord appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the Lord shall do this thing"; but it

was conditional upon Pharaoh refusing to let Israel go (Ex. 9:1,2,5). He *could* have complied, and therefore the plague wouldn't have happened. And yet the prophecy is so specific that it would seem that this conditionality just didn't exist. But it did. Pharaoh had a real choice whether or not to obey God's word.

Exo 9:6 Yahweh did that thing on the next day; and all the livestock of Egypt died, but of the livestock of the children of Israel, not one died-
Clearly not all Egyptian cattle died because there were still some alive in the next plague (:19). So I suggest going with the translation of Adam Clarke: "All the cattle that did die belonged to the Egyptians".

This plague was avoidable, preparing them for the possibility to escape the death of the firstborn. God's hand was upon the animals left in the field but they need not have died if the Egyptians had obeyed the command to bring them under cover. All "the cattle of Egypt died" suggests that whoever was obedient to Yahweh was not "of Egypt ". Disobedient Israelites were "of Egypt". A new people was being formed.

Exo 9:7 Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not so much as one of the livestock of the Israelites dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was stubborn, and he didn't let the people go-
Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35). And yet God hardened his heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8). The references to God hardening Pharaoh's heart generally occur after Pharaoh had first hardened his own heart. The fact Pharaoh hardened his heart was a sin (Ex. 9:34), and yet God encouraged him in this. God offered Pharaoh a way of escape after each of the plagues; all he had to do was to agree to let Israel go. But the conditions got tougher the longer he resisted God's demand: he finally had to not only let Israel go, but also provide them with sacrifices (Ex. 10:25). Likewise when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his heart up, God hardened it (Dan. 5:20).

Exo 9:8 Yahweh said to Moses and to Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the sky in the sight of Pharaoh-
"The ashes of the furnace" which created the plague of boils (Ex. 9:8) may have been a reference to the furnaces used for the brick kilns, where the Hebrews were made to slave away making bricks. The result of this abuse was to come down upon the Egyptians as boils (Ex. 9:9). Egypt is therefore likened to a furnace of oppression to Israel (Dt. 4:20; Jer. 11:4). The Lord describes condemnation as being cast into a furnace (Mt. 13:42,50). He is not speaking literally, but rather using the figure of Egypt as a furnace- for the condemnation of the unworthy in God's Israel is to be sent back into Egypt / the world (Hos. 8:13; 9:3), and share their judgments.

Exo 9:9 It shall become small dust over all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking out with boils on man and on animal, throughout all the land of Egypt-
This affliction was so terrible that it became known as "the boil of Egypt" (Dt. 28:27). Apostate Israel were to be punished with the judgments of Egypt. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues. **In terms of the progressive nature of the plagues, we note that boils were intensely personal. Pharaoh and the Egyptians felt this intimately; it was God touching their bodies and most private parts. The Egyptians again would have been tempted to rationalize this plague as being a skin anthrax which had come from the piles of dead frogs and livestock, or from the plague of flies. Always there was this and is this temptation to rationalize God's hand. And this was what hardened Pharaoh's heart. We must beware of it, and accept miracle as miracle.**

Exo 9:10 They took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward the sky; and it became a boil breaking out with boils on man and on animal-
The plagues upon Egypt form the basis for the vials and seals of Revelation, which speak of judgment to come upon the land of Israel, and feature a furnace with ascending smoke turning into judgments upon the land. See on :9.

The plagues often reflect how the apparently total destruction of the previous plagues was in fact not total. All Egyptian animals were killed but then the plague of sores breaks out upon their animals. In wrath God remembers mercy. A remnant was preserved by grace alone. That was the message.

Exo 9:11 The magicians couldn't stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boils were on the magicians, and on all the Egyptians-
Dt. 28:27 describes this plague in more detail when we read of how it would come upon an apostate Israel, who identified with Egypt in their hearts and ways: "Yahweh will strike you with the boil of Egypt and with the tumours, the scurvy and the itch, from which you cannot be healed". **The magicians hardly wanted to bring yet more boils on themselves. We see again how the religious structure of Egypt was being destroyed; and the vacuum left was to prepare them to accept Yahweh.**

Exo 9:12 Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he didn't listen to them, as Yahweh had spoken to Moses-
The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive

context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

When Paul insists that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Rom. 9:14-18), he is not only repeating the Biblical record (Ex. 9:12,16; 33:19), but he is alluding to the way that the Jewish *Book of Jubilees* claimed that Mastema [the supposed personal Satan] and not God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Exo 9:13 Yahweh said to Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and tell him, 'This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: Let My people go, that they may serve Me-

"Serve Me" could refer specifically to the initial request to keep a feast to Yahweh. But the call was for Israel to be allowed to change masters, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Exo 9:14 For this time I will send all My plagues against your heart, against your officials, and against your people; that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth-

Heb. "I will send all My plagues upon your person". Again we see the focus on Pharaoh personally. To 'know Yahweh', to have a relationship with Him, is God's greatest desire. And it was His desire even for Pharaoh. "You *may* know" suggests this was potentially true. When God earlier said that Israel "will know" Him, this doesn't mean they would; it is rather a statement of potential, of God's wish. Just as God told that generation that they would enter Canaan; but they effectively chose not to. The idea of knowing Yahweh as a result of the plagues is found in Ex. 10:2 in relation to Israel: "... that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your son's son, what things I have done to Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them; that you may know that I am Yahweh".

As Pharaoh's heart was plagued (Ex. 9:14), so was Israel's (1 Kings 8:38); as Egypt was a reed, so were Israel (1 Kings 14:15). As Pharaoh-hophra was given into the hand of his enemies, so would Israel be (Jer. 44:30). She would be "Condemned with the world...". Time and again the prophets describe the judgments to fall upon Israel in the same terms as they speak of the condemnations of the surrounding nations. The message was clear: rejected Israel would be treated as Gentiles. Thus Joel describes the locust invasion of Israel in the language of locusts covering the face of Egypt (Joel 2:2,20 = Ex. 10:14,15,19). Israel's hardness of heart is explicitly likened to that of Pharaoh (1 Sam. 6:6); as the Egyptians were drowned, so would Israel be (Am. 9:5-8).

The plagues upon Pharaoh were to bring him to repentance, although his lack of response to them led him to only harden his heart. Consider how carefully they were planned- these were not random acts of wrath from an offended Deity. They are in three cycles. First: Blood, frogs, gnats; second cycle: Flies, pest, boils; third cycle: Hail, locusts, darkness, and each cycle begins in the same way- the first plague of each cycle has Moses standing before Pharaoh in the morning, and warning him; the second plague of each cycle has Moses simply coming to Pharaoh and warning him; and the third plague in each cycle has no warning. My simple point is that a huge amount of thought went into the plagues, and the careful planning behind them was surely intended to appeal to Pharaoh and convict him that a God far mightier than himself or his deities was at work in his life.

Exo 9:15 For now I would have stretched out My hand, and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth-

The argument is that God could have destroyed Pharaoh immediately, but He didn't. And this ought to have humbled Pharaoh. This is a powerful argument. The fact God keeps us alive should mean that every moment we are attentive to Him and appreciative of Him, and never hard. Thus Belshazzar was told: "the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified" (Dan. 5:23). David's Psalms likewise reflect his awareness that every breath and heartbeat is a conscious gift from God. The reason Pharaoh was not immediately

destroyed was because God wanted Pharaoh to perceive His power, and to declare His Name in all the earth (:16). God wanted him to "know that there is none like Me in all the earth" (:14), which would mean Pharaoh declaring God's Name in all the earth. The intention was that Pharaoh would come to know "that the earth / land is Yahweh's" (:29); it did not belong to Pharaoh, as had been arranged in Joseph's time, but Yahweh. And so Pharaoh was intended to declare this throughout that land. But instead, Pharaoh exalted himself, declaring his own name, rather than Yahweh's (:17). In other words, God didn't kill him outright because God so wanted his repentance. Just as He delays judgment of this world so that more may have a chance to repent.

This seems to imply that the only reason God had not immediately "cut off" Pharaoh was because He so wished him to repent (:14). Finally at the Red Sea, the unbaptized Egyptians were "cut off" (Ex. 9:15); "all flesh" that was not baptized into the Christ-ark was "cut off" (Gen. 9:15). "The uncircumcised man child... that soul shall be cut off" (Gen. 17:14). The New Testament matches this by the oft repeated teaching that outside of Christ, there can be no salvation.

To be caught up in the downward spiral [as we all are at times] doesn't mean that there's no way out. The hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hardened (Ex. 10:1 cp. Ex. 9:34), and yet they did in fact soften when they beg Pharaoh to let Israel go (Ex. 10:7; 11:8). Yet each refusal of Pharaoh to soften his heart made it harder for him to soften it the next time the opportunity was presented. Conditional language is always used about Pharaoh-if he were to refuse to release Israel, more plagues would happen (Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 cp. 8:21; 4:23 RSV). In fact God wanted Pharaoh to come to realize that there is none like Yahweh in all the earth- and that was actually why He did not immediately kill Pharaoh, but rather appealed to him through the plagues. That's how I read the enigmatic Ex. 9:15: "For now I should have put forth my hand, and smitten thee... and thou hadst been cut off from the earth". Fretheim paraphrases this: "If I had not had the intention of your knowing that there is none like me in all the earth... then I should have put forth my hand and cut you off from the earth. This is what you have deserved". The hardening of Pharaoh's heart didn't mean that he was thereby bound to chose wrongly each time. Indeed, the plagues themselves were designed to warn Pharaoh and thereby appeal to him to change, in order to avoid worse plagues.

Exo 9:16 but indeed for this cause I have raised you up: to show in you My power, and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth-
"The earth" specifically refers to the land / *eretz* promised to Abraham. Abraham's seed were brought out of Egypt in order to inherit the earth / land promised to them. Thus the Name was declared in all the earth due to the exodus- i.e. throughout the whole land

promised to Abraham. Rahab etc. heard about it, but not the whole planet (Josh. 4:23,24). They were brought into the land, but reminded in Ex. 19:5 that “all the earth is mine”. This may refer to the whole planet, but surely it has special reference to the land? In one sense, all nations are Yahweh’s, and yet He has also chosen Israel as His special people. And so it is with the earth / land of Israel.

These words are cited in Rom. 9:17 to explain how even in the lives of those who will not ultimately be saved, there is a saving purpose- that the Name might be declared in all the earth. And that phrase is associated with descriptions of the future Kingdom of God upon earth (Dt. 28:10; 1 Kings 8:43; Ps. 66:4; 83:18; 102:15; Zech. 14:9). Yahweh's Name was declared to Moses in terms of a declaration of His attributes, and in a sense it was declared throughout the earth / land of Egypt through the plagues and judgments. But ultimately the condemnation of sinners will lead to this happening on a global scale. Again we learn that God's judgments are always intended to ultimately save someone, even if those experiencing the judgments will not themselves be saved (Is. 26:9).

The essence of the Yahweh Name was His desire to save, coming to full term in His Son, Yah-Hoshua, 'Yah saves'. The whole 'thing' with Pharaoh was to declare for all time that Yahweh wants to save- especially Pharaoh, even abusive Egypt, and certainly His people. "To show you My power" (GNB), as He later did to Moses on Sinai. The Hebrew hiph'il here is definitely causative; God raised up Pharaoh to cause him to know His power, and to declare the Yahweh Name which is all about saving people, even those like Pharaoh. But Pharaoh refused. Just as men are called and set up to know God, but refuse. "To show *in* you My power" could mean that Pharaoh in his heart was to know God's power. Yahweh wanted to reveal Himself to Pharaoh in that same way. It was God's vision that Pharaoh repent and made a declaration of God's Name throughout the world. The great commission is alluding to this. That is God's intention and we have Him totally behind us when we try to fulfil it. Rom. 9:16-18 appears to interpret these words as a parade example of God's mercy to Pharaoh: "It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. For [in demonstration of *mercy*] the scripture says of Pharaoh: For this very purpose did I raise you up, that I might show in you My power, and that My Name might be published abroad in all the earth. So then He has mercy on whom He wishes to, and hardens who He wishes".

Exo 9:17 as you still exalt yourself against My people, that you won’t let them go- Pharaoh was exalting himself against God, but attitudes to God's people are taken as attitudes to Him. It's why we can't claim to love God if we don't love His people. "Won't let them go" is the language used of Babylon's reason for destruction: "The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go" (Jer. 50:33). Similarly Babylon is

described as not opening "the house of the prisoners" (Is. 14:17). Biblical history continually interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on Ex. 1:7; 15:21.

Exo 9:18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as has not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now-
The specification of the time was surely in order to give Pharaoh and his courtiers a chance to repent. **The word hail occurs 14 times in the record here. And the Hebrew word for hail has a numerical value of 14. Surely the beauty is in the detail.**

Exo 9:19 Now therefore command that all of your livestock and all that you have in the field be brought into shelter. Every man and animal that is found in the field, and isn't brought home, the hail shall come down on them, and they shall die'-
There is increasing opportunity given for response to God's word of judgment. They had time to repent (:18), and now the opportunity to show their faith in Yahweh's word.

Exo 9:20 Those who feared the word of Yahweh among the servants of Pharaoh made their servants and their livestock flee into the houses-
Fearing the word of Yahweh is associated with entering covenant with Him (Dt. 4:10; 17:19; 28:58). The hint may be that these people then showed their commitment to the covenant by leaving Egypt with Israel.

Exo 9:21 Whoever didn't respect the word of Yahweh left his servants and his livestock in the field-
Zech. 6:12 says that later God's people hardened their hearts and didn't respect Yahweh's word (s.w.). Their apostacy is so often described in the language of Egypt. For that was where their hearts were. God's apostate people act as Egypt / the world and are judged as the world / Egypt..

Exo 9:22 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man, and on animal, and on every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt-
The exceeding great plague of hail was one of the plagues which lead to Israel's Passover deliverance (Ex. 9:22), and yet this is the language of the last days (Rev. 16:21)- as if there will again be a Passover deliverance for God's people, heralded by the pouring out of plagues upon those who persecute them. The plagues of Revelation upon the land of Israel are based upon those upon Egypt. See on :21.

Exo 9:23 Moses stretched out his rod toward the heavens, and Yahweh sent thunder, hail, and lightning flashed down to the earth. Yahweh rained hail on the land of Egypt-
The same word for "stretched out" is used of how Yahweh would stretch forth His hand upon His land of Israel (Ez. 14:13). As noted on :21,22, the language of Egypt's judgment is used about that of an apostate Israel, because they acted as Egypt and returned there in their hearts. This is why the rejected of the new Israel will simply be sent back into the world which they loved, and be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32).

Exo 9:24 So there was very severe hail, and lightning mixed with the hail, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation-
This is the language of the cherubim in Ez. 1:4, where the same words are used for the "great cloud, with a fire taking hold of itself". The visible sight of this would have been terrifying, and yet it was to be seen as a manifestation of the cherubim to save Israel and deliver them from captivity- which is the very context of the vision of Ez. 1:4 which uses identical language.

Exo 9:25 The hail struck throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and animal; and the hail struck every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field-
The breaking of trees is a phrase which appears to refer to the breaking of twigs and branches, meaning there would be no fruit on them.

Exo 9:26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail-
The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. And it is used of God's special grace, 'set apart', a grace known by no other people (Ps. 17:7). The word is used in this sense in Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart Israel from all other peoples. And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing characteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

Exo 9:27 Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, I have sinned this time. Yahweh is righteous, and I and my people are wicked-
Confession of sin requires the appreciation that not only have we sinned, but that "Yahweh is righteous". Pharaoh really seems to 'get there' with these words. But he slipped back into the hardness of heart and spiritual insensitivity which was to be his condemnation. **The movement of progressive hardness of heart occurred along with a progressive sense of sin and desire to repent. But the hardness was stronger, in Pharaoh's case.**

Exo 9:28 Pray to Yahweh; for there has been enough of mighty thunderings and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer-
Although Pharaoh has come to a very fine expression of repentance (:27), he still asks Moses to pray for him to Yahweh- rather than praying himself. This desire to have someone else as an interface between us and God is a major abiding theme. Israel themselves wanted Moses as an intercessor, rather than to forge an independent relationship with God. **The Egyptians had conflict with other nations around them; and along with other such situations in the ancient near East, the people being attacked were threatened with curses if they did not surrender. Evidence of this has been discovered not only regarding Egypt, but also the Hittites and Assyrians. Some lists of such Egyptian curses upon their enemies and opponents are exactly the ten plagues threatened and brought upon Egypt. Pharaoah was being called upon to surrender. And at this point, he apparently does. But his surrender was not total, and this is the huge lesson- total surrender, as the Lord taught in His parable of the man faced by a larger army coming towards him.**

Exo 9:29 Moses said to him, As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands to Yahweh. The thunders shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that you may know that the earth is Yahweh's-
Let's not read these records as implying that Moses simply uttered a few words to God, waved a wand- and then each of the plagues was lifted. There was an element of real fervency in Moses' prayers- which may well be lacking in ours. This is surely an example of genuinely praying for our enemies (perhaps it is the Old Testament source of Christ's words in Mt.5:44?). The intention as ever was to that Pharaoh might realize that the earth / land, specifically of Egypt, was Yahweh's- not Pharaoh's, and not the territory of the gods he worshipped.

Moses only prayed when he was outside the city. Perhaps the idea was for the Egyptians to see him walking through the deadly hail without being hurt. Just as they could if they identified with Israel's God.

Exo 9:30 But as for you and your servants, I know that you don't yet fear Yahweh God- Despite his fine expression of repentance, Moses knew that this was surface level. There is apparent repentance, and real repentance. **We too are tempted by mere surface level repentance, partial surrender, hiding behind forms of words like "we're all sinners".** But he lived in hope of Pharaoh's repentance- "you don't *yet* fear Yahweh". Here for all time we are set an example of hopefulness in witness. If Yahweh and Moses could hope for Pharaoh's conversion, so can we towards all those we witness to.

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

The statement that Pharaoh didn't fear Yahweh (Ex. 9:30) is alluded to in Ex. 20:20: "God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, that you won't sin". Israel were warned to fear Yahweh all the time and not just at a few points in life [as Pharaoh] and not to be hardened in sin; hence their judgments were expressed in terms allusive to the plagues upon Egypt. The point is that Pharaoh stands as the classicized warning to all God's people for all time. The implication here is that true fear of God is what happens after the immediate situation or crisis of need has passed. True spirituality is shown in who we are outside times of urgent need for God.

Exo 9:31 The flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was in bloom-
Flax was used to make the linen which was so widely used in Egyptian religious practices, and barley was used to make beer and alcoholic drinks used in those practices. So again this was a judgment upon Egypt's gods.

Exo 9:32 But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they had not grown up-
These were apparently the crops grown in Goshen, where the Israelites were. See on :26. Egypt were being led to realize that salvation was through identifying with Yahweh's people. And the fact a mixed multitude left Egypt with Israel is evidence that some did respond to this.

Exo 9:33 Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands to Yahweh; and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured on the earth-
Again we see the intensity of prayer required for the plagues to be removed. It was far from automatic.

Exo 9:34 When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants-
This is a case of "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness" (Is. 26:10). People like this "despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance". And so they "treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:4,5). Paul surely wrote this in conscious allusion to Pharaoh, as a representative of all who will ultimately fail of God's grace. **The Lord understood a hardened heart as a mindset which refuses to understand: "Do you not yet see or understand? Have you still hardened your heart?" (Mk. 8:17). This is clearly an allusion to Pharaoh ["not *yet* see..."], and again we see Pharaoh being used as a warning to all of us.**

Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant.

Exo 9:35 The heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he didn't let the children of Israel go, just as Yahweh had spoken through Moses-
The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the scapegoat

into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins- all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

EXODUS CHAPTER 10

Exo 10:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I may show these My signs in their midst-
To be caught up in the downward spiral [as we all are at times] doesn't mean that there's no way out. The hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hardened (Ex. 10:1 cp. Ex. 9:34), and yet they did in fact soften when they beg Pharaoh to let Israel go (Ex. 10:7; 11:8). Yet each refusal of Pharaoh to soften his heart made it harder for him to soften it the next time the opportunity was presented. And so it is with us. Conditional language is always used about Pharaoh-if he were to refuse to release Israel, more plagues would happen (Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 cp. 8:21; 4:23 RSV). In fact God wanted Pharaoh to come to realize that there is none like Yahweh in all the earth- and that was actually why He did not immediately kill Pharaoh, but rather appealed to him through the plagues. That's how I read the enigmatic Ex. 9:24: "For now I should have put forth my hand, and smitten thee... and thou hadst been cut off from the earth". Fretheim paraphrases this: "If I had not had the intention of your knowing that there is none like me in all the earth... then I should have put forth my hand and cut you off from the earth. This is what you have deserved". The hardening of Pharaoh's heart didn't mean that he was thereby bound to chose wrongly each time. Indeed, the plagues themselves were designed to warn Pharaoh and thereby appeal to him to change, in order to avoid worse plagues.

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

Exo 10:2 and that you may tell in the hearing of your son, and of your son's son, what things I have done to Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them; that you may know that I am Yahweh-
Repeatedly God has held out hope that Pharaoh would "know that I am Yahweh". But he had refused this, and it was God's hope now that His own people would perceive the truths He had tried to teach Pharaoh, and come to the required repentance and

humility. For to know Yahweh, in the Hebraic sense, is not so much to know facts about Him; but to be in relationship with Him.

Exo 10:3 Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and said to him, This is what Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Let My people go, that they may serve Me-
"Humble yourself" is the word used for how the Egyptians had afflicted or humbled the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). The only way Pharaoh could undo that was by afflicting / humbling himself before God. What was [and is] required was not the desperate repentance of a moment, in the face of urgent personal need, but humility as a permanent characteristic.

"Serve Me" could refer specifically to the initial request to keep a feast to Yahweh. But the call was for Israel to be allowed to change masters, from Pharaoh to Yahweh. They changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Exo 10:4 Or else, if you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country-
Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 emphasize the real choice before Pharaoh; he was refusing to let Israel go and "held" them. Babylon was warned that no nation could "hold them fast [and] refuse to let [Israel] go [because] their redeemer is strong" (Jer. 50:33,34). The Hebrew for "strong" is that translated "hold". God had a stronger grip and claim on them than did Pharaoh. They were Yahweh's, not Pharaoh's. And it could be argued that Babylon-Persia did listen to this message, and allowed and encouraged the exiles to return. We too are to learn from all this historical precedent; that our hand is not stronger than God's.

The defining of a specific time, "tomorrow", was again in order to give Pharaoh the opportunity for repentance.

Exo 10:5 and they shall cover the surface of the earth, so that one won't be able to see the earth. They shall eat the residue of that which has escaped, which remains to you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which grows for you out of the field-
The 'covering' of Egypt with frogs in Ex. 8:6 and locusts in Ex. 10:5,15 looked ahead to

the 'covering' of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:28; 15:5,10). It was an appeal for repentance, in the hope that the final smiting would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save the Egyptians, but they would not.

Exo 10:6 Your houses shall be filled, and the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; as neither your fathers nor your fathers' fathers have seen, since the day that they were on the earth to this day'-
The language of the locust plague here is alluded to throughout Joel, where the invaders of Israel are likened to an unprecedented locust invasion. Thus the filling of houses with locusts is repeated in Joel 2:9. The idea was that an apostate Israel were to be treated as the Egyptians. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues. The Egyptians were likewise tempted to understand the locusts as symbolizing an invading army- of Israelites. They would destroy Egypt- unless they let them go. See on :26.

He turned himself about, and went out from Pharaoh-
Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he turned himself and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazer (Ex. 32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted? And yet Moses went on to become the most humble of all men. It came to full term when Moses' faith slipped for a moment; because his spirit was provoked by Israel, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips and was therefore barred from entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven.

Moses turned and left Pharaoh without asking for permission to leave. He didnt retreat from the King's presence by stepping backwards facing the king, but turned his back on him and walked out. He was showing total disrespect to Pharaoh as monarch. He was indeed acting as God to Pharaoh.

Exo 10:7 Pharaoh's servants said to him, How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve Yahweh, their God. Don't you yet know that Egypt is destroyed?-
The magicians had earlier admitted "This is the finger of God" (Ex. 8:19); but the

courtiers had "hardened their hearts" like Pharaoh (Ex. 9:34). But now they are realizing the power of Yahweh. They were the landowner class. But they had now lost their cattle and crops, and the land was ruined.

"Not yet" suggests they sensed God had an intended point of realisation for Pharaoh and he needed to hurry up and get there. Likewise in :3 "How long will you refuse..".

Exo 10:8 Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, Go, serve Yahweh your God; but who are those who will go?-
Pharaoh surely originally intended to tell them to leave immediately; but his lack of total capitulation to Yahweh meant that at the last minute, he still brings in a proviso- 'Who will go?'. We have in him an example of what happens when we offer God anything less than total capitulation. Sinless perfection is not what's required- but total capitulation to Him is.

Exo 10:9 Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old; with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast to Yahweh-
This was an argument back against the idea that religion was just a male preserve. Yahweh's covenant was with all His people, including women and children. It was no mere hobby or external religious ritual.

Exo 10:10 He said to them, Yahweh be with you if I will let you go with your little ones! See, evil is clearly before your faces-
The greatest Egyptian god was the sun–god Ra, and the Pharaoh was seen as his manifestation on earth. It may be that Pharaoh alludes to this when he threatens Moses: “Look, for there is evil [*ra’a*] before you” (Ex. 10:10). And Yahweh’s response was to darken the sun and create a darkness which could be felt (Ex. 10:21). The AV brings out the strong but indirect threat: "Look to it". We wonder why Pharaoh didn't just slay Moses and Aaron out of hand. For he was so angry with them. But this is the closest he gets to threatening them personally. I suggest it was only his conscience and subconscious fear of Yahweh which stopped him from killing them as they stood before him. For that, surely, was the logical way out of all these plagues which these troublesome brothers kept bringing upon him.

Exo 10:11 Not so! Go now you who are men, and serve Yahweh; for that is what you desire! They were driven out from Pharaoh’s presence-

Pharaoh clearly saw that he was going to have to allow the entire nation leave. But his rage increases as he realizes this, and desperately clings on to his petty power.

Exo 10:12 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up on the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail has left-
The continual destruction of what had remained from the previous plagues was a carefully calculated way of trying to bring the Egyptians progressively towards repentance.

Exo 10:13 Moses stretched out his rod over the land of Egypt, and Yahweh brought an east wind on the land all that day, and all the night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts-
It was the east wind which was to open the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21). The people were being taught that God could control the winds as He wished; and "wind", *ruach*, is the word also used for God's Spirit-Angels. But the east wind was to judge an apostate people of God (Is. 27:8; Jer. 18:17; Ez. 17:10; 19:12; Hos. 13:15). The idea was that an apostate Israel were to be treated as the Egyptians. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

Exo 10:14 The locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the borders of Egypt. They were very grievous. Before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such-
Egypt at the time was 520 miles from north to south, and about 20 miles wide apart from at the Nile delta. This was a huge number of locusts. The "locusts" appear to have been a special creation, never seen before nor afterwards.

Time and again the prophets describe the judgments to fall upon Israel in the same terms as they speak of the condemnations of the surrounding nations. The message was clear: rejected Israel would be treated as Gentiles. Thus Joel describes the locust invasion of Israel in the language of locusts covering the face of Egypt (Joel 2:2,20 = Ex. 10:14,15,19). Israel's hardness of heart is explicitly likened to that of Pharaoh (1 Sam. 6:6); as the Egyptians were drowned, so would Israel be (Am. 9:5-8). As Pharaoh's heart was plagued (Ex. 9:14), so was Israel's (1 Kings 8:38); as Egypt was a reed, so were Israel

(1 Kings 14:15). As Pharaoh-hophra was given into the hand of his enemies, so would Israel be (Jer. 44:30). She would be "Condemned with the world…".

Exo 10:15 For they covered the surface of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened, and they ate every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. There remained nothing green, either tree or herb of the field, through all the land of Egypt-
The darkening of the land could refer to the locust clouds blotting out the light of the sun. But it's likely a reference to the way that their brown bodies and wings literally darkened the ground after settling (:5). The destruction described would have been felt particularly by the landowner class who surrounded Pharaoh.

Exo 10:16 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and he said, I have sinned against Yahweh your God, and against you-
His previous summonings of Moses and Aaron in Ex. 8:8,25; 9:2 had lacked this element of haste. We see a man increasingly desperate, being forced to repentance. And his repentance has greater depth to it than before in Ex. 9:27; for he realizes he has sinned also against Moses and Aaron personally. The Lord puts his words in the mouth of the repentant prodigal son. He had the right form of words, and probably the right attitude of heart- at that moment. But the lesson is that repentance is not a passing realization of sin, but a permanent change of attitude and behaviour. And that is a critical lesson for all of us, for all time.

Exo 10:17 Now therefore please forgive my sin again, and pray to Yahweh your God, that He may also take away from me this death-
Pharaoh asked Moses to pardon his sin, rather than asking Yahweh directly. By contrast, David asks God directly to "pardon my sin" (Ps. 25:18; 32:5). Likewise Saul's mere religiosity is reflected by the way in which he asks Samuel to "pardon my sin", when he ought instead to have been asking this of God. For Yahweh is the God who delights to pardon sin (s.w. Ex. 34:7). But whilst Saul uses the correct vocabulary, he misdirects it- to Samuel and not to God. And he ends up using the very phrase of Pharaoh (Ex. 10:17), also without ultimate sincerity.

Exo 10:18 He went out from Pharaoh, and prayed to Yahweh-
What Moses prayed for isn't recorded. It is left purposefully ambiguous as to whether he simply prayed for the locusts to be removed, or for Pharaoh's forgiveness. There are many such intentional ambiguities in the Biblical narrative- to provoke our imagination and questions, so that we might enter more fully into the narrative.

Exo 10:19 Yahweh turned an exceeding strong west wind, which took up the locusts, and drove them into the Red Sea. There remained not one locust in all the borders of Egypt-
The wind which blew the locusts in and then to blow them away again, until "not a single locust was left" (Ex. 10:19) is just what happened to the Egyptians- the wind blew the waters to and fro, and left not a single Egyptian soldier alive (Ex. 14:21,28). The locust plague was an appeal for their repentance, and an encouragement for them to perceive what Yahweh could do again. The plagues began by affecting everyone, but then focus in on the Egyptians and then zoom closer in upon the personal possessions of Pharaoh. In Pharaoh's case, it would be true to say that God's hardening activities gather momentum, like a swimmer sucked closer and closer towards the waterfall. There has to come a moment when the pull is now too strong, and the plunge is inevitable. It is that moment which perhaps we need to fear more than anything else in human experience.

"There remained not one" beetle (Ex. 8:31), locust (Ex. 10:19) nor Egyptian who pursued the Israelites (Ex. 14:28). The same phrase is used. Again we see how both Egyptians and Israelites were intended to learn from the plagues, and how this came to full term when "not one" of their enemies was left- thanks to the prayer of Moses.

Exo 10:20 But Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he didn't let the children of Israel go-
Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant.

This is a case of "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness" (Is. 26:10). People like this "despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads them to repentance". And so they "treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:4,5). Paul surely wrote this in conscious allusion to Pharaoh, as a representative of all who will ultimately fail of God's grace.

Exo 10:21 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt-
The rejected will be sent to a mist of darkness (2 Pet. 2:17). Thick darkness is associated

with God's judgment (Is. 8:22; Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15)- and recall how the judgment of darkness upon Egypt was so severe that human movement required 'groping' (Ex. 10:21). Perhaps there will be a literal element to this in the experience of the rejected. Be that as it may, the utter *pointlessness* of life without God will be so bitterly apparent. And yet they would not face up to it in their day of opportunity.

The plagues upon Egypt recorded in Ex. 7-10 are frequently alluded to in later Scripture concerning the judgments upon the apostate people of God. The judgment of darkness is a case in point. Quite simply, God's rejected people suffer the judgments of this world. All this has a powerful imperative for us. If we love the world, we will be sent back into it. The Lord will effectively tell the rejected: 'Go back and watch telly. That's what you liked doing. Go back and sail your pleasure boat, take a holiday to Spain, go back to the guys at the bar and have another drink with them... that's what you always liked, compared to the things of My people and My Kingdom'. And the last thing, the very last thing, that the rejected will want is to go back to all that. But they will have to. For in their lives, they made their answer. The pointlessness of the life of the world will then be only too apparent to them. As Adam was made to realize he was made of dust and must tend that dust and then return to it, living a pointless existence, so the rejected whom he typified will realize all too late the vanity of life in the flesh. Rejected Israel in the wilderness had their years of prolonged existence "consumed with vanity" (Ps. 78:33). The faithless of the new Israel will go through the same. *So let us, while we have opportunity, learn the utter vanity of all else apart from the things of the Lord, His people and His Kingdom*.

The darkness would have been "felt" in that it may have been associated with a sandstorm which blotted out the sun's light.

Exo 10:22 Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days-
Three days was the period associated with death and mourning. We think of the Lord's death for three days. They were being taught that God could bring about intense mourning and death- and they would all feel it, as they felt this darkness (:21). The death of the firstborn was therefore avoidable, and was only God's most desperate attempt, as it were, to bring about their repentance. The plague of darkness was intended to help them realize that He could slay them, and to elicit their repentance before He did.

Exo 10:23 They didn't see one another, neither did anyone rise from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings-
Israel in Egypt had light, but Egypt was in darkness. And yet later, at the time of the Exodus, it was the Angel in the pillar of cloud and fire that gave light to the Israelites and darkness to the Egyptian pursuers. One possible conclusion could be that the guardian

Angel of each Israelite was physically with them at the time of the plague of darkness, giving them light and yet darkness to the Egyptians. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

Again we see how the plagues were designed to teach. If Egyptians wanted light, they must go into the house of Israelites. This was to prepare then to go into their houses for salvation from the final plague. And Israelites only had light in their homes. They were taught to see their homes as the place of safety, to prepare them to abide in their homes during the death of the firstborn. It is only when we refuse to accept meaning in event that we fall into the sense that life is random and pointless, and we are held captive by the winds of fortune. And the many associations between death and darkness were to encourage them all to see that escape from death was only through association with God's people within their homes. And we have here the basis for house churches, light and escape from death for the world.

Exo 10:24 Pharaoh called to Moses, and said, Go, serve Yahweh. Only let your flocks and your herds stay behind. Let your little ones also go with you-
Again we see Pharaoh capitulating- and then putting on the brakes, by trying to make some proviso. He agreed now that their women and children could leave- but their animals must stay behind. Most of the animals of the Egyptians had been slain, and so Pharaoh was desperate for animals. But again we see the lesson- that anything less than total capitulation to God is the same as resisting Him.

Exo 10:25 Moses said, You must also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to Yahweh our God-
Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35). And yet God hardened his heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8). The references to God hardening Pharaoh's heart generally occur after Pharaoh had first hardened his own heart. The fact Pharaoh hardened his heart was a sin (Ex. 9:34), and yet God encouraged him in this. God offered Pharaoh a way of escape after each of the plagues; all he had to do was to agree to let Israel go. But the conditions got tougher the longer he resisted God's demand: he finally had to not only let Israel go, along with their animals, but also provide them with sacrifices (Ex. 10:25). Likewise when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his heart up, God hardened it (Dan. 5:20).

Exo 10:26 Our livestock also shall go with us. Not a hoof shall be left behind, for of it we must take to serve Yahweh our God; and we don't know with what we must serve

Yahweh, until we come there-
"Serve" is used in the sense of sacrifice. "Left behind" is the word just used for how not a single locust "remained" in Egypt (:19). I suggested on :6 that the Egyptians saw the locust invasion as representing the swarming multitudes of Hebrews which had come into their land. And Moses goes along with this parallel; he says that just as not a single locust remained, so neither would a single Israelite animal. Just as Egypt wanted the locusts to totally leave their land, so they had to let all Israel leave.

Exo 10:27 But Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he wouldn't let them go-
When Paul insists that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Rom. 9:14-18), he is not only repeating the Biblical record (Ex. 9:12,16; 33:19), but he is alluding to the way that the Jewish *Book of Jubilees* claimed that Mastema [the supposed personal Satan] and not God hardened Pharaoh's heart. He is deconstructing this wrong idea. See on :25.

Exo 10:28 Pharaoh said to him, Get away from me! Be careful to see my face no more; for in the day you see my face you shall die!-
I discussed on :10 how Pharaoh could easily have apparently rid himself of these plagues by slaying Moses and Aaron. The only reason I can see for not doing so was his subconscious awareness that they were of God, and he would suffer terribly if he did so. This is the tragedy of it all- that Pharaoh had a conscience. But he refused to be led to follow it.

Exo 10:29 Moses said, You have spoken well. I will see your face again no more-
The LXX makes this sound as if Pharaoh was as it were being judged out of his own mouth: "And Moses says, Thou hast said, I will not appear in thy presence again". Pharaoh had said that he wouldn't see Moses again, and indeed he wouldn't- for he would soon be slain. That is the implication of Moses' words. And yet according to Ex. 12:31, there was one last brief meeting between them. So the idea may be that Moses would not again appear before God's face again in intercession for Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Pharaoh and Egypt were now beyond Moses' intercession and prayer.

EXODUS CHAPTER 11

Exo 11:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Yet one plague more will I bring on Pharaoh, and on Egypt; afterwards he will let you go. When he lets you go, he will surely thrust you out altogether-

We can read this and :4 as that God "had said"... and Moses said these things to Pharaoh. This would explain the apparent contradiction with Moses having said in Ex. 10 that Pharaoh would not see his face again.

"Altogether" can mean 'all of you'. Previously Pharaoh had argued about whether men, women or children could leave. But they were all to be thrust out. And yet there is evidence that many of them remained or did not keep the Passover. Just as God's efforts to bring men out of the world are resisted by man's love of his miserable world. "When Israel conducted their census of the Levites and the firstborn from the rest of the tribes (Numbers 3:39, 46), the number of firstborn males is recorded as just over twenty thousand. Using the traditional interpretation of 600,000 adult males implies that firstborns made up only 1 out of every 30 men. If that were the case, the average Israelite family would have about 60 children, boys and girls combined". Israel were typically disobedient to God [think of how they tried to gather manna when told not to], so it is unlikely they were all obedient to the Passover regulations. Ex. 13:18 "the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt" can be translated "went up as a fifth", as if only a fifth of Israel left Egypt. The rest remained from fear of the unknown, from connection with the Egypt which they hated. In the wilderness, the people often suggest that Israel never actually wanted to leave Egypt anyway and that is why they wanted to return.

The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. This would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did Israel eat the Passover?

My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, "the Destroyer" Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). "The Destroyer" is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer" (*olothreutes;* this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the 'Destroyer' Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of "He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. *olothreuo*) the firstborn".

Israel were side-tracked from what should have been the central object of their attention: the blood of the lamb. They were disobedient from the day God knew them, i.e. Passover night (Dt. 9:24). *Very* soon afterwards, the people reminded Moses of this incident: "Would to God *we* (maybe this is the emphasis) had (also) died by the hand of the Lord (a phrase often associated with Angel's work at passover: Josh. 4;24; Is. 11:11; 19:16; Dan. 9:15; Heb. 8:9) in the land of Egypt, when

we sat by the flesh pot (Young's Literal) and when we did eat bread" (Ex. 16:3). They weren't just saying they wished they had died in Egypt; they wished they had died by the hand of the Lord. Sitting by the flesh pot and eating bread is perhaps a reference to eating Passover that night, when in (perhaps) 90% of Hebrew families the firstborn had slumped down in death. They wished they too had died that Passover night. They felt Moses was going to kill them as, by implication, they blamed him for killing the firstborn.

God's purpose will be achieved. His desire was that Pharaoh should let Israel go. He refused, but in the end, he and his people begged them to leave and hasted them to get out, loading them with their wealth, desperate that they should leave immediately. The lesson is that we will as it were be forced to be obedient to God's will; but we will not be saved unless we willingly do this.

Exo 11:2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let them ask every man of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold-
The same phrase "of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" is used of the vessels taken from the Gentile world and dedicated to the tabernacle (Ex. 11:2; 12:35; Josh. 6:19; 2 Sam. 8:10; 1 Kings 7:51). The generosity of others in Biblical history, their right perspective on the wealth taken from this world, was to inspire other believers in later history. And this is how the body of Christ should function today, with members inspiring others to spirituality. This request for high value material goods was playing on the basic human tendency to think that we can buy salvation. And in times of desperation, that sense is all the stronger. And God played on that aspect of human nature. **But the whole idea was that they gave what they took from Egypt / the world to the work of the tabernacle. And that is the principle for us.**

Egyptians are defined as Israel's neighbours from whom they were to ask gold etc. (Ex. 11:2), so we can assume the neighbours with whom Passover was to be shared included Egyptians (Ex. 12:3). The first passover was open to Egyptians and there were no commands about being clean or ritually pure in order to eat it. It could be argued that taking the lamb on the 10th day of the month and keeping it carefully until the 14th was itself a witness to Egypt, and an invitation to them to join in. Lambs were seen as deities in Egypt; they had to accept that salvation involved the slaying of their gods and a total resignation from their religious system.

Exo 11:3 Yahweh gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians-
Again we see God's power through His Spirit to give attitudes to people, to work directly upon the human heart.

Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people-

Note that God's comment on Moses was: "the man Moses was very great" (Ex. 11:3). Yet it is also written that "the man Moses was very meek" (Num. 12:3). Putting the two passages together we have the clear lesson that he who humbles himself is made great; and in this, Moses was not only a type of Christ but also a pattern for all who would go through the pattern which the Lord Jesus set before us: of humbling ourselves now that we might be made great in due time. Moses our example is really a challenge in this.

Exo 11:4 Moses said, This is what Yahweh says: 'About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt-

It is stressed that Israel were taken out from the "midst of Egypt" (Dt. 4:34; 1 Kings 8:51). The plagues and wonders were done in "the midst of Egypt" (Ex. 3:20; Dt. 11:3). The midst of Egypt appears to be defined in Ps. 135:9; Is. 19:3; Ez. 29:3 as being Pharaoh and his servants. The narrative therefore stresses so much his response to the plagues. God's especial focus had been upon his conversion, and yet he refused. Israel were taken out right from under his nose, from the very heart of Egypt. Ez. 20:8 reveals what is not recorded in the historical record; that because the Israelites were so devoted to Egyptian idolatry still, His thought had been to destroy them "in the midst of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:8 "Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for my name's sake"). **His Name is all about saving by grace. He went out to slay them, but saved them, working for His Name's sake, struggling within Himself, as He said in Hosea "My repentings are kindled together".** God's pole of grace overcame the pole of necessary judgment. He tolerated them and saved them, with enthusiasm, by the grace which comes from love- love taken to its ultimate, saving term. The whole narrative speaks as if the Hebrews were all at one place at one time and left "the midst of Egypt" together. Although unrecorded in the historical narrative, this would have meant that they gathered together "in the midst of Egypt" with Moses, who was not in Goshen but in the locality and presence of Pharaoh.

Exo 11:5 and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of livestock-

"That sits upon his throne" is superfluous or out of place unless it means to tell us that the Pharaohs placed their firstborn upon their thrown as co regents. Which implies what Egyptologists tell us, that the firstborn son became Pharaoh. Which means Pharaoh himself was a firstborn and indeed firstborn of the gods was a title of Pharaoh. His life was preserved by grace. God really wanted to save him. Just as the Lord gave the sop, the favoured piece, to Judas as a desperate attempt to win him by His grace at the last moment. And the Father and Son likewise seek that their goodness and grace lead us to a repentance that is not repented of. The comment that Pharaoh's servants would bow down to Moses after the death of the firstborn could be read as intimating that Pharaoh their Lord was to be slain. We marvel at how this gem about Pharaoh being a firstborn is hidden, to be discovered by those who reflect on a few inspired words. The connection between the firstborn and taking the throne is made clear in 2 Chron. 21:3, which implies Jehoram automatically became king because he was the firstborn: "the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because he was the firstborn". Likewise Ps. 89:27 implies that to be made firstborn means to be made king: "Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth".

Women grinding at the mill therefore refer to the lowest class in society (Is. 47:2; Jud. 14:21; Lam. 5:13). Yet from amongst them will some be snatched away to meet their Lord at His return, just as those with the leisure to be lounging in bed will be called away (Lk. 17:34,35). Animals were worshipped in Egypt as representatives of the various gods, especially the firstborn of animals; and we recall therefore that the plagues were judgments against the gods of Egypt. **The firstborn of domestic animals were often worshipped. Just as the firstborn whether of man or woman was the family priest. Again we see the dismantling of Egypt's religion. The vacuum was intended to be filled by a turning to Yahweh.**

How did the firstborn feel? They would have left the house and looked at the blood and remembered the slain lamb they had eaten. It would have felt incredible that just because of faith in that, they were saved. We are the church of firstborns (Heb. 12:23 Gk.), just as all Israel were God's firstborn. Israel is My firstborn, God had told Pharaoh. We have the same feeling at the breaking of bread. What we ate and associated with has saved us. And therefore the firstborns were to be dedicated to Yahweh's service as we are. We are His. And they would have reflected on all the firstborns who did die, and God's grace to them through having obedient family. Perhaps only the great cry of the Egyptians and seeeing the carcases of firstborn animals everywhere would have made them appreciate what had happened.

The Passover deliverance was to be the beginning of months for Israel (Ex. 12:2); time and history, and our sense of where we are in time and history, were to be

constantly governed by this experience of great salvation. Yet people tend to live without this sense of their place in history, never learning from history and never seeing the long term horizon, just living life as it is experienced right in front of their eyes and ears. Hence the Hebrew months are called just the second month, the third month etc. The names of the Hebrew months were picked up only in Babylonian exile. And this is how radically our great salvation should affect our lives. It could be argued that Israel's entire wilderness experience was lived in the shadow of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They were in an envelope of Divine protection and their sense of day and night was governed by these things, rather than their sight of the sun or moon. Likewise the arrival of the quail and manna gave them their sense of "morning" and of the sixth day, when double manna was given, and the Sabbath when there was no manna. They lived without any way of telling the time as we do. We likewise are to live in a total environment of awareness of God's salvation, that I have been redeemed and am on my path to the Kingdom. And yet even whilst living in this total environment of salvation, Israel rebelled and wanted to return to Egypt.

Exo 11:6 There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has not been, nor shall be any more-
This "great cry" is described with the same phrase used in Gen. 27:34, when Esau cries with a great cry- realizing that he had been rejected from God's purpose and that could not now be put right. Whilst the great cry was indeed because of their loss, the connection with Esau is to make the point that despite all God's efforts, they had turned down His invitation to have a part in His purpose- and realized that all too late.

Exo 11:7 But against any of the children of Israel a dog won't even bark or move its tongue, against man or animal; that you may know that Yahweh makes a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel-
The way conditions are not stated within the actual prophecy is similar to how blanket statements are made in Scripture, and yet there are exceptions to them. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue" (Ex. 11:7) was in fact conditional on Israel remaining indoors. But that condition isn't then stated. Even the old covenant, which was in a sense "eternal", was made with Israel "upon all these conditions" (Ex. 24:8 RVmg.). It was eternal, potentially, because it had conditions. But the conditionality of it isn't always brought to the fore when, e.g., we read of the Sabbath as being an eternal ordinance.

The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through

separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. And it is used of God's special grace, 'set apart', a grace known by no other people (Ps. 17:7). The word is used in this sense in Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart Israel from all other peoples. And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing characteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

This promise was of course conditional- upon obeying the Passover legislation. When the Destroyer angel saw the blood, then it passed over; or, the Passover protective angel hovered over the homes identified with the blood [s.w. Is. 31:5 "As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it"], so that the Destroyer Angel didn't slay anyone there. There is good reason to think that not all Israel kept the Passover. The small number of firstborns recorded in the census after leaving Eypt would rather suggest that. The simple requirement was identification with the blood of the lamb. We do this through taking the wine at the breaking bread, through life lived in identity with Him. And our sins are thereby passed over. Possibly Rom. 3:24,25 alludes to this: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past [passed over]".

Exo 11:8 All these your servants shall come down to me, and bow down themselves to me, saying, Get out, with all the people who follow you; and after that I will go out'- GNB tries to make better sense here: "Moses concluded by saying, "All your officials will come to me and bow down before me, and they will beg me to take all my people and go away. After that, I will leave." Then in great anger Moses left the king".

Bowing down to Moses rather than Pharaoh suggests that the servants of Pharaoh would now become servants of Moses. They would change master. Just as developed by Paul in Romans 6, that the crossing of the Red Sea was Israel changing masters. From Pharaoh to God. But not "all" Pharaoh's servants did this; probably many of them were themselves firstborns and were slain. Just as not "all" Israel followed Moses out of Egypt and not all Israelite firstborn were saved. The whole record is one of missed possibilities and unrealized potentials, which is really the story of God's gracious project with man.

To be caught up in the downward spiral [as we all are at times] doesn't mean that there's no way out. The hearts of Pharaoh's servants were hardened (Ex. 10:1 cp. Ex. 9:34), and yet they did in fact soften when they beg Pharaoh to let Israel go (Ex. 10:7; 11:8). Yet each refusal of Pharaoh to soften his heart made it harder for him to soften it the next time the opportunity was presented. Conditional language is always used about Pharaoh-if he were to refuse to release Israel, more plagues would happen (Ex. 8:2; 9:2; 10:4 cp. 8:21; 4:23 RSV). In fact God wanted Pharaoh to come to realize that there is none like Yahweh in all the earth- and that was actually why He did not immediately kill Pharaoh, but rather appealed to him through the plagues. That's how I read the enigmatic Ex. 9:15: "For now I should have put forth my hand, and smitten thee... and thou hadst been cut off from the earth". Fretheim paraphrases this: "If I had not had the intention of your knowing that there is none like me in all the earth... then I should have put forth my hand and cut you off from the earth. This is what you have deserved". The hardening of Pharaoh's heart didn't mean that he was thereby bound to chose wrongly each time. Indeed, the plagues themselves were designed to warn Pharaoh and thereby appeal to him to change, in order to avoid worse plagues.

He went out from Pharaoh in hot anger-
Moses' faith slipped for a moment; because his spirit was provoked by Israel, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips and was therefore barred from entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven. Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he turned himself and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazer (Ex. 32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted? **Yet despite this characteristic, he was the meekest man on earth. This gives an insight into what it is to be humble. It doesn't mean being passive or passionless.**

Exo 11:9 Yahweh said to Moses, Pharaoh won't listen to you, that My wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt-
God is never ultimately defeated by human intransigence and lack of response to Him. Pharaoh's refusal to listen would result in God's wonders being multiplied, and thereby more glory being given to Him. The multiplication of wonders could be a form of saying [as an intensive plural] that there would be a multiplied wonder, a very great wonder, performed- in the events of the Red Sea.

Again it is stressed that God's glory would be achieved through God not hearkening to Pharaoh. Whereas Moses had earlier reasoned that their salvation was only possible if Pharaoh hearkened to him. Which Moses considered impossible due to his speech impediment. He is reminded of this so many times as we need to be; that God works in a counter instinctive way, through our inadequacy, and destroys and counter points our assumptions that our imagined way is the only way out. And anyone who thinks God treated Pharaoh harshly has just never really thought carefully but rather rushed to a desired conclusion.

Exo 11:10 Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he didn't let the children of Israel go out of his land-
The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

God hardened his heart, meaning He had removed sensitivity from his conscience. His heart was turned by God, because that was the direction he himself wanted (Ps. 105:25). Pharaoh's response gets increasingly better, confessing sinfulness, asking for prayer, etc. And yet we have to read this as his conscience being increasingly touched, and yet he refused to act upon it. The movement of conscience within him was overcome by the movement of hardness; and as hardness was his dominant desire, it was that which Yahweh confirmed.

The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the scapegoat into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins- all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

EXODUS CHAPTER 12

Exo 12:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying-
The idea is that He had spoken to them in Egypt, before they left. For what we read now is partly retelling what had been told them before.

Exo 12:2 This month shall be to you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you-

Seeing they had been 430 years in Egypt, they would previously have followed the Egyptian beginning of the year- which commenced with the overflowing of the Nile at the summer solstice. But Israel were to begin their year by celebrating the overflowing of the Red Sea which destroyed the Egyptians. **The Passover deliverance was to be the beginning of months (Ex. 12:2) for Israel; time and history, and our sense of where we are in time and history, were to be constantly governed by this experience of great salvation. Hence the Hebrew months are called just the second month, the third month etc. The names of the Hebrew months were picked up only in Babylonian exile. And this is how radically our great salvation should affect our lives. It could be argued that Israel's entire wilderness experience was lived in the shadow of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They were in an envelope of Divine protection and their sense of day and night was governed by these things, rather than their sight of the sun or moon. Likewise the arrival of the quail and manna gave them their sense of "morning" and of the sixth day, when double manna was given, and the Sabbath when there was no manna. They lived without any way of telling the time as we do. We likewise are to live in a total environment of awareness of God's salvation, that I have been redeemed and am on my path to the Kingdom. And yet even whilst living in this total environment of salvation, Israel rebelled and wanted to return to Egypt.**

Exo 12:3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth day of this month, they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household-

"Every man a lamb" is purposefully ambiguous. The idea is that the heads of households should do this, but it is phrased in such a way as to imply that every Israelite was to do this. They were to each see in the lamb the source of their personal redemption. The Passover, like the breaking of bread service which it anticipated, has both a collective and a personal aspect. We note God's method of salvation by households, with those without families apparently taken in to existing household units (Ps. 68:6). And we wonder whether there is not an element of that within His present economy of working, through the lamb which represents the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:7).

Exo 12:4 and if the household is too little for a lamb, then he and his neighbour next to his house shall take one according to the number of the souls; according to what everyone can eat you shall make your count for the lamb-

The implication was that the slain lamb was to be totally consumed, and therefore there needed to be enough people present to ensure this would happen.

The Mosaic command to give, every man according to the blessing with which God had blessed him (Dt. 16:17), is purposely similar in phrasing to the command to eat of the Passover lamb, every man according to his need; and to partake of the manna (cp. the Lord Jesus), every man according to his need (Ex. 12:4; 16:6,16). According to the desperation of our need, so we partake of Christ; and in response, according to our blessing, we give, in response to the grace of His giving.

Egyptians are defined as Israel's neighbours from whom they were to ask gold etc. (Ex. 11:2), so we can assume the neighbours with whom Passover was to be shared included Egyptians (Ex. 12:3). The first passover was open to Egyptians and there were no commands about being clean or ritually pure in order to eat it. It could be argued that taking the lamb on the 10th day of the month and keeping it carefully until the 14th was itself a witness to Egypt, and an invitation to them to join in. Lambs were seen as deities in Egypt; they had to accept that salvation involved the slaying of their gods and a total resignation from their religious system.

Exo 12:5 Your lamb shall be without blemish-
This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:7). The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

A male a year old-
Male not only because it looked forward to the Lord Jesus, but also because it represented the firstborn males who were to be saved from death by the death of the lamb. We note therefore that the lamb died as a representative of those redeemed, rather that a substitute for them.

You shall take it out from the sheep-
"Take it out" implies that it was not to be kept aside specially, but was to be one of the flock. This eloquently points forward to the Lord Jesus as taken out of the flock of humanity. He was of our nature, and not God Himself.

Or from the goats-
We get the impression that God was very strict about the offerings. He was. But He

made concession to the man who couldn't bring what he ought to: "If he be poor, and cannot get much... two young pigeons, such as he is able to get" (Lev. 14:22). If they were blemished in some way, and even though they were not the animal God desired, God would accept such as the man was able to get. Likewise the offerings had to involve the shedding of blood; but God was prepared to accept a food offering if a man really couldn't get an animal. The eagerness of God to accept what a man can do rather than the insistence on legal principles really comes over. He recognized the Israelites would be living on different levels. Such an eagerness involved accepting a lower standard of adherence to God's ideal principles. In harmony with this, the Passover 'lamb' (:3) could be either a sheep, or if necessary, a goat (Ex. 12:5), even though the use of a goat would somewhat spoil the foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Exo 12:6 and you shall keep it-
LXX "it shall be kept by you". The idea may be that the lamb was to be kept in their homes from the 10th to the 14th day. The family would become fond of the lamb, it was even more one of them that was to be sacrificed for the salvation of the family. And this again speaks of the Lord's absolute sharing of human nature, as our representative, truly 'one of us'.

Until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at evening-
Why was the lamb or kid kept for four days (Ex. 12:2,6)? If the effects of circumcision take three days to wear off (Gen. 34:25), it could be that the uncircumcised males were intended to circumcise themselves, chose the lamb, and then keep the Passover four days later. Some Jewish commentators claim that God fell in love with Israel whilst she was still in her blood (Ez. 16:6) in that some Jews circumcised themselves at the time of the first Passover- hence one Rabbi speaks of the blood of circumcision and the blood of the first Passover running together. See on Ex. 12:48.

The people of Israel as a body were going through the death and resurrection experience of the Lord Jesus, through the process of the Passover and Exodus through the Red Sea. Israel ate Passover (Ex. 12:6) [14th Abib], as the Lord died on the cross as the Passover lambs were slain; Israel left Egypt the next day (Num. 33:3) [15th Abib] and journeyed three days (Ex. 8:27) [15th-17th Abib], and the Lord Jesus was three days in the tomb. Israel then came through the Red Sea [17th Abib], connecting with the Lord's being resurrected. As we come out of the baptismal water, we really are united with the resurrected Lord- a new creation. His newness of life, His deliverance and successful exodus from the world- all this becomes ours.

Exo 12:7 They shall take some of the blood, and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel, on the houses in which they shall eat it-
Time and again we find that the local pagan myths about Satan are alluded to and deconstructed by Moses. It has been observed that the Passover ritual of smearing the blood of the sacrifice on the doorposts was very similar to what Bedouin tribes have been doing in the Middle East for millennia- they smear the blood on their tent poles and tent entrances when they erect a new home or tent, in order to keep 'satan' figures away (Roland De Vaux, *Studies In Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961) p. 7). But the Exodus record is at pains to point out that the 'Destroyer' was one of Yahweh's Angels; and thus it was ultimately Yahweh Himself who slew the firstborn in those homes without the daubed blood. Again- yet again- we see a pagan idea concerning 'satan' being taken up and reinterpreted in light of the fact that the 'satan' figures don't really exist, and God is the ultimate and unrivalled source of disaster. See on Ex. 21:6.

We note that the blood was not to be placed on the threshold, lest it be trodden under foot in disrespect (Heb. 10:29). It clearly looked forward to the blood of the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 1:2). This seems one of many things in the Passover commandments which was relevant only for that first Passover, and was not an abiding part of the later Passover ritual; for the lambs were slain at the sanctuary and the blood put on the altar, not on the individual homes of the Israelites. Thus the command not to allow Gentiles to participate was only for the first Passover, whereas in the later Passover legislation they were allowed to. See on :9,11.

Grandparents would have nervously eyed their firstborn, who would likewise have watched or cuddled their firstborn, summoning all their faith to believe in the power of that blood which they had publicly associated themselves with. Such should be the pattern of our ecclesial life on the eve of the Lord's coming, which was prefigured by Passover night.

Exo 12:8 They shall eat the flesh in that night, roasted with fire, and unleavened bread. They shall eat it with bitter herbs-
The Passover, as the prototype breaking of bread, featured bitter herbs to remind Israel of their bitter experience in Egypt (Ex. 1:14). The breaking of bread should likewise focus our attention on the fact that return to the world is a return to bondage and bitterness, not freedom. Israel didn't learn this lesson, they forgot the bitterness of Egypt, and longed to return to it. The idea was that the sweetness of the lamb's roasted meat was to assuage the bitterness of the herbs; and we see here prefigured the intended effect of the Lord's sacrifice.

Exo 12:9 Don’t eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted with fire; with its head,

its legs and its inner parts-
Israel were told specifically that the Passover lamb must be roasted and not boiled (Ex. 12:9 uses two distinct words for 'boiled' and 'roasted'.). But the word used in Ex. 12:9 for "boiled" is that used in Dt. 16:7 of how the Passover could be boiled, although many Bible versions misleadingly translate the word there as "roast". The translators need not have feared such contradiction. For it is the contradiction of grace. Moses in Dt. 16:2,7 was allowing a less strict observation of the Passover than originally intended, typical of the way Deuteronomy, 'the second law', seems to make concessions to Israel's weaknesses. Or it could be that here we have another example of where the Passover regulations given in Exodus were specific only to that time at the exodus. Thus a foreigner was not allowed to eat of that sacrifice, but foreigners were welcome to eat of the Passover later. See on :7,11.

The prohibition against boiling may have been because of the desire that no bone of the lamb be broken. It was to be roasted on a spit, whereas a lamb would never have fitted into a pot as required for boiling. It would have had to be cut up into parts.

Exo 12:10 You shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire-
There is the possibility of living before God on different levels. Hence nothing was to remain, but God foresaw that some would allow part of the sacrifice to remain. This was a concession to human weakness, and reflects God's awareness of human liability to failure.

Exo 12:11 This is how you shall eat it: with your belt on your waist, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste: it is Yahweh's Passover-
Here we have another example of where the Passover regulations given in Exodus were specific only to that time at the exodus. Thus a foreigner was not allowed to eat of that sacrifice, but foreigners were welcome to eat of the Passover later. See on :7,9.

This captures the spirit of expectancy and readiness to leave at any moment- which we should have, as we, too, await the coming of the angel.

Exo 12:12 For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and animal-
"The angel of death" is an idea picked up by Moses in his account of the Passover deliverance, to show that the Angel of death is not in fact Mot but an Angel of Yahweh, completely under His control. For it was none less than Yahweh Himself who slew the firstborn of Egypt (Ex. 12:11,12). Likewise it was Yahweh's Angel who played the role of the 'Angel of death' in smiting the Assyrian army dead (Is. 37:36).

Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments-
The plagues specifically targetted Egyptian gods: Nile water turned to blood = HAPI – the god of the spirit of the Nile; Frogs = HEKOT – the goddess of magic who had a frog's head; "The dust of the land" turned to lice or gnats (Ex. 8:16) = SEB – god of the dust of the earth; "Swarms of beetles" (Ex. 8:21 Hebrew) = RA and the forerunner of BEELZEBUB were likened to beetles; much pagan Egyptian jewellery features beetles; Murrain of cattle = APIS – the sacred bull god; Boils (Ex. 9:8–9) = NEIT – the queen of the heavens; Thunder and hail = SHU – god of the atmosphere; Darkness = RA – the sun god; Locusts = SERAIJA – protector of Egypt from locusts.

The "gods" are spoken of for a moment as real and existing, in order to show Yahweh's total superiority over them to the point that they didn't exist. Note how it was the Egyptian people who were judged (Gen. 15:14); their idols ("gods") are used by metonymy to stand for those who believed in them. Likewise "demons" is sometimes put by metonymy for those who believed in them (e.g. Mk. 2:32,34). The judgment upon Egypt's gods is brought out by an otherwise obscure reference in Ex. 7:19 to how "there shall be blood in all the land of Egypt on wood and in stone". "Wood and stone" is a term usually used in the Bible for idols; and "the Egyptian priests used to wash the images of their gods in water every day early in the morning". Thus the gods were shown to be effectively dead and bleeding.

I am Yahweh-
Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2; Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God's Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God 'is' not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He 'is' there with and for us. The verb behind 'YHWH' was "originally causative", i.e. God not only 'is' but He causes things to happen. We aren't to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name… but rather passionately active and causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

Exo 12:13 The blood shall be to you for a token on the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and there shall no plague be on you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt-
"Pass over" is literally 'hover over'. The angel of death, "the destroyer", went out to slay all the firstborn. But the Passover Angel hovered over the doors of the Israelites who had daubed blood on their door posts, and stopped the Destroyer from slaying in that house. We see here an example of Angelic cooperation. The slaying of the Egyptians apparently happened in a moment, so this is representing things from a human point of view. We are invited to imagine the Destroyer going from house to house, and the Passover Angel hovering over Israelite houses. But the whole thing happened in a moment of time as we

understand time. The meaning of time was collapsed, just as will happen at the time of the Lord's second coming- which Passover night typified. This collapsing of time would involve the collapsing of space as well, if Einstein indeed got it right about the space-time relationship. This helps us to better cope with the apparent logistic problems which arise when considering the nature of the judgment seat, with millions of people having a personal interview with the Lord Jesus at one place on earth.

"Token" is the word used for the "mark" set upon Cain which preserved him from being slain (Gen. 4:15). The similarity is intended; Israel were being presented as sinful Cain, but they as sinners were being saved by grace.

Exo 12:14 This day shall be to you for a memorial, and you shall keep it a feast to Yahweh: throughout your generations you shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever-
The feasts of Yahweh have now been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. "*Olahm*", "forever", literally means 'to the vanishing point', the point where time can no longer be perceived. Of itself it doesn't mean 'infinity'. Indeed it could be argued that there is no Biblical Hebrew word for literal eternity. And this is why "forever" doesn't have to mean literal eternity, but a period, the end of which isn't in view at the time.

Exo 12:15 'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread; even the first day you shall put away yeast out of your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel-
The leaven or yeast in our context is to be understood as the leaven of malice and wickedness (1 Cor. 5:8). The search for leaven at the time of the Passover would therefore look ahead to our self examination at the breaking of bread.

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly

breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Exo 12:16 In the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation-

This is the first time we read of "convocations". "Convocation" is LXX *ekklesia*. This is the word rendered "church" in the New Testament. We could reason from this therefore that "church" specifically refers to a gathering of God's people. At that time and during those moments, they are a church. When the entire community of believers is referred to as "church", this is how God views them- as if they are all gathered together at a gathering or convocation before Him. The word in its Biblical usage therefore doesn't refer to what we might call a denomination or fellowship.

No kind of work shall be done in them, except that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you-

In the lead up to the feast (cp. our Lord's return), "no manner of work shall be done, save that which ever man must (do to) eat", or "that which every man must necessarily do" (LXX; Ex. 12:16). Thus in our lives now, having food and clothing we should be content, not working any more than necessary, so that "the loins of our mind" will be girded, looking forward to the Passover feast.

Exo 12:17 You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this same day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance forever-

They were to see their own redemption in the historical redemption of Israel. And indeed, David and later believers continually alluded to the Red Sea deliverance, as if it had happened to them personally. And we can likewise. Our membership of the body of believers gives us connection with all other believers, not just those alive today, but also historically.

Exo 12:18 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty first day of the month at evening-

These seven days were to recall the seven days of creation; for the exodus was a new creation of Israel, out of the water of the Red Sea.

Exo 12:19 There shall be no yeast found in your houses for seven days, for whoever eats that which is leavened, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a foreigner, or one who is born in the land-
The run-up to Passover was to feature a business-like searching of the house for leaven, reflecting the close self-examination which we should undertake individually and ecclesially ("your houses") in this prelude to the Passover-coming of our Lord. See on :21,42. The picture of Israel in their family units huddled together around the Lamb, desperately focusing their attention on that saving blood, watching and praying, examining themselves- this is us, right now. For there can be no serious doubt that the second coming is almost upon our generation. The run up to the final tribulation will provoke a "praying always, that ye may be accounted worthy... to stand before the Son of man" (Lk. 21:36).

"Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven...of malice and wickedness" (1 Cor. 5:8). The disciples' question at the first breaking of bread, "Lord, is it I?" is another prototype of the command to examine ourselves at the feast (Mt. 26:22). Combining Paul's command to examine ourselves that we are really focusing upon our Lord's sacrifice, and the Exodus allusion which implies that we should examine our own lives for wickedness, we conclude that if we properly reflect upon Christ and His victory for us, then we will inevitably be aware of our own specific failures which Christ really has vanquished. But this will come as a by-product of truly grasping the fullness of the Lord's victory.

Exo 12:20 You shall eat nothing leavened. In all your habitations you shall eat unleavened bread'-
The prohibition is repeated so often. "Leaven" literally means that which is sour, and is translated "cruel" (Ps. 51:4) and "grievous" (Ps. 73:21). Paul therefore sees leaven as a symbol of malice and wickedness, which we must purge out (1 Cor. 5:8).

Exo 12:21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, Draw out, and take lambs according to your families, and kill the Passover-
The focus of the Passover feast was the lamb, and this should be the centre of our thinking in these last days. Some very intense Hebrew words are used to describe their association of themselves with it: "Draw out (to seize) and take you a lamb... strike ('lay the hand on', a word used about rape) the lintel... with the blood" (Ex. 12:21,22).

Exo 12:22 You shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin,

and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning-
Heb. 10:25 may refer to this; we are not to forsake assembling ourselves together in Christ, on pain of spiritual and eternal death. We note the association of hyssop with the Lord's death on the cross (Jn. 19:29). That hyssop had been dipped in red wine, representing blood, and the Lord surely saw the relevance to Himself. "I am that hyssop", He would have thought. On the cross, He was the door (Jn. 10:9), and He experienced hyssop with red wine (representing blood) brushed against Him. Just as the doors at Passover had blood brushed onto them using a hyssop plant, and this was the basis of Israel's salvation.

Exo 12:23 For Yahweh will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel, and on the two doorposts, Yahweh will pass over the door, and will not allow the Destroyer to come in to your houses to strike you-
The Passover Angel would "pass (hover) over the door and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you". 'The destroyer' refers to an Angel- Ps. 78 speaks of the "Angels of evil" who brought the plagues, and as the plague of the firstborn was one of them, it follows that this too must have been brought about by an Angel. The same Angel i referred to in Jer. 51:1- the “destroying spirit” [“wind”, AV] who was sent forth by God to smite Babylon; note how Revelation also describes Babylon as being destroyed by a singular Angel. In another Angelic context we read: “O Lord my Lord; will you be the destroyer of the remnant of Israel?” (Ez. 9:8 Heb.). “Let the Angel of the Lord persecute them” (Ps. 35:5,6) has the same Angel in mind. The destroyer Angel is perhaps alluded to in Job 18:13: “The firstborn of death”. Job 33:23 LXX certainly is relevant: “Though there should be one thousand Angels of death…”. This same 'destroyer' Angel is referred to again in the context of being present with Israel to punish them if they disobeyed in 1 Cor. 10:10 -"they were destroyed of the destroyer". So we have here on this first Passover night the situation where one Angel is commissioned to do a certain task- in this case kill all firstborn in Egypt- and goes ahead with this task blind to any other consideration, e. g. whether the people concerned were obedient Israelites or not. Therefore another Angel was needed, presumably more powerful or senior to the 'destroyer', to stop the faithful Israelites being killed. Of course God could have given the 'destroyer' additional instructions about not killing the Jews; but it seems to be God's way of working both amongst us and among the Angels to assign each a specific role in the execution of His purpose, and to take pleasure in seeing each Angel or saint working in loving co-operation with another, after the pattern of the Angelic co-operation. Ez. 20:8-14 talks more about this destroyer Angel: "Neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out My fury upon them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. But I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted among the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I

made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes. . My Sabbaths. . the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. . but I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted" . The destroyer Angel went out through the midst of the land of Egypt to kill the firstborn. He wanted to kill the Jews too because they were not forsaking the idols of Egypt- i. e. they were preparing to take them out of Egypt with them (Ex. 13:17 and Acts 7:43 lend support here). "I"- God manifest now in the Passover Angel- "wrought for My name's sake" (v. 9) against the Destroyer that this should not be done. He remembered how He had "made myself known unto them" in the burning bush, by saying there "I am the Lord your God "(v. 5). "Mine eye (the Passover Angel) spared them from destroying them ",v. 17; i. e. from the work of the Destroyer Angel, both in Egypt at the night of Passover and also in the wilderness. Notice how God is spoken of as both wanting to destroy them and also striving for His Name's sake (born by the Angels) so this should not happen. It seems sensible to interpret this by reference to the two powerful Angels active at this time, perhaps representing the groups of Angels of good and Angels of evil (i. e. disaster bringing) which appear to be in Heaven.

Exo 12:24 You shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever-
There is such repeated emphasis upon the need to celebrate this redemption. Salvation was achieved for us in the death of the Lord Jesus on both a collective and personal level. Our personal salvation is on account of our participation in the collective redemption of God's children which He achieved on the cross.

Exo 12:25 It shall happen when you have come to the land which Yahweh will give you, according as he has promised, that you shall keep this service-
It could be that the "you" refers to the people of God in a collective sense. But the more comfortable application is to that generation to whom Moses was then speaking. This promise of entering the land was solemnly made, with uplifted hand as it were, to that generation who left Egypt (Ex. 6:8; Num. 14:30). But they did not enter the land, as Num. 14:30 makes clear. This was because Israel broke their side of the covenant, and did not in fact want to enter the land; and continued serving the idols of Egypt, which they took with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8; Acts 7:43). But that promise was guaranteed by the fact that "I will bring you into the land… I am Yahweh" (Ex. 6:8). The very essence of Yahweh, that 'I will' save, as surely as 'I will be who I will be', a saviour God, was fought against by Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to the covenant. And because 'Yahweh' involves His character, which includes His judgment of sin and not turning a blind eye to it (Ex. 34:4-6), human intransigence and faithlessness was allowed to as it were even counteract His most essential 'being' a saviour God for His beloved people. But that salvation was recalculated and reinterpreted with reference to another generation, and to the people of God generally rather than to the initially intended audience.

Exo 12:26 It will happen, when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this service?'-

A striking difference between the Pentateuch and other contemporary legal codes is that those codes are straight codices of statutes; whereas God's law isn't like that. It is commandment interspersed between historical documents and incidents. We read of some incident in the wilderness journey, then we have some commandments recounted, then another incident, some more commandments, etc. This surely reflects how God intended obedience to His law to not be a legalistic exercise- it was a code for real human life, which should affect the very spirit of human existence in a way which no dry legal code really could. It was to set a rhythm of life, revealing how that law was "for our good always, that God might preserve us" (Dt. 6:24)- the person who obeyed the law was to live in it (Hab. 2:4 etc.). The motive for obedience to the law was not so that God might give them salvation or status as His people- it was precisely because He had done that, by grace, that they were to respond in obedience (Ex. 12:26; 13:8,14; Dt. 6:20).

Exo 12:27 that you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of Yahweh's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians, and spared our houses'. The people bowed their heads and worshiped-

The land was 'smitten' in Ex. 8:2 as a foretaste of the 'striking / smiting' of the Egyptian firstborn (Ex. 12:23,27 s.w.). It was an appeal for Pharaoh's repentance, in the hope that the final smiting of the firstborn would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save Pharaoh, but he would not. God "delivered" or "spared" (s.w.) His people from Egypt and Pharaoh, just as He delivered Moses personally from the sword of Pharaoh (Ex. 18:4,8 s.w.). Moses was the representative of his people, they were saved "in" him, and baptized into him (1 Cor. 10:1,2). They were apostate idolaters (Ez. 20:8), and were in a way only saved "in" Moses, just as we are saved "in Christ". They were "spared" or delivered not only from Egypt, but also from the wrath of God which was upon them (Ez. 20:8).

Exo 12:28 The children of Israel went and did so; as Yahweh had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did-

Their obedience is presented as total, but I will suggest on :37 that they were not all obedient, and many Israelite firstborn died that night. The prophets will later lament that Israel were disobedient to Yahweh from Egypt onwards. But He had decided to save them by grace, and so their limited obedience is counted as total.

Exo 12:29 It happened at midnight, that Yahweh struck all the firstborn in the land of

Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of livestock-
We note that Egypt had a system of prisons and dungeons, as we know from the story of Joseph. This begs the question as to why Moses was not slain or imprisoned by Pharaoh- for that would have been the logical way to stop this troublesome man from bringing plagues upon Egypt. The answer seems to be that Pharaoh had a conscience, and he feared to lay hands on Moses. His failure to follow that strong conscience was therefore the more culpable and tragic.

Moses was the foremost intercessor for Israel, and is actually called 'the Paraclete' in the Midrash here on Ex. 12:29.

Exo 12:30 Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead-
This "great cry" is described with the same phrase used in Gen. 27:34, when Esau cries with a great cry- realizing that he had been rejected from God's purpose and that could not now be put right. Whilst the great cry was indeed because of their loss, the connection with Esau is to make the point that despite all God's efforts, they had turned down His invitation to have a part in His purpose- and realized that all too late.

There may have been some literal houses where there were no firstborns present. So I suggest that "house" here refers to a family unity rather than houses as in buildings.

Exo 12:31 He called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel; and go, serve Yahweh, as you have said!-
At the point of Ex. 10:29 Moses had told Pharaoh that "I will see your face again no more". So perhaps they didn't attend this meeting. Or perhaps we are to read Ex. 10:29 as meaning that Moses would not again appear before God's face again in intercession for Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Pharaoh and Egypt were now beyond Moses' intercession and prayer.

Exo 12:32 Take both your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also!-
Earlier, Pharaoh had failed to totally capitulate to Yahweh. He had tried to reach a negotiated settlement, whereby their animals would remain behind. This was especially significant because the Egyptian livestock had been destroyed by the plagues. Now he appears to totally capitulate, and asks for Moses to also "bless" him, a term which can imply forgiveness. Again we note that he doesn't pray himself to Yahweh, but asks Moses to do so for him. And again we see that his repentance may have been absolutely

sincere at that point in time; but true repentance is not the emotion or passion of a moment, but an abiding way of thought and action. And he failed to retain that, thus becoming a warning to all who experience 'repentance' as a passing experience.

Exo 12:33 The Egyptians were urgent with the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, We are all dead men-
They feared that the death of the firstborn was but a prelude to mass slaughter, just as they now perceived that the plagues had been progressively demanding upon them. They feared the next step. We know that there were only ten plagues, but they didn't have our perspective. For all they knew, there could be more coming. Eventually, man is brought to conformity with God's demands- they urged the people to leave immediately, having tried to stop them doing so before. But the lesson is to willingly submit to God's ways, rather than having to be forced to through the process of judgment and condemnation.

Exo 12:34 The people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes on their shoulders-
We wonder as to the extent to which the Israelites knew the game plan. Because although they were expecting to leave Egypt, we have the impression of a haste which reflects surprise at the speed of the whole turn of events. This exactly prefigures our position at the Lord's coming, which Passover night typified. They had been commanded to keep seven days of unleavened bread after the night of the 14th Abib. But we get the impression that they were not intending to be obedient to that. They were forced to be obedient to it by circumstance- they grabbed the dough before they had a chance to leaven it, because the Egyptians were almost literally pushing them out of the country. It could be argued that "troughs" were only required if they had the intention of making leavened bread. Unleavened flat bread would not have required them. Thus :39 emphasizes that they only ate unleavened bread because they didn't have time to bake leavened bread. The salvation of this disobedient people was indeed by grace alone, as is ours.

Exo 12:35 The children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and clothing-
The same phrase "of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass" is used of the vessels taken from the Gentile world and dedicated to the tabernacle (Ex. 11:2; 12:35; Josh. 6:19; 2 Sam. 8:10; 1 Kings 7:51). The generosity of others in Biblical history, their right perspective on the wealth taken from this world, was to inspire other believers in later history. And this is how the body of Christ should function today, with members inspiring others to spirituality.

Ezra 6:4 records how God moved the local authorities to pronounce that the residents around the returning exiles should give them silver, gold and goods. This was an exact re-living of how Israel left Egypt with Egypt's gold and silver (Ex. 12:35). Yet most of the Jews didn't want to return, they didn't want to live out the type.

Exo 12:36 Yahweh gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked-
There are examples galore of God acting on the minds of men to give them a certain attitude which they would not otherwise have had (consider how He gave Saul another heart, or gave Israel favour in the eyes of the Egyptians so that they lent to them, Ex. 12:36). This is the work of the Holy Spirit directly upon human hearts, to this day.

They despoiled the Egyptians-
"Despoiled" is the same word commonly used for God's sparing or delivering His people from the Egyptians (s.w. :27). It is an unusual word choice if the idea was solely "despoiled". The hint may be that Israel delivered the Egyptians, in that we are now going to read that some Egyptians left Egypt along with them (:38).

Exo 12:37 The children of Israel travelled from Raamses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot who were men, besides children-
The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did all Israel eat the Passover? Were many in fact slain. My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, “the Destroyer” Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). “The Destroyer” is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer” (*olothreutes;* this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the ‘Destroyer’ Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of “He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. *olothreuo*) the firstborn”.

The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1

would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Ex. 13:18 seems to say they marched five abreast. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night. This would then make better sense of Ex. 23:30 GNB: "I will drive them out little by little, until there are enough of you to take possession of the land". This indeed sounds as if Israel were the smallest of the nations, and not a huge nation comprising several million people.

Exo 12:38 A mixed multitude went up also with them, with flocks, herds, and even very much livestock-

The Hebrew text says that "a great mixture" of people "went up also" with Israel out of Egypt. There can be no doubt that this refers to the many references in the promises that the seed would come to include such a "mixed multitude" (Gen. 17:6; 22:17; 26:4; 28:3,14; 35:11), thereby showing that by reason of leaving Egypt and passing through the Red Sea these Gentiles became part of the seed (cp. 1 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 3:27-29). But the supreme fulfilment of these promises will be after the 'Red Sea' of the last days. We note that this "mixed multitude" had many animals. This means they had been obedient to the call to bring their animals into shelter during the plague of hail.

Exo 12:39 They baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought out of Egypt; for it wasn't leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt, and couldn't wait, neither had they prepared for themselves any food-
As explained on :34, this emphasizes that they only ate unleavened bread because they didn't have time to bake leavened bread- not because they were obedient to the command just given to eat unleavened bread for seven days after Passover night. The salvation of this disobedient people was indeed by grace alone, as is ours.

Apart from the jewellery taken from the Egyptians for the construction of the tabernacle, the total unmaterialism of Israel on Passover night is something to be marvelled at. They only had the clothes they wore, and just the one pair of shoes. This is confirmed by the reminder that these things were miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness journey (Dt. 8:4). It is also highlighted that they had no food when they left - they just grabbed some dough which later they baked into "unleavened cakes" (Ex. 12:34,39). Our Lord's perceptive mind picked out the picture of Israel as they were then, as an illustration of how his disciples should be on their preaching mission. "He called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth... and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats". All this is couched in the language of Israel on Passover night. His next words for them appear to be stating the obvious, unless they allude to Israel remaining at whatever place they reached until the fire and cloud moved them on: "In what place soever ye enter... there abide till ye depart from that place" (Mk. 6:8-10). It must be remembered that God intended Israel to be a missionary nation, teaching the surrounding world of His ways by their example of obedience to His law. As Israel left Egypt with the gold and jewels of Egypt, so, Jesus implied, the disciples were to carry the precious things of the Gospel.

The meaning of this in the typology of the Passover is twofold: firstly, it teaches that one way of being properly prepared for the second coming after the pattern of Israel that night, is to live a life committed to preaching; this will keep the loins of our minds girded, ever looking for the Lord's return which we preach, and often depriving us of the temptations of materialism. And, secondly, those of the new Israel who are found ready at the angel's coming will be prepared and eager to start on the greatest missionary campaign of all, in the establishment of the Kingdom.

Exo 12:40 Now the time that the children of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred thirty years-
Paul, under Divine inspiration, measures this period from the time of the promises given to Abraham in Canaan (Gal. 3:17). The LXX and the Samaritan Pentateuch here read "in Egypt and in the land of Canaan". And this reading of the text is clearly confirmed by the New Testament quotation and interpretation. Again we have an example of where the

LXX is quoted in the New Testament in preference to the Masoretic Text. It is noteworthy however that the 430 years appears split into two groups of 215 years. From Abraham's entry into Canaan to the birth of Isaac was 25 years (Gen. 12:4; 17:1-21; Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 (Gen. 25:26); and Jacob was 130 when he entered Egypt (Gen. 47:9), totalling 215 years. This would then require that the Israelites were in Egypt for 215 years. This would be corroborated by Ex. 13:18 LXX "and in the fifth generation the children of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt".

Exo 12:41 It happened at the end of four hundred thirty years, even the same day it happened, that all the armies of Yahweh went out from the land of Egypt-
"All the hosts (Angels) of the Lord went out (with Israel) from the land of Egypt". See on Lk. 15:6; Ex. 7:4. The 400 years of Gen. 15:13 speak of Israel being foreigners in a land not theirs; and this would refer to their time in both Canaan and Egypt, seeing that Canaan was not fully given to them until the conquest. See on :40.

Exo 12:42 It is a night to be much observed to Yahweh for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. This is that night of Yahweh, to be much observed of all the children of Israel throughout their generations-
Because God preserved [s.w. "observed"] His people, they were to observe the Passover feast. We see here the mutuality encouraged between God and His children.

Not surprisingly, in the light of what was noted on :19,21, Passover night was to be "a night of watching" (Ex. 12:42 RV mg.), strongly suggesting "watching in prayer" (Eph. 6:18; 1 Pet. 4:7; 2 Cor. 11:27?). Similarly those who are found "watching" at the Lord's midnight coming (cp. that of the Passover angel) will be found acceptable (Lk. 12:37).

Israel both kept Passover and went through the Red Sea at night. Indeed, it is stressed six times in Ex. 12 that it was "night", and hence Dt. 16:1 reminds them to carefully keep the Passover (i.e. at night), "for... thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night". Other latter day prophecies speak of the events of the second coming being at "night" : Lot left Sodom in the very early hours of the morning; and it was "at midnight (that) there was a cry made" informing the virgins of their Lord's return (Mt. 25:6).

Lk. 12:35-39 speaks of the Master coming at night and then sharing the Passover meal with those who are "watching". Israel were told to 'watch' throughout that first Passover night (Ex. 12:42 RV mg.), eating the meal with loins girded. Our Lord matches this with "let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning", referring to the virgins parable. Israel eating that meal together, huddled around the slain lamb, the oil burning lamps revealing their tense faces, is therefore a picture of what the new Israel should be like just prior to their deliverance.

Exo 12:43 Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover. No foreigner shall eat of it-

I explain on :48 that these commands were specifically for the first Passover; and I have noted earlier in this chapter various other features of the commands which were only relevant to the first Passover. Eating in haste with belts on, ready to leave Egypt, was clearly only relevant to them then. Likewise the daubing of blood on lintels was replaced by offering the Passover lambs at the sanctuary and daubing the blood on the altar there.

Exo 12:44 but every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then shall he eat of it-

I have argued on :43,48 that these commands were specifically for the first Passover. The idea may be that those Egyptian members of Israelite households were to be circumcised on the 10th of Abib, and then they could eat the Passover, and would have recovered after three days in time to leave Egypt.

Exo 12:45 A foreigner and a hired servant shall not eat of it-

Num. 9:14 is clear that later, these people could do so if they wished. But they were not allowed to at the time of the first Passover, because God was making a very clear distinction between Israel and Egypt; and He wanted the Egyptians to accept covenant relationship with Him and be circumcised.

Exo 12:46 In one house shall it be eaten; you shall not carry out anything of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall you break a bone of it-

As noted on :43,48, this was specific to the first Passover. For in future, the Passover was to be sacrificed at the sanctuary, and not kept in individual houses. The Israelites were "delivered", but the same word is translated "spared" in :27, when we read of how practically this was articulated- the houses of Israel were spared / delivered. Salvation depended upon being in "the house" of Israel. The efficacy of the sacrificed lamb was predicated upon being located within the house of Israel. Eating it outside of those houses was not going to be effective. The Egyptians had to humble themselves and come within the houses of Israel. Likewise there must be some level of identity with the people of God, otherwise the slain lamb, the Lord Jesus, will not save isolated individuals who refuse to take that step of identity.

Jn. 19:36 stresses that not a bone of the Lord Jesus was broken when He was crucified. We are the Lord's body, of His flesh and bones (Eph. 5:30). Crucifixion was designed to torture the bones; and yet none was broken. We suffer in Him, but shall not be finally broken. As the Passover lambs were being killed, the Lord died; and it was critical that

not a bone of the Passover lambs be broken (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12). John seems so keen to point out that the Lord died as the Passover lamb, and Paul perceives this when stating that He is "our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7). For no bone of the Lord to be broken, the nails driven through His hands [the Greek can refer to the arms or wrists too] would not have been large, and would probably have been driven through the 'Destot gap', the set of nerves in between the large wrist bones. The pain would have been intense at that point. The rough hammering of the nails through that point would have paid no attention to detail; but those hammer blows were Divinely guided so that no bone broke. And this would have been even more amazingly guided for the nails driven through the feet not to break a bone. It was only by the Lord refusing to relieve the pain by pushing down on the sedile that He avoided breaking any bones.

Exo 12:47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it-
Personal engagement with the slain lamb was absolutely required. It was no good thinking that 'I am an Israelite, so I shall be saved', or 'My family are keeping it in the house next door, I shall therefore be saved'. And here we see a challenge to all who [however subconsciously] consider that a vague association with Christian culture will save them.

Exo 12:48 When a stranger shall live as a foreigner with you, and will keep the Passover to Yahweh, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one who is born in the land: but no uncircumcised person shall eat of it-
See on :43. It has been argued that the breaking of bread is the equivalent of the Jewish Passover, and Ex. 12:48 says that only the circumcised could eat of it. Here are a few comments:
- Whatever interpretation we wish to place upon Ex. 12:48, we have to reconcile it with the above evidence for the openness of the Lord Jesus with regard to His table fellowship, using it to bring people to Him, rather than as a test of fellowship or intellectual / moral purity of understanding or living.
- Peter ate with the uncircumcised- and got into trouble with the Judaist brethren exactly because the Law had forbidden the uncircumcised from eating the first Passover (Acts 11:3). The Jews had put a [very large!] hedge around this law by forbidding Jews from eating with Gentiles period. Yet Peter was taught that this was wrong- and he ate with Gentiles, it seems even before they were baptized. But the point is, he had been taught by the vision that all the old Mosaic category distinctions of clean / unclean, circumcised / uncircumcised, had now been ended. It seems this was as large a challenge to the church in the 1st century as it is today.
- Although the Passover and memorial meeting are related, the relation is at times by way of contrast rather than only similarity; e.g. in the first Passover, the families were to

provide a lamb; whereas in the antitype, the Lord Jesus is the lamb of Divine and not human provision. The Paschal lamb of God takes away the whole world's sin, rather than just providing blood for the temporal redemption of Israel's firstborn, etc.
- Circumcision under the new covenant doesn't refer to anything outward, visibly verifiable. For now "he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. 2:29)- seeing we can't judge the secret things of others' hearts, how can we tell who is circumcised in heart or not? The 'sealing' of God's people today, the proof that they are the Lord's (2 Tim. 2:19), is not anything external, but the internal matter of being sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), or being sealed with a mark in the mind / forehead, as Revelation puts it (Rev. 7:3; 9:4).
- The Gentiles in Israel, circumcised or not, could keep the feast of unleavened bread (Ex. 12:17-20) which was related to the Passover.
- If Ex. 12:48 is read on a literalistic level, i.e. that only the circumcised could eat the Passover, this would surely mean that no female could eat it? Yet this was not the case.
- It's Num. 9:14 which speaks in more general terms of whether or not a Gentile could partake of the Passover- and here it's made clear that yes he/she could, and no mention is made of being circumcised: "And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the Passover unto the Lord; according to the statute of the Passover, and according to the ordinance thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one statute, both for the stranger, and for him that is born in the land".
- Commands that were intended for subsequent generations often include the kind of rubric we meet in Ex. 12:14,17: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord: throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever... therefore shall ye observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever". But we don't meet that 'throughout your generations' with regard to the uncircumcised men not being allowed to eat it.
- Israel were told specifically that the Passover lamb must be roasted and not boiled (Ex. 12:9 uses two distinct words for 'boiled' and 'roasted'.). But the word used in Ex. 12:9 for "boiled" is that used in Dt. 16:7 of how the Passover could be boiled, although many Bible versions misleadingly translate the word there as "roast". The translators need not have feared such contradiction. For it is the contradiction of grace. Here we have another example of where the Passover regulations given in Exodus were specific only to that time at the exodus. Thus a foreigner was not allowed to eat of that sacrifice, but foreigners were welcome to eat of the Passover later.
- So my suggestion is that the command of Ex. 12:48 that no uncircumcised could eat of the Passover, and that the Gentiles amongst the people should be circumcised if they wanted to eat it, was specific to that first Passover. As Israel and the mixed multitude that went with them sat in Egypt under threat of losing their firstborn sons, they could find salvation by keeping the Passover and entering into covenant with God through circumcision. Both Jewish tradition and the implication of Moses not circumcising his sons is that the Jews in Egypt weren't circumcised; yet "all the people that came out

were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised" (Josh. 5:5). Implication would be that many were circumcised in order to keep the first Passover according to the command given them in Ex. 12. We could therefore take Ex. 12:48 as a specific command for those who kept the first Passover to be circumcised, rather than an ongoing principle. The Jewish sage Maimonides (*A Guide For The Perplexed* Vol. 3 ch. 46) explains: "The reason of the prohibition that the uncircumcised should not eat of it (Exod. xii. 48) is explained by our Sages as follows: The Israelites neglected circumcision during their long stay in Egypt".

- This approach would explain why Num. 9:14 doesn't demand that Gentiles be circumcised to keep future Passovers; why there's no comment that the exclusion of the uncircumcised should be kept "throughout your generations"; and why Ex. 12:50 speaks as if Israel fully obeyed the command about circumcision and Passover eating in a once-off sense when they kept that first Passover. And of course this is the reason for many branches of Judaism welcoming uncircumcised Gentiles to the Passover celebration- for they don't understand Ex. 12:48 to preclude it, but rather Num. 9:14 encourages it.
- This approach also helps answer a difficult question: Why was the lamb or kid kept for four days (Ex. 12:2,6)? If the effects of circumcision take three days to wear off (Gen. 34:25), it could be that the uncircumcised males were intended to circumcise themselves, chose the lamb, and then keep the Passover four days later. Some Jewish commentators claim that God fell in love with Israel whilst she was still in her blood (Ez. 16:6) in that some Jews circumcised themselves at the time of the first Passover- hence one Rabbi speaks of the blood of circumcision and the blood of the first Passover running together.

Exo 12:49 One law shall be to him who is born at home, and to the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you-

There were Egyptians who lived amongst the Israelites, for they borrowed jewels from their Egyptian neighbours. But such material generosity was not going to save them. They too must follow the "law" of the lamb, Yahweh's law, and identify with the lamb.

Exo 12:50 All the children of Israel did so. As Yahweh commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did-

Their obedience is presented as total, but I suggested on :37 that they were not all obedient, and many Israelite firstborn died that night. The prophets will later lament that Israel were disobedient to Yahweh from Egypt onwards. But He had decided to save them by grace, and so their limited obedience is counted as total.

Exo 12:51 It happened the same day, that Yahweh brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies-
God did this. But Ez. 20:8 and Acts 7:43 imply that they carried the Egyptian idols with them through the Red Sea. Indeed, Ez. 20:16,18 state that God gave Israel in the wilderness His statutes and judgments, but they actually lived according to their own statutes and judgments; and therefore He appealed to the younger generation not to walk in the statutes and judgments of their parents, but in those which He had given them. But "the children rebelled against me; they walked not in my statutes, neither kept mine ordinances to do them, which if a man do, he shall live in them; they profaned my Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness" (Ez. 20:21). Even in the wilderness, Israel didn't keep the Sabbaths, and the younger generation refused God's laws. Although unrecorded in the Pentateuch, Ez. 20:8,23,24 describes a threat from God to Israel, whilst they were still in the wilderness, that He would scatter them among the nations. Yet this drastic appeal went unheeded, because "their eyes were after their father's idols". They were so obsessed with the idols worshipped by their parents' generation- the generation who left Egypt. Yet for all this, God did " not behold iniquity in Jacob" (Num. 23:21,22), such was the righteousness imputed to them. And yet that generation were indeed types of us.

EXODUS CHAPTER 13

Exo 13:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
It seems this legislation about the firstborn was given the same day they left Egypt (:3,4).

Exo 13:2 Sanctify to me all of the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of animal. It is mine-
The Levites had not yet been chosen as the priestly tribe. Perhaps it was God's initial intention that all the firstborn should be sanctified to His service, from whatever tribe. But this plan didn't work, and so He called one tribe to be His sanctified priests. And they also didn't really do their ministry, and so under the new covenant, all are priests.

The idea that we are God's, we "the church of firstborns" (Heb. 12:23) are His, answers man's existential fear of loneliness, his desire to belong, to be in a family, to belong to another. For "they are mine" and finally in the Kingdom as Malachi puts it, "they shall be mine". Man is not alone. We are God's. We belong. Our need to belong is ultimately met. This is part of the sex drive within man. It is why refugee families are desperate not to be divided. The childhood desire to have something "of my very own" remains for a lifetime. My room, my flat, my house, my section,

my area, however small; my career, my job. And yet the human structures for belonging go wrong. Families break up, people die. Things go wrong. What you once knew as yours, as you, disintegrates and goes bad. Only in "you are Mine" is there the answer. Our need both to own "of our very own" [stronger when we are younger], and yet also to belong to another [stronger as we get older], are met only in becoming "the very own" of God.

The command to sanctify the firstborn was given to all Israel. They were to sanctify or set apart their firstborns unto God. The firstborns were the priests. But they failed to remember their great salvation on passover night, the blood of the lamb failed to imprint deeply upon them. For at the time of the golden calf, they led the desire to return to Egypt. And so they were replaced by the tribe of Levi as priests. This is why "Lest we forget" is so important for us. It's why we have the breaking of bread service. It's why we must remind ourselves of the blood of the lamb and our redemption. For as all Israel were the firstborn ["Israel is My firstborn"], so we are the church of firstborns.

Exo 13:3 Moses said to the people, Remember this day, in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand Yahweh brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten-
The 'remembrance' was to be of the power of Yahweh's grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there (Ez. 20:7,8 "I said to them, Throw away every man the abominations of his eyes, and don't defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God.
But they rebelled against Me, and would not listen to Me; they didn't throw away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt... So I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt"), were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Exo 13:4 This day you go out in the month Abib-
"Abib" is a young ear of green corn. The idea was that there was hope now of spiritual fruit to be brought forth.

Exo 13:5 It shall be, when Yahweh shall bring you into the land of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, which he swore to your fathers to give you-
This land inhabited by those tribes was significantly smaller than the territory sworn to the fathers, which was from Egypt to the Euphrates. It seems God had recalculated the

extent of the inheritance, or at least realized that they needed a more limited objective to achieve first. He is so sensitive to our weaknesses.

A land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month-
The promised land was to flow with milk and honey to those who kept covenant. And yet Saul later precluded the people from experiencing the blessings of the covenant by petty legalism and a desire for personal control. The people were obedient to his word, but then totally disobeyed Yahweh's command about not eating blood as a result of it (1 Sam. 14:25,33).

Exo 13:6 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to Yahweh-
This refers to the feast of unleavened bread, which was not the same as the feast of the Passover, which was seven days earlier. These seven days were to recall the seven days of creation; for the exodus was a new creation of Israel, out of the water of the Red Sea.

Exo 13:7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and no leavened bread shall be seen with you, neither shall yeast be seen with you, in all your borders-
Their "borders" aren't defined, but the idea was that their houses in Egypt were to become as the entire territory they then controlled- be it their individual land inheritances, or the entire land.

Exo 13:8 You shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'It is because of that which Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt'-
The Hebrew understanding of hope and memory is such that past events can be presented again through rituals like the Passover in a very palpable manner; and "This is my body... this is my blood" is a classic example. Paul's language of "showing the Lord's death" at the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 11:26) is rooted in the Passover being a 'showing' of what God had done in the death of the Paschal lamb (Ex. 13:8 Heb.). The breaking of bread is therefore a calling to an acting out, just as the Passover was.

The Passover meal was in order to remember the great salvation which God had wrought for all Israel at the Red Sea. Egypt, representing the power of sin, was gloriously vanquished there. Yet the faithful Israelite of all ages was to also proclaim that "This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:8). Our memorial meeting has this same two fold structure; remembering the deliverance which God wrought for us personally, as well as for the whole community of the redeemed. This is why at the breaking of bread there ought to be an awareness of personal fellowship with God, and also with each other, and with those who have gone before.

A striking difference between the Pentateuch and other contemporary legal codes is that those codes are straight codices of statutes; whereas God's law isn't like that. It is commandment interspersed between historical documents and incidents. We read of some incident in the wilderness journey, then we have some commandments recounted, then another incident, some more commandments, etc. This surely reflects how God intended obedience to His law to not be a legalistic exercise- it was a code for real human life, which should affect the very spirit of human existence in a way which no dry legal code really could. It was to set a rhythm of life, revealing how that law was "for our good always, that God might preserve us" (Dt. 6:24)- the person who obeyed the law was to live in it (Hab. 2:4 etc.). The motive for obedience to the law was not so that God might give them salvation or status as His people- it was precisely because He had done that, by grace, that they were to respond in obedience (Ex. 12:26; 13:8,14; Dt. 6:20).

Exo 13:9 It shall be for a sign to you on your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes, that the law of Yahweh may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand Yahweh has brought you out of Egypt-

The only two sacraments which we have- baptism and the breaking of bread- are related, in that both show in physical symbolism our association with and blessing from the Lord's sacrifice. The breaking of bread is in a sense an ongoing reminder of the same principles which we showed at our baptism. Likewise the Jewish Passover (cp. our breaking of bread) was in order to bring to mind the deliverance achieved at their national baptism. They were even to wear a sign on their hand and between their eyes that reminded them of the exodus (Ex. 13:9); all their thinking and doing was to be overshadowed by the awareness of the fact that they had been redeemed that day. It seems they never did this, although the idea may be that there to remember their redemption as if it were a seal on their hand and between their eyes. If we do feel that we have fallen so deeply into the rut of semi-spirituality that we can't crawl out, then think back to your baptism, or to the days when you first read Christian literature, bought a Bible, started praying...

"Sign" is s.w. "token" in Ex. 12:13, "the blood shall be for a token". Just as the blood was put on the lintel and doorposts, so Israel were to as it were have that blood on their hands and between their eyes always. Their vision, their worldview, all that they did with their hands, was to be influenced by the blood of the lamb. Smearing the blood on doorposts was part of the original Passover which was not repeated in the subsequent legislation about the feast of Passover; instead, it was to be as a token permanently on every Israelite. The pagans wore tokens of their gods on their hands and between their eyes; God's people were to instead have their mental awareness of the lamb's blood as the equivalent. All this speaks of the huge awareness we should have of the implication of the Lord's blood and the great

salvation achieved. Not just when as it were we keep Passover at the communion meal, but in life lived with a worldview affected by it.

Exo 13:10 You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year-
The reference is specifically to the feast of unleavened bread, not Passover.

Exo 13:11 It shall be, when Yahweh shall bring you into the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and shall give it you-
It could be that the "you" refers to the people of God in a collective sense. But the more comfortable application is to that generation to whom Moses was then speaking. This promise of entering the land was solemnly made, with uplifted hand as it were, to that generation who left Egypt (Ex. 6:8; Num. 14:30). But they did not enter the land, as Num. 14:30 makes clear. This was because Israel broke their side of the covenant, and did not in fact want to enter the land; and continued serving the idols of Egypt, which they took with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8; Acts 7:43). But that promise was guaranteed by the fact that "I will bring you into the land... I am Yahweh" (Ex. 6:8). The very essence of Yahweh, that 'I will' save, as surely as 'I will be who I will be', a saviour God, was fought against by Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to the covenant. And because 'Yahweh' involves His character, which includes His judgment of sin and not turning a blind eye to it (Ex. 34:4-6), human intransigence and faithlessness was allowed to as it were even counteract His most essential 'being' a saviour God for His beloved people. But that salvation was recalculated and reinterpreted with reference to another generation, and to the people of God generally rather than to the initially intended audience.

God swore / lifted His hand to Heaven as He had no greater to swear by. He swore to their fathers, :5, but also "to you". Likewise the Passover deliverance was done "to me". There is a strong sense that all these things were done to each individual in history, just as baptism makes the promises to Abraham personal to each of us. Hence "He will give it thee", you singular.

Exo 13:12 that you shall set apart to Yahweh all that opens the womb, and every firstborn which you have that comes from an animal. The males shall be Yahweh's-
I suggested on :2 that it was God's initial intention that all the firstborn should be sanctified to His service, from whatever tribe. And the sacrificial animals would be provided by the firstborn of every animal. But this plan didn't work, and so He called one tribe to be His sanctified priests, and all Israel were to provide animals for sacrifice. And they also didn't really do their ministry, and so under the new covenant, all are priests. We marvel at how God continually seeks to forge ahead with His plans for relationship with man.

Exo 13:13 Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not

redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and you shall redeem all the firstborn of man among your sons-

The redemption of unclean devoted animals was to be at the basis of the animals value plus one fifth (Lev. 27:27). But the firstborn of donkeys were to be redeemed with a lamb, and a lamb would have been of less value than a newborn donkey. The firstborn of the donkey was to be redeemed by a lamb (Ex. 13:13) as a ritual reminder of the power of the Passover lamb's redemption. The value of its blood was far greater than its commercial value. And this was to point forward to the value of the blood of the Lord Jesus, far more precious than of any gold or silver (1 Pet. 1:18). The donkey was the most common domestic animal, and it was an unclean animal. It was therefore representative of common people, in their unclean state. Firstborn donkeys were to be redeemed because they were to be understood as representative of God's people, redeemed by the Passover lamb.

Donkeys were unclean animals. The firstborn of their flocks would have been clean animals as they were only to keep clean animals. The donkey was the one unclean animal whose firstborn was to be redeemed and given to God. Ez. 23:20 uses the donkey as a symbol of Egypt. Perhaps this was for all time to reflect and remind Israel of God's desire to save Egypt. We recall His huge efforts to save Pharaoh.

Exo 13:14 It shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall tell him, 'By strength of hand Yahweh brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage-

The son was to be taught that 'we' were delivered from Egypt. What had been done in history had been done to all within the body of God's people. David and the writers of the Psalms and restoration prophets clearly grasped this, as they constantly glory in what God had done for them and "us" at the Red Sea. The Biblical approach to history is unique. God's word is seen as a living word, and all His previous acts of salvation are to be felt as experienced by us. In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. For "all live unto Him"(Lk. 20:38), those now dead people who experienced Divine salvation are alive in God's mind [although not personally conscious]. We therefore live out our lives as it were on a stage, before the great crowd of witnesses of God's people over history (Heb. 12:1). It requires us to see ourselves as part of a far greater whole, the Israel of God, and not individuals isolated at a point of time. Salvation has both a collective and an individual dimension. Our individual salvation is predicated upon our choice to identify with the collective salvation of God's people which began with God's grace to Adam in Eden. Just as the sin of Adam and Eve is that of everyman, in that in

essence we repeat it in our own failings; so the plan of salvation which began there can be accepted by everyman.

Exo 13:15 and it happened, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that Yahweh killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of animal. Therefore I sacrifice to Yahweh all that opens the womb, being males; but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem'-

OMIT As the firstborn, Moses should have been slain on Passover night (Ex. 13:15); but he made the Passover sacrifice for his own redemption, although Heb. 11:28 says that he did it for the sake of Israel's redemption. Likewise the Lord's almost incomprehensible victory over human nature was not motivated by a selfish desire for his redemption; he did it for himself, that it might be for us. And this is what strengthened him. And on a far lower level, our own salvation is surely worked out through the sacrifices we make for the sake of others' spirituality. The fact that the Lord, as Moses, has gone along the same path to salvation really should be a comfort to us; it should lessen the distance which we feel between us and our Lord. Thus a study of typology and of the atonement is not barren; it really will bring us closer to the Lord Jesus if we do it in the right spirit.

Exo 13:16 It shall be for a sign on your hand, and for symbols between your eyes: for by strength of hand Yahweh brought us out of Egypt-

Contemporary ideas about Satan, demons etc. are often alluded to in the Pentateuch, and Israel are given the true understanding. Take the well known command to Israel to wear a phylactery as a reminder of the Passover deliverance from Egypt: "You shall have the record of it as a sign upon your hand, and upon your forehead as a phylactery, because by the strength of his hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:16 N.E.B.). Wearing a phylactery wasn't a new concept; the idea "refers to amulets which were worn in order to protect their wearers against demons". So by giving this command, Israel's God was showing His people that instead of being on the *defensive* against demons, needing good luck charms against them, they should instead replace these by a positive remembrance of how Yahweh had saved His people from all the power of evil which was symbolized by Pharaoh's Egypt. Rejoicing in His salvation and constantly remembering it was intended to totally sideline the various false beliefs about demons which were prevalent at the time.

As discussed on :9, the equivalent of ["it shall be for..."] pagan amulets on the hand and forehead was to be the mental awareness of the great salvation wrought through the blood of the lamb. Likewise the whole law was to be "for" a token on the hand and forehead (Dt. 6:8). The idea is not that the entire law could literally be placed there. Rather, the equivalent of pagan amulets was to be a mental

awareness of God's law. The use of phylacteries in Judaism is a complete missing of this point.

Exo 13:17 It happened, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God didn't lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and they return to Egypt- The fear of God lest Israel would not attain the promised land ("lest perhaps") shows His humility, in being so concerned for the salvation of petty man; and that characteristic likewise will be His, right up to and through and beyond the day of judgment.

We see here a window onto God's sensitivity towards us. "For God said..."- to whom? This opens up His internal thinking, what He said to Himself. He will not let us be tested beyond what we can bear; and He will not allow the rod of the wicked to be so strong that the righteous put forth their hands to sin. So He knows our levels. He knew Israel's levels. Later in their journey, they did encounter war- with Amalek, with Og king of Bashan etc. He knew that they could endure those experiences [perhaps because by then their faith should have been increased by the daily experience of manna and water, and the presence of the cloud and fire]; but not the experience of war with the Philistines at this early point. We know the geography of the area from what the Bible tells us about Isaac and Abraham going down south of Israel into the land of the Philistines. Dt. 1 tells us that it takes only 11 days to travel by the highway from Egypt to Canaan- through the land of the Philistines. God knew their likelihood of wanting to return to Egypt- and He knew that if they were just a few days journey out of Egypt, on the main highway, then they would be tempted to return to Egypt. When they did later state they wanted to return to Egypt (Ex. 32; Num. 14:4), this was therefore inexcusable. God knew they did not need to have decided that. He knew that if they had encountered war with the Philistines, then they would have been overpowered by the temptation to want to return to Egypt. The result is that every failure before temptation is inexcusable. There can be no situational ethic. God foresees our likely sins and seeks to save us from them- by taking Israel on a longer route, perhaps leading them by the fire and cloud in such a way that there was no clear return path for them through the trackless wilderness, whereas the quicker way was on a well established highway. God likewise foreknew that the Philistines would not honour the peace treaty made with Isaac and Abraham, and would attack Israel as they passed through their land. We think how God drove Adam and Eve out of Eden, lest they take of the tree of life and live eternally in a fallen, miserable state. He foresees likely human behaviour despite our freewill.

It was the Angel which led Israel in the pillar of fire and cloud. Despite their limitations, we know that the work of our guardian Angel is so over-ruled that we will never be tested

above what we are able to bear. The trials they choose for us are in accordance to the spiritual strength they know we possess- thus the Angel leading Israel through the wilderness "led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines; for God (the Angel leading them) said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about through the way of the wilderness" (Ex. 13:17,18). So we see the great fear our guardian Angel has that we will return to Egypt (the flesh), and therefore He gives us trials which will prevent this, although at the time we feel like Israel that the trials are actually enough to make us want to return to the world.

Exo 13:18 but God led the people around by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt-
"Armed" is literally 'in fives', perhaps implying they marched five abreast. Hence LXX "and in the fifth generation the children of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt". If the LXX is correct then we have here confirmation of the argument made on Ex. 12:40 that Israel were in Egypt for 215 years, not 430. If we read "in fives" as 'five abreast' then as discussed on Ex. 12:37, a group of 600,000 men plus women, children and a "mixed multitude" would require a column of around 1000 km. long. See my suggestion on Ex. 12:37 that the numbers were far smaller. **"Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael plays around with the letters of the word “armed” (chamushim) to suggest that if the vowels are altered slightly, it might actually mean that only one out of five (chamishah) Israelites left Egypt". This would fit with the small number of firstborn given in the census of Num. 3- as if many firstborn were slain from disobedience to the Passover laws.**

Or we can understand that they went up armed as in with arms, prepared for war; which fits the context of :17, where God foresaw that if they did encounter actual war, they would be tempted to return to Egypt. They went up armed because they were frightened there would be warfare, and God saw that this fear could become obsessive to the point that they would return to Egypt if they ever had to use their weapons. Again we see how sensitively God foresaw their situations ahead of time.

"Red Sea" can be "the sea of reeds"; just as even in English there is a similarity of spelling between "red" and "reed". It is the same word in Ex. 2:3 of the reeds where Moses was hidden. The idea of salvation in the reeds was the narrative of Moses' life. He has been saved out of the reeds, and this was to encourage him that God would save him and Israel again. And again, his sister Miriam was involved, as she led the women in praise afterwards. We see how circumstances repeat, in Moses' example, after 80 years- experiences are intended to reinforce and develop faith.

Exo 13:19 Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the children of Israel swear, saying, God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones away from here with you-
Despite living a long life in the opulence of Egypt, without apparently falling from power and wealth, the heart of Joseph was not in it at all, but rather in the land of promise, in the things of the Kingdom. An example to us all.

We note it was Moses personally who carried Joseph's bones, possibly hinting that the Israelites were so burdened down with the wealth of Egypt. Acts 7:16 implies the bones of his brothers were also carried back and buried in Shechem.

Exo 13:20 They took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness-
Etham in Egyptian means a 'closed place, fortress, castle'. Presumably there was a Philistine garrison there, as it was a border town, and remnants of the castle have been unearthed. Again we sense the Egyptians as powerless before this huge column of Divinely liberated slaves. This incident was providentially arranged to strengthen the Israelites in faith when a far greater Egyptian force approached them. See on Ex. 14:3.

Exo 13:21 Yahweh went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night:-
This is very rhythmic and poetic in Hebrew, as if part of a marching song: "And YHWH went before them / by day in a pillar of cloud / to lead them by the way / and by night in a pillar of fire / to give them the light / to go by day and night. / Aside turns not / the pillar of cloud by day / nor the pillar of fire by night / before the people".

"He spread a cloud for their covering" (Ps. 105:39). We note God's sensitivity to His people in the desert- fire at night to warm them against the desert cold, and cloud in the day time to shield them from the heat of the sun. He is likewise sensitive to our issues on our wilderness journey to His promised land.

The Passover deliverance was to be the beginning of months for Israel (Ex. 12:2); time and history, and our sense of where we are in time and history, were to be constantly governed by this experience of great salvation. Yet people tend to live without this sense of their place in history, never learning from history and never seeing the long term horizon, just living life as it is experienced right in front of their eyes and ears. Hence the Hebrew months are called just the second month, the third month etc. The names of the Hebrew months were picked up only in Babylonian exile. And this is how radically our great salvation should affect our lives. It could be argued that Israel's entire wilderness experience was lived in the

shadow of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They were in an envelope of Divine protection and their sense of day and night was governed by these things, rather than their sight of the sun or moon. Likewise the arrival of the quail and manna gave them their sense of "morning" and of the sixth day, when double manna was given, and the Sabbath when there was no manna. They lived without any way of telling the time as we do. We likewise are to live in a total environment of awareness of God's salvation, that I have been redeemed and am on my path to the Kingdom. And yet even whilst living in this total environment of salvation, Israel rebelled and wanted to return to Egypt.

Exo 13:22 the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, didn't depart from before the people-
Ex. 13:21,22 says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)? When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud* of *fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:15-17; Dt. 5:22).

EXODUS CHAPTER 14

Exo 14:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
It was Moses who wrote these accounts, and his humility shines through in speaking of himself in the third person.

Exo 14:2 Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn back and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal Zephon. You shall encamp opposite it by the sea-
"Turn", Heb. 'turn back, return', to retrace their steps; see on :3. God told them to go to a location which humanly speaking was a trap- as the Egyptians realized, :3. The "turn"

back on themselves was humanly senseless when they needed to put as much distance as they could between them and the Egyptians, and gave the appearance of being lost [AV "entangled"]. So God leads us to baptism, leads us to redemption from this world, through bringing us into desperate situations. They were taken to a situation where there was no way out- the sea to the east, high mountains to the south and west, and the Egyptians approaching from the north.

God led Israel into a dead end and made them turn around and start facing back the way they had come , as if to start them marching towards Pharaoh rather than away from him. But this dead end was "Pihahiroth", 'the mouth of freedom'. For there they were "brought out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 29:2), it was as it were the gateway to the prison and they were leaving it. The path we are led by God appears senseless and unwise, by human judgment. But our dead ends lead to the ultimate freedom; although we only see this afterwards. And according to Maslow and other psychologists, the desire for freedom is the most powerful inbuilt human need. We were born with it, but it can only be realized and fulfilled in the freedom God gives in Christ. Isaiah often uses the Red Sea parting as the basis upon which we can believe that God will make a way when there appears no way: "This is what the LORD says, the one who made a road through the sea, a pathway through the surging waters" (Is. 43:16,17). This is why the Exodus is the most alluded to historical incident of the Old Testament- it's a pattern to us all. Israel were not to be passive to their history of redemption, and neither can we be. Both the ten commandments and the rest of the law began with reference to Israel's exodus deliverance: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me..." (Ex. 20:2,3); the rest of the law began with the commands about releasing slaves because this was the outcome of their own exodus experience: "Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything" (Ex. 21:1,2). And throughout the law, there were references to the exodus as the motive for obeying the law, e.g. Ex. 23:9 "You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt".

They and Pharaoh had the impression that they were lost in the desert. The desert shut them in, in that the pillar of cloud had led them through a trackless waste and the wind had covered their tracks. They were hyper vulnerable. And this is the kind of position God leads us to. In order to throw ourselves upon Him and to work a great salvation. The Egyptians however were brought to the same confusion. The breadth of crossing for Israel would have had to have been very wide. And it was dry ground, with the pillar of darkness in front of them. They probably charged after the Israelites unaware they were in the midst of the Sea. They then fled against the waters when the wind blew and found themselves in an absolute dead end. Israel crossed from West to East, so the blowing of the East wind meant that God as it were was carving a path towards them to rescue

them. We can assume that the wind blew from the West to cover the Egyptians; the water was coming towards them and yet they fled against and not from the waters. This means the waters were coming towards them and yet also coming behind them. They and not Israel were in a dead end by the Sea.

Exo 14:3 Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are entangled in the land. The wilderness has shut them in'-
"Entangled" has the sense of "confused / perplexed"; he assumed they had lost their way. They had turned back on themselves, and he had likely been informed of this by his garrison at Etham; see on Ex. 13:20. "The wilderness" which he supposed had now blocked them off was that between the Nile valley and the Red Sea. To pass west of the Bitter Lakes made no human sense- and so often, God's strategies for victory involve doing that which is absolutely counter instinctive to all secular wisdom. "Shut them in" is the word also translated "surrender". He thought they would have no option but to surrender to him.

Exo 14:4 I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will follow after them-
The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

And I will get honour over Pharaoh, and over all his armies; and the Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh. They did so-
The rejected at the last day will not be indifferent. It will be an awful end; finally grasping the real essence of spirituality and so desperately wanting to know God in the sense of having a loving relationship with Him- in the very last moments of their existence. The most Biblically emphasized reason for the Red Sea experience is "that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord" (Ex. 14:4,17) and therefore honour Him. It was surely only in Pharaoh's last few moments of life that he came, through his experience of condemnation, to know the essence of Yahweh. As the tidal wave crushed down upon him, as water filled his lungs...he desperately came to know Israel's God in absolute truth. But it was all too late. We must know Him *now*...

Exo 14:5 It was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was changed towards the people, and they said, What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?-

The Egyptian beast being so furiously determined to destroy Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:5; 15:9) is the basis for the dragon being "wroth with the woman, and went to make war (as Pharaoh 'went') with the remnant of her seed", chasing her into the wilderness and trying to destroy her with water (cp. the Red Sea); but "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood" (Rev. 12:13-17), as at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12). This passage in Revelation has reference to the latter day persecution of God's people, which is clearly based upon what Pharaoh did.

"That *we* have done" shows clearly the interplay between human freewill and Divine confirmation. Pharaoh let Israel go but God made him do it.

Exo 14:6 He prepared his chariot, and took his army with him-
The Hebrew Bible usually speaks of leaders having their chariots prepared by others, but Pharaoh personally was eager and committed to this enterprise. "His army" would refer to his own personal bodyguard.

Pharaoh still had some horses despite the plagues upon them. Again we see how a remnant was always left to Egypt through all the plagues, as a reminder that God saves by grace and dislikes punishing people and even in wrath remembers mercy just for the sake of pity. His pity is a huge part of His character, and this is the God with whom we have to do.

Exo 14:7 and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over all of them-
This may mean that every chariot in Egypt, all her human strength, was gathered against Israel.

Exo 14:8 Yahweh hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel-
Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 7:22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34,35). And yet God hardened his heart (Ex. 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:8). The references to God hardening Pharaoh's heart generally occur after Pharaoh had first hardened his own heart. The fact Pharaoh hardened his heart was a sin (Ex. 9:34), and yet God encouraged him in this. God offered Pharaoh a way of escape after each of the plagues; all he had to do was to agree to let Israel go. But the conditions got tougher the longer he resisted God's demand: he finally had to not only let Israel go, but also provide them with sacrifices (Ex. 10:25). Likewise when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his heart up, God hardened it (Dan. 5:20).

For the children of Israel went out with a high hand-
See on :31. "With a high hand" means effectively the lifted up hand of God (Ex. 15:12; Is.

26:11). Yet the term also refers to God's solemn oath. The fact He had brought them out of Egypt meant that He was taking an oath to bring them to His Kingdom. Whilst baptism (cp. the Red Sea crossing) is no guarantee of salvation of itself, as we ourselves may choose to return to Egypt, it is His oath to us that from His side, He will now save us and bring us to His Kingdom- if we let Him.

Going with a high hand can mean with confidence in their own strength; hence Job 38:15 "the high arm is broken". So Dt. 32:27 warns against thinking that their own hand had saved them. Pharaoh's heart was hardened in that he was enraged by the fact Israel marched out of Egypt "armed" or in ranks of five, and not as a rabble of runaway slaves. They were wrongly confident in themselves. But it provoked Pharaoh. And this confidence in self suddenly collapsed; see on :10.

Or we can understand the "high hand" as that of God. "Yahweh, when Your hand is lifted up..." (Is. 26:11). Hence Num. 33:3 "They went out with a high hand in the sight of the Egyptians". Moses' uplifted, tiny human hand... was the high hand of Yahweh.

Exo 14:9 The Egyptians pursued after them: all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen, and his army; and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baal Zephon-
We note the stress upon "of Pharaoh", "his... his...". He was personally responsible for all this, and the whole narrative is about Pharaoh and Moses locked in conflict.

It may be worth noting that there they camp "by" the sea, whereas in :2 they are specifically commanded to camp "before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea". It could be that they were disobedient to the command but were saved anyway- which is quite a theme of the record.

Exo 14:10 When Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were very afraid. The children of Israel cried out to Yahweh-
The people saw the Egyptians marching after them by the dust clouds from their chariots. These dust clouds ought to have been contrasted by them with the cloud of God's presence which was over them.

When Israel left Egypt God “led them on safely, so that they feared not” (Ps. 78:53). But they *did* fear (Ex. 14:10-12). Surely we must read in some conditions here- God’s care for them was such that they need not have feared, but they failed to discern His care and power and therefore they *did* fear.

Israel's deliverance through the Red Sea seems to be attributed to Moses' faith (Heb. 11:28,29; Acts 7:36,38). Yet in the actual record, Moses seems to have shared Israel's cry of fear, and was rebuked for this by God (Ex. 14:15,13,10). Yet in the midst of that

rebuke, we learn from the New Testament, God perceived the faith latent within Moses, beneath that human fear and panic. He likewise sees beneath our Christian hypocrisy to what true spirituality there is in us.

The whole description of Egypt's judgments in Ez. 29 is also full of links with those in store for Israel. *They* will cry unto Yahweh in their affliction (Is. 19:20), just as Israel did when Egypt persecuted them (Ex. 2:23; 14:10).

Egypt had 600 chariots but Israel had 600 thousands or military divisions. Yet they feared Egypt. Their high handed attitude of :8 was bravado not underpinned by faith. Their fear is totally psychologically credible. They had always feared the Egyptians as their superiors and couldn't break out of the slave mentality.

Exo 14:11 They said to Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you treated us this way, to bring us out of Egypt?-
Moses had been weak and discouraged in the same way, accusing God of wanting to do them evil rather than save them (Ex. 5:23). And now this was what the people concluded in the desert, when they complained Yahweh had brought them into the desert to slay them. Moses would have found patience with them, because he would have realized that this same desperate conclusion, in the heat of desperation, was what he too had been guilty of. It is awareness of our own failures which provides the basis for others in theirs. God is without that aspect; His patience with human sin is therefore the more wonderful than ours.

Again it is so psychologically credible that God's people cry to Yahweh and yet in the same moment display lack of faith, here, in wishing they had stayed in Egypt. As noted earlier, their fear of so few Egyptians shows they had not risen above their slave mentality. As so many today will not. Ps. 106:7 comments that Israel rebelled against Yahweh at the Red Sea. And yet for the sake of Moses' faith (Heb. 11), and God's special grace and desire to save Israel, He mightily saved them. He heard their cry at the Red Sea (Neh. 9:9), He focused on the positive, on their cry to Him rather than their lack of faith in His purpose.

Exo 14:12 Isn't this the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, 'Leave us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?' For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness-
This is so significant; the people didn't actually want redemption. God had been minded to slay them in Egypt for their idolatry and rejection of serving Him in favour of serving the Egyptians (Ez. 20:8). But the pole of His saving grace was stronger than that of His necessary judgment of sin. He saved them against their will. The crossing of the Red

Sea was like baptism for us (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were led to that point by grace alone. It is so wrong to think that leading was some reward for our own righteous hearts. It was by grace alone. It's like the prophecies about Israel's return from the Gentiles and rebuilding their land *after repentance* were fulfilled by God in the 20th century- even though they were not penitent.

Here we learn that Israel had bluntly told Moses whilst in Egypt that they didn't want to leave. They preferred their slavery to a journey with God. This is the force of the statements that God took Israel out of Egypt with a strong hand, almost against their will. This was the extent of His love for them and His "I will..." desire to save. For all time we see how God really does want to save His people and is very far from indifferent.

Exo 14:13 Moses said to the people, Don't be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh, which He will work for you today: for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you shall never see them again-
Yet his faith was weak at this time; see on :15. He had faith and unbelief at the same time, just as he left Egypt at age 40 "not fearing the wrath of the king", and yet also he fled from fear of death at the hands of the king. To believe and disbelieve at the same time is a sad feature of human nature (Mk. 9:24).

Ex. 14:13 could appear to be prophecy: "The Egyptians... you shall see them again no more for ever". But it is understood as a command not to return to Egypt in Dt. 17:16- and because of Israel turning back to Egypt in their hearts, they would be taken there again (Dt. 28:68). So we must be prepared to accept that what may appear to be prophecy is in fact commandment, which we have the freewill to obey or disobey. Ez. 43:7 likewise is more command than prediction: "The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name" (RV). It isn't saying 'this is a prophecy that they will not do this'- for they did. Rather is it a plea, a command, that they are not to do this any more.

It was by Moses' faith that the Red Sea parted (Heb. 11:29). His faith was based upon the promises of deliverance from and judgment upon Egypt found in Gen. 15:14; 46:3,4. Faith comes from the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Exo 14:14 Yahweh will fight for you, and you shall be still-
"Still" is "silent". Rahab's house had to be identified by a scarlet cord- like the blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the two doorposts and lintel of the Israelites' homes in Egypt. The silence demanded of the people when Jericho was taken was surely to recall Ex. 14:14, there the people standing before the Red Sea were assured: "The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent". Compare the command to keep silent whilst Yahweh fought, with the common practice of yelling war cries as an ancient army approached their enemy. All human convention, wisdom and strength, was placed in purposeful

opposition to what seemed quite counter-instinctive- to be utterly silent whilst God did the fighting.

Exo 14:15 Yahweh said to Moses, Why do you cry to me? Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward-
"By faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them (Israel). By faith they (Israel) passed through the Red Sea" (Heb. 11:28,29). Yet at this time Israel were weak in faith, they passed through the Red Sea cuddling the idols of Egypt (Ez. 20:8), from the day God knew them they were rebellious against Him; so runs the refrain of the prophets. It seems that due to Moses' faith Israel were saved by the Passover lamb, through his faith they passed through the Red Sea; his faith was so great, his desire for their salvation so strong, that God counted it to the rest of Israel. Thus "he (Moses, in the context) brought them (Israel) out" of Egypt (Acts 7:36,38). This points forward to Christ's redemption of us, and also indicates how quickly Moses' faith rallied. And yet just prior to crossing the Sea, God rebuked Moses: "Why do you cry unto me?" - even though Moses calmly exhorted the people to have faith (Ex. 14:15 cp. 13). Yet by faith he brought them through the Red Sea. Therefore as with his first exit from Egypt (he feared the wrath of the King, and then he didn't), his faith wavered, but came down on the right side.

So at the shores of the Red Sea, it seems Moses' faith wavered, and he prayed something at best inappropriate. All we read is God's response: "Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Ex. 14:15). It seems that Moses' 'cry' isn't recorded- by grace. Likewise it seems Zacharias probably said far more than "Whereby shall I know this?" when Gabriel told him he would soon have a son. It would seem the conversation went on for so long that the people outside wondered why he was staying so long. Presumably he remonstrated with the Angel with other, graciously unrecorded words, and thereby earnt the punishment of dumbness (Lk. 1:18-22). We too are to have the love that seeks to cover sin and not unduly record it by keeping a record of wrongs.

There is no record that Moses cried to God, but man's unspoken feelings are read by God as prayer. Moses is rebuked here, as the "you" is you singular, yet Heb. 11 says that it was by his faith that the Sea parted. Again we see faith and unbelief coexist in man but God focuses upon the faith.

They were told to go forward- before the sea was opened. It was really a leap of faith, to as it were cast themselves into the sea, to do what was counterintuitive. They were set up by God with no real choice, seeing they so feared the Egyptians. And this is how it is-

we move forward in faith and God does more than His part. We can assume from Ps. 77:17-20 that Moses and Aaron were the first to enter the sea, thus leading the people in: "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters. Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron". Just as the Lord Jesus leads us in such totally counterinstinctive following.

Exo 14:16 Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground-
The Babylonian Account of Creation claims (Tablet 4, line 137) that Marduk cleft Tiamat, the ocean goddess, with his sword. The Biblical idea of Yahweh cleaving the waters clearly picks up this idea (Hab. 3:9; Ps. 74:15; 78:13,15; Ex. 14:16,21; Jud. 15:19; Is. 35:6; 48:21; 63:12; Neh. 9:11). But these passages largely refer to the miracle God did at the Red Sea, bringing about the creation of His people out of the cleft waters of the Sea. Again, pagan creation is reinterpreted with reference to a historical, actual event in the experience of God's people.

"Lift up" can mean to put aside. Moses only lifted his hand, :21. Or was that disobedience? And God worked through that partial obedience to save Israel through one of the greatest miracles of the Old Testament? Moses' hand was God's and that hand at the Exodus is called a strong and mighty hand. This shows how if we use our hand for Him, a mightier hand is behind us. The hand that taps on a keyboard, that builds a baptismal bath, that helps another into a wheelchair, that takes the hand of another in grief... a hand mightier far is working through that hand.

Moses sinned later by using his staff to hit the rock, whereas he had been told to have his staff but not use it. We wonder if he failed to perceive the connection. He obeyed here the command about not using his staff, but failed when the test was repeated. Or we can think that here he was disbedient and did use his staff. But later he made the same mistake.

Exo 14:17 I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall go in after them: and I will get Myself honour over Pharaoh, and over all his armies, over his chariots, and over his horsemen-
Hebrew tends to reason through placing 'blocks' of ideas are put in opposition to each other, or 'dialectic', in order to come to conclusions. That's why we can read of God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart (Ex. 7:3; 8:15). To Greek, step-logic thinkers, that's a worrying contradiction- only because they don't pick up the way that Hebrew reasoning involves these kinds of statements being put in opposition to each other, so that through the dialectic process we come to understand what is meant.

God had hardened their hearts, meaning He had removed sensitivity from their consciences. Pharaoh's heart was turned by God, because that was the direction he himself wanted (Ps. 105:25). Pharaoh's response gets increasingly better, confessing sinfulness, asking for prayer, etc. And yet we have to read this as his conscience being increasingly touched, and yet he refused to act upon it. The movement of conscience within him was overcome by the movement of hardness; and as hardness was his dominant desire, it was that which Yahweh confirmed.

However, it would be wrong to consider the 'hardening' of Pharaoh's heart as solely meaning that Pharaoh was given a hard heart. The words translated 'hardened' are not bad words of themselves; the idea is of strengthening and confirmation. The same idea of a hardened / strengthened heart is found when the words appear later: "Be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart" (Ps. 27:14). "Of good courage" is the same word used for the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Or Is. 35:4 "Say to them of a fearful heart, be strong", or hardened- by God. We will be hardened / confirmed in the psychological positions we ourselves adopt. If we truly wish to be in God's Kingdom and love the Lord's appearing... then we shall be there. This means however that it is the state of our spirit which is so critical. To desire God's Kingdom "first" is far more than mere religion or involvement with church meetings. This desire is to take a grip upon our entire being.

When Paul insists that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Rom. 9:14-18), he is not only repeating the Biblical record (Ex. 9:12,16; 33:19), but he is alluding to the way that the Jewish *Book of Jubilees* claimed that Mastema [the supposed personal Satan] and not God hardened Pharaoh's heart.

Exo 14:18 The Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh, when I have gotten Myself honour over Pharaoh, over his chariots, and over his horsemen-
When they are appointed their portion with the hypocrites and there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, *then* shall the Kingdom be likened unto the five wise and five foolish virgins. *Then* the rejected will understand the principles of that parable, crystal clearly. Members of the ecclesia of Israel will say "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"- but be rejected (how else to understand Mt. 23:39?). Likewise the Egyptians, fleeing in the mud from Yahweh as they vainly hoped against hope that the returning waters wouldn't somehow reach them...they came to know Yahweh (Ex. 14:18). It could well be that this knowing of Yahweh involves a desperate recounting of their sins, seeing that one of the purposes of condemnation is to make men aware of their sinfulness and the depth of God's grace. Num. 32:23 prophesied of Israel in their time of condemnation: "You will be sensible of your sin when evil overtakes you" (LXX).

Or the idea could be that the Egyptians in Egypt were to know Yahweh through Pharaoh's destruction. Again God's intention was to bring good out of judgment. The Egyptians

"shall know that I am Yahweh", just as God promised that "I will bring you [Moses' generation] into the land". But the Divine "will" was foiled by human intransigence. Not all Egyptians came to know Yahweh, nor did all Israel enter the land. But the potential and Divine "will" was there. The nature of how Pharaoh was destroyed is full of allusion to Egyptian ideas of the afterlife, as seen in the Coffin Spells and "The Book of the Dead". The idea was that Pharaoh was "Lord of the winds" and at his death, he brought an east wind that ushered back the Nile waters, opened by a glittering pathway, and he passed through a pillar of fire and the Nile waters to eternity at the dwelling place of the gods. All this was deconstructed. He was not "Lord of the winds", Yahweh was. The east wind brought his destruction. The pathway through the water which he eagerly followed let to his shameful destruction, drowning in mud, and not to eternal glory. He could not pass through the pillar of fire. The dwelling of Yahweh was at Sinai, but Pharaoh did not make it there. The description of Sinai as Yahweh's "holy dwelling place" is alluding to these Egyptian ideas of passing through the waters on a pathway to a divine dwelling place. This was all set up so that the Egyptians would be further encouraged to quit their entire religious system and accept Yahweh's way.

Exo 14:19 The angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them, and stood behind them- The Mount burning with fire when Moses ascended it was due to the pillar of fire standing there, appearing to reach to the "midst of Heaven", showing Heaven and earth were connected through this manifestation (Dt. 4:11). The Angel led them through the wilderness, and elsewhere we read that the pillar of fire led them; the conclusion is therefore that the pillar of fire was where the Angel dwelt. Thus the Angel literally "went before" them as God promised it would, in the form of the pillar. Angels are elsewhere associated with pillars of fire, e. g. the one which came to Manoah, and not least in that God came down in a pillar of fire to speak to Moses. Ex. 14:19 conclusively shows the pillar of fire/cloud and the Angel to be identical: "the Angel of God which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud (the Shekinah glory) went from before their face, and stood behind them".

Recognizing the extent of Angelic work in our lives should in itself be a humbling experience, not least because if we recognize we are led by the Angels through life, we cannot plan ahead in our own strength. When Israel crossed the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud that led them went behind them so that the Egyptians could not see ahead of them to where the Israelites were, although the actual distance was not great at all (Ex. 14:19,20). This means that the pillar of cloud, which represented the Angel leading them, was too thick to see through, and so it follows that if the Egyptians could not see through it when it went in front of them, neither could the Israelites for most of the wilderness journey. And if our lives are truly led by the Angel, we should not expect to

see the way ahead stretching in front of us, but just rest assured that we are actually being led.

Exo 14:20 It came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet gave it light by night: and the one didn't come near the other all the night-
The Angel was light to Israel and darkness to the Egyptians. The Angelic appearance on Sinai featured both bright fire and darkness (Dt. 4:11; 5:22). Hence Israel had light but Egypt had darkness in the plague of darkness- because the Angels stood with each Israelite family. What's light to us is darkness to this world. Josh. 24:7 says that God placed darkness between Israel and the Egyptians. Again this shows that the pillar was thick and effectively darkness. To follow it meant walking with no vision of what was ahead.

Exo 14:21 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and Yahweh caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided-
The Red Sea lay broadly North-South in orientation. The people crossed from West to East. This meant they would've been walking across the Red Sea against a powerful wind. Participating in God's great salvation involves walking against the wind. But it's this which saves us and opens the way to redemption.

The driving back of the Red Sea, and its return, is explained in Exodus by a "wind". But in Ps. 77:17,18 we find that the wind was in fact a whirlwind, associated with an earthquake and lightnings- all language of a theophany. The historical record doesn't much mention the thunder and theophany which was experienced, according to the later Biblical descriptions of what happened.

The idea of waters being divided in "the midst" (Ex. 14:22) recalls the language of creation- the waters were divided "in the midst" (s.w.) (Gen. 1:6). Remember that Moses [albeit inspired by God] wrote both Genesis and Exodus. He may be suggesting that his faith in creation lead to his faith that the waters would part. For God had mightily parted waters "in the midst" before. And so our faith in the Genesis creation leads us to faith in God's creative salvation of us in life's crises. Thus the Psalms so often allude to creation as an inspiration for faith.

The East wind which blew the locusts in and then to blow them away again, until "not a single locust was left" (Ex. 10:19) is just what happened to the Egyptians- the East wind blew the waters to and fro, and left not a single Egyptian soldier alive (Ex. 14:21,28). The locust plague was an appeal for their repentance. And the plagues began by affecting everyone, but then focus in on the Egyptians and then zoom closer in upon the personal

possessions of Pharaoh. In Pharaoh's case, it would be true to say that God's hardening activities gather momentum, like a swimmer sucked closer and closer towards the waterfall. There has to come a moment when the pull is now too strong, and the plunge is inevitable. It is that moment which perhaps we need to fear more than anything else in human experience

Exo 14:22 The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left-
Indeed the ground was so dry that Ps. 106:9 says that "He led them through the depths, as through a desert". There are a number of hints in the record at a new creation. Whilst this has primary reference to the creation of Israel as a nation through the exodus experience, it is fitting that it points forward to the fuller 'new creation' that will be brought about by baptism. Ex. 14:20-22 speak of the Red Sea in terms of "darkness... (giving) light... sea... dry land... the waters were divided", the waters covered [the Egyptians]... all reminiscent of Gen. 1:2,3,10,9,7, respectively. "This month shall be unto you the beginning (Heb. 'rosh') of months: it shall be the first month of the year" (Ex. 12:2) indicates how Passover was to be a new beginning. It is possible to see in the ten plagues brought about by God's word to Moses an echo of the ten times it is recorded that "God said" in Gen. 1. Ps. 105:28-36 describes the plagues on Egypt as a reversal of creation - starting with darkness (cp. "let there be light") and ending with the slaying of the firstborn to match the creation of man last of all. There are also many connections with the flood narrative- again, judgment, destruction and a new world order arising. Israel were to be the new creation born out of those waters. So much potential power was available to them. But still they clung to the idols of Egypt which they carried through those waters.

The wall of water on their right hand and left when they crossed the Red Sea is twice emphasized (Ex. 14:22,29). It is alluded to later, when they are urged to not depart from God's way, not to the right hand nor left (Dt. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14). We passed through the Red Sea when we were baptized (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were set upon a path which is walled up to keep us within it. And we are to remain in that path upon which we were set. To turn aside from it would be as foolish as Israel turning away from their path and trying to walk into the walls of water.

Exo 14:23 The Egyptians pursued, and went in after them into the midst of the sea: all of Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen-
It's emphasized that the Egyptians perished in the midst of the sea (Ex. 14:27). It happened in the morning, when Israel were all safely onshore. The Red Sea at the place of crossing suggested by the geographical references in Ex. 14:2 is only about 1 kilometer wide at most. So if the Egyptians were in the middle of the sea when the last

of the Israelites had arrived onshore, the distance separating them would've been only 500 meters at most. They were really close and likely could've heard each other. 14:13 says the Israelites saw the Egyptians- they were that close.

Exo 14:24 It happened in the morning watch, that Yahweh looked out on the Egyptian army through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and confused the Egyptian army-
Morning watch- 02:00 to 06:00 a.m. For the two million Israelites plus their animals to all cross so quickly, they must've been moving in a very wide column, which means that the path cut through the waters was very broad.
Especially do we find the essence of the Red Sea deliverance repeated in life after life, situation after situation, in Israel's history. This happens to the extent that some of the Psalms can speak as if we were there present; and Paul stresses how that passage through water remains a type of the baptism of every believer to this day (1 Cor. 10:1). Take for example how just as Yahweh confounded Israel's enemies at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:24), so He did in Deborah's victory over Sisera (Jud. 4:15); and "not one was left" (Jud. 4:16), just as happened with the Egyptians (Ex. 14:28).

Ex. 13:21 says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)? When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud* of *fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:15-17; Dt. 5:22).

Exo 14:25 He took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let's flee from the face of Israel, for Yahweh fights for them against the Egyptians!-
He jammed the wheels- as a result of the rain making the ground mud beneath them (Ps. 77:17-19). Likewise Sisera "lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet" (Jud. 4:15), due to the mud produced by the hail (Ps. 83:9). "There was not a man left" (Jud. 4:16) of those enemies; matched by the comment concerning the Egyptians, that "there remained not so much as one of them" (Ex. 14:28). Biblical history continually

interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on Ex. 1:7; 15:21.

Exo 14:26 Yahweh said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come again on the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen-
Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched our arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Aaron had earlier stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt (Ex. 8:6 s.w.) to produce the plague of frogs- and the Egyptians ought to have perceived that all he needed to do was stretch out his hand, and the waters would return and drown them. But their hearts were hardened against such spiritual perception.

Exo 14:27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it. Yahweh overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea-
"Overthrew" translated a word elsewhere always used for being shaken; later references to what happened suggest there was an earthquake, and they may well have been slain by this, although not all were swallowed- as their bodies washed up on the shore in the morning. The fleeing of the Egyptians from Israel in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27) was a case of fleeing when none pursued them. This was the judgment upon Israel (Lev. 26:17,36; Dt. 28:25), which was to arise because in their hearts they had returned to Egypt (the world) and were therefore to be judged as Egypt, "condemned with the world" they had loved (1 Cor. 11:32).

The fleeing of the Egyptians was to be repeated in all Israel's conflicts with their enemies; every time, the essence of the Red Sea deliverance [which was by grace alone, as Israel then were so weak spiritually] was to be repeated throughout the history of God's people (Num. 10:35; Dt. 28:7).

If Israel crossed over by the morning, they must have crossed quickly and one or two thousand abreast. The way through the sea was therefore very wide.

Exo 14:28 The waters returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even all Pharaoh's army that went in after them into the sea-
The 'covering' of Egypt with frogs in Ex. 8:6 and locusts in Ex. 10:5,15 looked ahead to the 'covering' of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:28; 15:5,10). It was an appeal for repentance, in the hope that the final smiting would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save the Egyptians, but they would not.

There remained not so much as one of them-
"There remained not one" beetle (Ex. 8:31), locust (Ex. 10:19) nor Egyptian who pursued the Israelites (Ex. 14:28). The same phrase is used. Again we see how both Egyptians and Israelites were intended to learn from the plagues, and how this came to full term when "not one" of their enemies was left- thanks to the prayer of Moses.

We find the essence of the Red Sea deliverance repeated in life after life, situation after situation, in Israel's history. This happens to the extent that some of the Psalms can speak as if we were there present; and Paul stresses how that passage through water remains a type of the baptism of every believer to this day (1 Cor. 10:1). Take for example how just as Yahweh confounded Israel's enemies at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:24,25), so He did in Deborah's victory over Sisera (Jud. 4:15); and "not one was left" (Jud. 4:16), just as happened with the Egyptians (Ex. 14:28).

Exo 14:29 But the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left-
"A wall" suggests a defence, twice emphasized (:22,29); although they would have been tempted to not see them as a wall of defence at the time, but rather glanced at them in terror, fearing they might come crashing down upon them. Only in hindsight did they perceive, as we do, that what had seemed so terrifying at the time was actually God's wall of defence.

Exo 14:30 Thus Yahweh saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore-
As noted on :23, the Egyptians perished in the midst of the Red Sea, only about 500 meters from the shore. Their bodies would have washed up on the shores. These small touches of detail are what to me add absolute credibility to the narrative.

Exo 14:31 Israel saw the great work which Yahweh did to the Egyptians, and the people

feared Yahweh; and they believed in Yahweh, and in his servant Moses-
This was faith that lasted just for a moment. That is the challenge; to not be spiritual just on the cusp of the moment but to have an abiding faith. Right at their birth by the Red Sea, the Almighty records that "the people feared Yahweh, and believed Yahweh, and His servant Moses" (Ex. 14:23). No mention is made of the Egyptian idols they were still cuddling (we don't directly learn about them until Ez. 20). Nor do we learn that this "belief" of theirs lasted a mere three days; nor of the fact that they rejected Moses, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. "There was no strange god" with Israel on their journey (Dt. 32:12); but there were (Am. 5:26). The reconciliation is that God counted as Israel as devoted solely to Him.

There are many references in the Upper Room discourse to Moses- without doubt, Moses was very much in the Lord's mind as He faced His end. Consider at your leisure how Jn. 14:1 ["you believe in God, believe also in Me" = Ex. 14:31; Jn. 14:11 = Ex. 14:8]. When the Lord speaks in the Upper Room of manifesting the Father and Himself unto the disciples (Jn. 14:21,22), he is alluding to the way that Moses asked God to "manifest thyself unto me" (Ex. 33:18 LXX). The Lord's allusion makes Himself out to be God's representatives, and all those who believe in Him to be as Moses, receiving the vision of God's glory. Note that it was that very experience above all others which marks off Moses in Rabbinic writings as supreme and beyond all human equal. And yet the Lord is teaching that that very experience of Moses is to be shared to an even higher degree by all His followers. It would've taken real faith and spiritual ambition for those immature men who listened to the Lord that evening to really believe it... And the same difficult call comes to us too.

EXODUS CHAPTER 15

Exo 15:1 Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to Yahweh, and said, I will sing to Yahweh, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea-
The singular horse and rider refers to Pharaoh as the other Egyptians were in chariots.

The Psalms so often encourage Israelites to feel as if they personally had been through the Red Sea experience. Generation would tell to generation the Passover story, and would also sing of God's greatness as Israel did in Ex. 15 (Ps. 145:5-7). Hence: "He turned the sea into dry land... there let us (AV: did we) rejoice in him" (Ps. 66:6 RVmg.). We too are enabled by Scripture to feel as if we were there, and to rejoice in what God

did for us there. This of course depends upon our sense of solidarity with God's people over time, as well as over space.

Therefore the saints will sing "The Song of Moses", which Ex. 15 records was sung after the triumph at the Red Sea. This indicates that Israel in Egypt prior to that represents the saints, just before the Lord's coming. Rev. 15:2-4 is all in the context of the Exodus: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire (cp. the calm Red Sea after it had returned over the Egyptians): and them that had gotten the victory (God was victorious at the Red Sea, Ex. 15:1) over the beast (Egypt is the prototype beast, Is. 51:9; Ez. 29:3)... having the harps of God (cp. Miriam's timbrels)... they sing the song of Moses... Who shall not fear Thee (cp. Ex. 15:14-16)... all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest", referring to how the nations of Canaan were subdued as a result of the Red Sea victory (see Ex. 15:15). There must therefore be a latter day equivalent of the Red Sea deliverance of God's people, **and this is why the events of the exodus are alluded to throughout Rev. 12 and 13- the destruction of the latter day beast system matches that of Pharaoh, and God's people will likewise rejoice over this destruction**. **But the idea clearly is that the deliverance at the Red Sea is the deliverance of every man in Christ. We have a part in it, this is not mere history, this deliverance is ours. Lk. 9:51 speaks of the Lord's *exodos* which He accomplished at Jerusalem at His death- at the same Passover time as the exodus. His passing out of Egypt to eternal life is therefore to be seen as prefigured by the Red Sea crossing and the destruction of Pharaoh [cp. the devil, sin, which held us in slavery]. It was through Him that Yahweh became *el gibbor* , a man of war (:3)- a title of the Lord Jesus in Isaiah 9. This is why Rev. 15:3 speaks of the Song of Moses as being the Song of the Lamb.**

The Songs of Moses at the Red Sea and at his death were sung by a stuttering man (Ex. 4:10). This shows for all time how God works through those who apparently are unsuited for His work.

Exo 15:2 Yah is my strength and song. He has become my salvation-
Moses perceived that the essence of Yahweh and His Name was salvation. To save weak sinners like Israel were at the time is what He is all about. He is a God of salvation, not condemnation; and this should encourage us in our weakness.

Heb. "He has become to me a salvation". The idea is that we each sing this song at the last day, just as all Israel were to sing it, feeling that the exodus happened to me personally. "He has become my salvation" uses a form of the verb 'to be'. Moses perceived that seven times, Yahweh had declared that "I will..." save. Yahoshua, Yah saves, 'Jesus', is the essence of our God, and He articulated that same basic

characteristic to Moses and all Israel through the Red Sea salvation and the power of the blood of the lamb. Hence :3 "Yahweh is His Name".

This is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will exalt Him-
Moses was only with his parents in babyhood and maybe very early childhood. They inculcated in him the faith of Yahweh at that early age. They likely died whilst he was still in the court of Pharaoh and looked like an ungrateful child who had gone the way of the world and forgotten his God and his people and their efforts to raise him in the faith. Moses here and in Ex. 18:4 pays tribute to them. What a surprise awaits them in the Kingdom!

Exo 15:3 Yahweh is a man of war. Yahweh is His name-
Moses hereby resigns all possible idea that he himself was a mighty warrior who had saved Israel out of Egypt. He had not fought, and the Egyptians had fled when none pursued them. Yahweh alone was the warrior of Israel.

Exo 15:4 He has cast Pharaoh's chariots and his army into the sea. His chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea-
The Egyptians themselves chased after the Israelites into the sea, but God was confirming them in their decision- He was casting them into that water. But if they'd been interviewed as they charged in, they'd have said that they were of their 100% freewill chasing after the Israelites. But God works through and confirms people in their freewill decisions.

Exo 15:5 The deeps cover them. They went down into the depths like a stone-
The 'covering' of Egypt with frogs in Ex. 8:6 and locusts in Ex. 10:5,15 looked ahead to the 'covering' of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:28; 15:5,10). It was an appeal for repentance, in the hope that the final smiting would not be necessary. It was God's intention and hope to save the Egyptians, but they would not. They may well have been swallowed by some kind of earthquake (see on Ex. 14:27) and then their bodies floated to the surface, to be washed up on the shore as a witness to Israel of the destruction of their enemies. The destruction of Babylon is described as a stone being cast into the depths, and this latter day triumph is to be based upon the historical destruction of the Egyptians.

Exo 15:6 Your right hand, Yahweh, is glorious in power. Your right hand, Yahweh, dashes the enemy in pieces-
The present tenses inculcate the grand theme- that the victory at the Red Sea was to

experienced as ongoing throughout the history of God's people. They were to be continually saved, and their enemies likewise defeated.

Exo 15:7 In the greatness of Your excellency, You overthrow those who rise up against You. You send forth Your wrath. It consumes them as stubble-
As noted on :6, the present tenses suggest that the victory at the Red Sea was to be forever ongoing in the experience of God's people. What happened in the past (note the past tenses of :8) was to become ongoing experience. And so we like David **and** other later writers can feel that God comes through for us in our lives, just as He did at the Red Sea; and He shall do so for us ultimately.

Exo 15:8 With the blast of Your nostrils, the waters were piled up. The floods stood upright as a heap. The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea-
"A blast" (Heb. *ruach*, a spirit / Angel?) being sent upon Sennacherib uses the same term used here about Pharaoh's destruction, and it is also used of that of Babylon (Jer. 51:1). As noted on :21, these similarities show the same Divine hand working throughout the centuries of human history. "Congealed" can mean frozen, although the idea is likely that the water appeared like that, rather than being literally frozen.

Exo 15:9 The enemy said, 'I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil. My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them'-
But they were cast into the sea by God (Ex. 15:21). We see here how God confirms people in the desires of their heart, for both good and bad.

The Egyptian beast being so furiously determined to destroy Israel at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:5; 15:9) is the basis for the dragon being "wroth with the woman, and went to make war (as Pharaoh 'went') with the remnant of her seed", chasing her into the wilderness and trying to destroy her with water (cp. the Red Sea); but "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood" (Rev. 12:13-17), as at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:12). This passage in Revelation has reference to the latter day persecution of God's people.

We note here the six [not seven] "I will..." statements. Egypt were pitted against God's purpose, His seven fold statement of His Name, which meant that "I will..." save Israel.

Exo 15:10 You blew with Your wind-
The reference may be to God's wind / spirit in an Angel.

The sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters-
Rev. 18 describes the latter day Babylon as being destroyed by being cast into the sea as

a stone. This is definitely based on the description of Egypt as suffering the same fate in the Red Sea (Ex. 15:5,10), thus associating the historical 'Egypt' with last days Babylon. All this would suggest that the Lord could return at Passover, or the final tribulation begin then. “The day of the Lord” is the same phrase used about a Jewish feast. “Let the feasts come round: then will I distress Ariel” (Is. 29:1,2 RV).

Exo 15:11 Who is like You, Yahweh, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?-
The earlier books of the Bible declare Yahweh as greater than all other gods; later on, especially in Isaiah, it's more specifically stated that the other gods don't exist. Rather like the earlier parts of the Gospel records speaking of God's supremacy over demons / pagan gods; but then such references fade as it becomes apparent that Yahweh is *so* great that the other gods don't exist at all. God is very gentle in how He progressively teaches and reveals Himself to His people. We at times need to do the same in teaching misbelievers and unbelievers. The Lord's attitude to the question of demons is an example.

As in Ex. 12:12; 15:11; Num. 33:4, the “gods” are spoken of for a moment as real and existing, in order to show Yahweh’s total superiority over them to the point that they didn’t exist. Note how it was the Egyptian people who were judged (Gen. 15:14); their idols (“gods”) are used by metonymy to stand for those who believed in them. Likewise “demons” is sometimes put by metonymy for those who believed in them (e.g. Mk. 2:32,34). The judgment upon Egypt’s gods is brought out by an otherwise obscure reference in Ex. 7:19 to how “there shall be blood in all the land of Egypt on wood and in stone”. "Wood and stone" is a term usually used in the Bible for idols; and "the Egyptian priests used to wash the images of their gods in water every day early in the morning". Thus the gods were shown to be effectively dead and bleeding.

Exo 15:12 You stretched out Your right hand. The earth swallowed them-
As later happened to apostate Israel in the wilderness (Num. 16:32; 26:10). The punishment / judgment upon the world [Egypt] will come upon God's renegade people; they shall be "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). The swallowing up of the Egyptian rods by that of Aaron's (Ex. 7:12) had been to warn the perceptive Egyptians that Yahweh could easily swallow them up if He wished; and He did so at the Red Sea. Because they failed to learn from His prior warning.

They may well have been swallowed by some kind of earthquake (see on Ex. 14:27) and then their bodies floated to the surface, to be washed up on the shore as a witness to Israel of the destruction of their enemies.

Exo 15:13 You, in Your grace, have led the people that You have redeemed. You have guided them in Your strength to Your holy habitation-
"You have guided them" suggests that the Exodus was a guarantee that final entry into the Kingdom was assured and as good as done. This is what baptism means too, but as with the Israel who first sung these words, we can go back to Egypt because we prefer the slave mentality. The Exodus deliverance was seen as part and parcel of being given inheritance in the promised land; just as baptism is for us. We can upset the process, as faithless Israel did in the wilderness. Whilst baptism of itself will not save us (cp. crossing the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:1,2), it is a guarantee that God from His side will guide us to His Kingdom.

Moses' song of triumph after the Red Sea deliverance shows a fine spirituality. However, we note here his possible misunderstanding in Ex. 15:13,17- that Sinai was to be “the place” where God would dwell with Israel.

Exo 15:14 The peoples have heard. They tremble. Pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia-
Rahab was aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and not make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18). When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (Josh. 2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "Your terror is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word for "terror" is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "fainting" in fear- quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "faint" (AV "melt away") because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the impossible- that she would be the exception, that with her a covenant would be made. When she says that "we have heard" about the Exodus (Josh. 2:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people shall hear and be afraid". In

this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have"- 'yes, we have heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we are afraid'. Seeking God's face is actually to strive for the unachievable in this life; but it's what we are to do. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

Exo 15:15 Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed-
We must put this together with the way Edom "refused to give Israel passage through his border" (Num. 20:18-21). Edom's refusal was because they were "dismayed" and terrified, not because they had some nonchalant confidence against Israel. Rather like the walls of Jericho appearing so strong- yet they were built from chronic fear of the Israelites. This is an example of where we must place scripture together to get an accurate picture.

Trembling takes hold of the mighty men of Moab-
This is indicated by the way Balak king of Moab tried to hire Balaam to curse Israel.

All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away-
Israel doubtless sung this song with great gusto. And truly it happened, that the Canaanite nations melted in fear of Israel (Josh. 2:11). But Israel's hearts "melted" for fear of those melting Canaanites (Josh. 14:8). Do *we* believe the words we so fervently sing...? For Israel didn't. It remained as words on a hymn sheet, and never took lodgment in their hearts.

Exo 15:16 Terror and dread falls on them. By the greatness of your arm they are as still as a stone- until Your people pass over, Yahweh, until the people pass over whom You have purchased-
As the Egyptians sunk as a stone (Ex. 15:5), so would the Canaanite nations. If God could do this to the Egyptians, He would remove all other obstacles to entering the Kingdom. The 'passing over' of the Red Sea was to be seen as the entire passing over into the Kingdom. Their entire journey was to be done in the spirit of the crossing of the Red Sea. The fact we have been brought out of the world, baptized through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1-3), is comfort and encouragement that all the other obstacles on the Kingdom road will also be dealt with. We can never under-estimate the significance of our own baptisms.

Yahweh "purchased" His people from Egypt (Ex. 15:16) in the sense that He "redeemed" them (Ex. 6:6), alluding to the idea of buying a close relative out of slavery to a Gentile. God's people were in slavery to Egypt and wished to remain like that (Ex. 14:12); and had accepted their idols, rather than Yahweh (Ez. 20:8). Yet God bought them out of that slavery, He redeemed them only thanks to His love and pity (s.w. Is. 63:9); so earnest

was He to have them as His own. We cannot push the metaphors too far, but the price paid was perhaps represented by the blood of the Passover lamb. For this finally was the price He was willing to pay to redeem us, similarly weak as they were. For we are redeemed (s.w.) by Him from the power of sin and death (Hos. 13:14).

Exo 15:17 You shall bring them in-
The prophets had the spirit of Moses, who wished to see Israel in the land glorifying God, and was willing for his name to be blotted out of the book of eternal remembrance for that to happen. In that spirit, Moses even earlier could rejoice in song that "Thou wilt bring *them* in and plant *them*" (Ex. 15:17) rather than "You will bring *us* in...". The prophetic desire was to see God glorified rather than their own success. This is the spirit of the prophets. This is what led them to see the tragedy of insincerity, of indifference, of the don't care attitude.

And plant them-
Gen. 2:5 explains how God created "every plant of the field before it was in the earth / *eretz* / land [promised to Abraham]". Quite simply, the plants Israel knew had been made by God and somehow transplanted or moved into the land, just as one does when developing a garden. It was Moses' understanding that on entering the land, God would be planting Israel there (Ex. 15:17; Num. 24:6), just as God had planted in Eden (Gen. 2:8 s.w.).

In the mountain of your inheritance-
The parable of the pounds describes the reward of the faithful in terms of being given ten or five cities (Lk. 19:17). This idea of dividing up groups of cities was surely meant to send the mind back to the way Israel in their wilderness years were each promised their own individual cities and villages, which they later inherited. The idea of inheriting "ten cities" occurs in Josh. 15:57; 21:5,26; 1 Chron. 6:61 (all of which are in the context of the priests receiving their cities), and " five cities" in 1 Chron. 4:32. As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the while nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. The language of inheritance (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:4) and preparation of reward (Mt. 25:34; Jn. 14:1) in the NT is alluding to this OT background of the land being prepared by the Angels for Israel to inherit (Ex. 15:17 Heb.; 23:20; Ps. 68:9,10 Heb.) . We must be careful not to think that our promised inheritance is *only* eternal life; it is something being personally prepared for each of us. The language of preparation seems inappropriate if our reward is only eternal life.

The place, Yahweh, which You have made for yourself to dwell in; the sanctuary, Lord, which Your hands have established-
The whole land of Israel was intended to be the sanctuary ultimately, and not just the

temple mount (Ps. 78:54). But this was one of the many potentials made possible for Israel which never materialized, because of their failures.

Exo 15:18 Yahweh shall reign forever and ever-
The sense of this statement is explained by the next verse explaining that this is because Yahweh had destroyed the Egyptians. "Reign over" can mean to defeat. The idea is that His victory over Egypt would continue eternally; the same victories required for the salvation of His people (in whatever form) would continue always. The Red Sea was not to be seen as an isolated victory, but programmatic for all His victories. David in the Psalms so often alludes to the Red Sea victory like this; and felt he was experiencing similar salvation from God. And we can too.

The whole song alludes to the Baal myth. Baal had a conflict with Yam, the god of the sea, which Baal won, the nations and other gods all feared him, he built a sanctuary on a mountain, and declared himself eternal King. Israel worshipped Baal at this time, Hosea says. But they are being shown that Yahweh and not Baal was to be worshipped. Yet despite singing this song, possibly as a kind of national anthem, they continued their worship of Baal despite giving this lip service to Yahweh's supremacy. We can do the same with our idols...

Exo 15:19 For the horses of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and Yahweh brought back the waters of the sea on them; but the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea-
AV has "the horse of Pharaoh". Consistently, the record is focused upon this man, who pitted himself against Yahweh in abusing His people. The language of the plagues and exodus is so frequently used in the book of Revelation and other latter day prophecies, leading us to see Pharaoh as a type of the latter day antiChrist figure.

Exo 15:20 Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dances-
Ps. 150:4 bids all God's people take up the tambourine and dance because of what God has done and will do at the coming of His Son. The same Hebrew words are used as here. Again and again the point is made- that we are to see the Red Sea as our victory, to be replicated in essence in our lives; we too are to rejoice in that victory. "*They* went through the water on foot... and [therefore] there did *we* rejoice in him" (Ps. 66:6).

Exo 15:21 Miriam answered them-
She appears to have sung words to them, to which they responded with a chorus. Or

perhaps the idea is that she and the women answered "them" in the sense of the words sung by the men in the song of Moses, in a kind of part singing.

Sing to Yahweh, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea-
They ran into the sea of their own freewill (:9), but God confirmed them in this. The language is used again in the description of Babylon's judgments: "the horse and his rider... the chariot and his rider" (Jer. 51:19-23) is quoting Ex. 15:4,21. Biblical history continually interconnects, demonstrating that the same Divine hand has worked throughout history, and likewise works in our lives according to the same style. See on :8; Ex. 1:7; 14:25.

Exo 15:22 Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water-

This is where we are located- we have been "saved" from Egypt, we are out of slavery, but we are at some point in the wilderness between slavery and final freedom. "Shur" means 'the wall', and may refer to the wall built to define the boundary of Egypt by an earlier dynasty. Num. 33:8 defines the part of the wilderness as being near Etham, where there was a garrison of Egyptians (see on Ex. 13:20). It had been God's intention that they would go three days journey from Egypt into the wilderness and then worship Him (Ex. 8:27). But they didn't. It seems God purposefully didn't provide water for them- because this great trial was intended to lead them to worship and faith. **They should have coped with it, because He knew their levels, and knew that if they saw war by going through Philistine territory, that test would be too great for them and they would've returned to Egypt.** But instead they rebelled, and His intention they would worship Him then didn't come to fruition. How many billions of such plans are made and frustrated each day by human short-sightedness... We note that very soon after their baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), they ran into testing. Just as the Lord did, and as we do.

Exo 15:23 When they came to Marah, they couldn't drink from the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore its name was called Marah-
Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6).

Egypt's experience in Egypt had been bitter (Ex. 1:14), and the Passover herbs were to recall that bitterness (Ex. 12:8). Their complaint was that the wilderness life was as bitter as Egypt had been. This can be our feeling at times- that life is bitter, it's suffering either way, be it in Christ or in the world. But they were being reminded that this bitterness could be lifted. They were being shown that the deliverance from Egypt had to be experienced throughout the wilderness journey, as situations arose which were reminiscent of Egypt- and again, they could be saved from them. We are still in the now / but not yet point between slavery and ultimate freedom.

We learn from Dt. 33:8-11 that in some way at this time, some of the tribe of Levi showed themselves faithful to God, whilst others didn't, and the faithful Levites opposed the unfaithful ones- although this isn't here recorded. This kind of faithfulness was shown again at the time of the golden calf, and therefore the system of the firstborn being priests was changed so that the tribe of Levi became the source of the priests. Priesthood was therefore given on the basis of qualification, and Levi's behaviour at this point was one of those qualifications: "Of Levi he said, Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one [the faithful Levites] whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove [the unfaithful Levites] at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your word and keep Your covenant.
They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering on Your altar".

Exo 15:24 The people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?-
Israel continually "murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12).

The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses...

Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to “the Lord spake unto Moses” (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in the way he wrote his books.

The test as to "What shall we drink?" was to be repeated in Ex. 17 and Num. 20. The same basic test, although in regard to "What shall we eat?", was repeated in Ex. 16. The Lord alludes to this when warning us not to ask what we shall eat or drink but to live life trusting in God's provision. And this is how life goes- tests repeat, in essence, and we are intended to learn from how God provides and acts in earlier tests in our lives. And also from how He has provided historically, in the Biblical record. It's the same with how God had carefully instructed Moses how to use his rod, and therefore his failure with his rod was seen as so culpable.

Exo 15:25 Then he cried to Yahweh. Yahweh showed him a tree, and he threw it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet-
We could see in the tree a foretaste of "the tree" on which the Lord was crucified. **We note the connection with how at Elim there was good water with palm trees next to it, as if continuing the theme of a tree making water good.**

Moses was asked to *throw down* wood into the waters (Ex. 15:25). His staff, also made of wood, had to be *lifted up* in order to open the Red Sea and in order to get victory over Amalek (Ex. 17:9). The plagues had involved specific commandment about lifting up the rod. He was being taught careful obedience to commandment about wood, and yet he failed to learn- for the sin which excluded him from entering Canaan was that of not obeying commandment about his rod / the wood. He was told to take the rod in his hand but not use it. This may explain the apparent harshness of God's condemnation of him over this incident.

There He made a statute and an ordinance for them-
What exactly this was isn't defined. It seems it was some simple test of their obedience, perhaps related to the gathering of the water, just as the commandments about the gathering of the manna were a simple test of obedience- which they failed. It was intended to teach them the need for the more detailed set of ordinances which they were to soon receive (:26).

Perhaps Jer. 7:22,23 allude here: “For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you”.

And there He tested them-
At the very time Israel put God to the test at Marah (Dt. 6:16), God responded by testing *them* (Ex. 15:25). When Israel were weary of God, He wearied them (Is. 43:22,24). Because they turned their back on Him (Jer. 2:27), He turned His back on them (Jer. 18:17); because they broke His eternal covenant with them, He eventually did likewise. On the other hand, God set the rainbow in the sky so that whenever *He* looks upon it, He will remember His covenant with man (Gen. 9:16). The pronouns seem wrong; we would expect to read that the rainbow is so that whenever *we* look upon it, we remember... but no. God condescends to man to such an extent that He invites us to understand that whenever we remember the covenant with Him, He does likewise.

Exo 15:26 and He said, If you will diligently listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, and will do that which is right in His eyes, and will pay attention to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you, which I have put on the Egyptians-
The plagues upon the Egyptians were plagues upon their gods. If Israel worshipped their gods (and they did- Ez. 20:8), then the plagues would come upon them. And we often see the judgments upon an apostate Israel described in terms of what came upon Egypt. Thus the descriptions in Revelation of the seals and vials of judgment to come upon Israel are based around the plagues upon Egypt.

For I am Yahweh who heals you-
Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2; Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God's Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God 'is' not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He 'is' there with and for us. The verb behind 'YHWH' was "originally causative", i.e. God not only 'is' but He causes things to happen. We aren't to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name... but rather passionately active and causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

Again, God's healings of Israel are to be programmatic for His people of all time (Ps. 103:3). It seems that as a result of their lack of faith, they were perhaps struck with some of the plagues of Egypt at this point (for they were all healthy on leaving Egypt, Ps. 105:37)- and then healed from them.

We need to imagine the feelings of God as He provided food and drink for them:

He fed and watered them as a doting parent does a young child. Consider: "In the wilderness, you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you traveled until you reached this place (Dt. 1.29–31). If a child finds water bitter, we naturally want to give them sweet water. "There you are

darling, you'll like this". And for all the world, that's how it seems God treated Israel here. Or Hos. 11:1-4:
"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks,
I bent down to them and fed them".

Note that last line: "I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks, I bent down to them and fed them". That was the spirit of love behind His feeding of them. And yet they demanded food and water like an ungrateful person assumes that the royal "they" must provide for me... and worshipped their idols more and more instead of being grateful. You could weep for God. Israel's desire for food and drink was not a simple request of a child to the parent for sustenance. "They had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert" (Ps. 106:14). "You have been rebellious against the Lord as long as he has known you" (Dt. 9:24).

And yet God saw their very small love for Him, despite their idol worship, as wonderful: "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, How you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown" (Jer. 2.2). "Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond to me as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt" (Hos. 2.14,15). This all sounds like the lover almost over eager to wildly over interpret any sign of love for him or even interest in his approaches. And we... love God. We thereby touch His heart, given His tragic experience with Israel.

That heals *you* suggests they were bitter with the bitterness of Egypt, the world, and could be healed by the tree, looking forward to the cross. This is the psychological miracle possible through engagement with the Lord's death for us and the subsequent gift of His spirit.

Exo 15:27 They came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water, and seventy palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters-
There were twelve wells- one for each of the tribes. The lesson was that God had foreseen Israel's need for water long ago, and arranged those wells for them. As for us in our wilderness journeys. Yet 70 is the number of the Gentile nations in Gen. 10. They were being shown that God's intention was to combine Israelites and Gentiles within a

new multiethnic people of God. Perhaps this arrangement of 12 springs and 70 palms was to help Israel to better incorporate the "mixed multitude" amongst them, as being equally God's people. Hence "Elim" implies "holy trees", or "trees of God", as if to remind Israel that He accepted the mixed multitude of Gentiles as equally His redeemed people. **Possibly the 70 palm trees were intended to represent the 70 elders of Ex. 24 who were currently the leaders of Israel. The righteous grow upright as the palm tree, David will later say. Perhaps the idea is that the elders of Israel were intended to bring forth good water for all Israel; and yet in reality they failed to reach this potential, and the system of 70 elders was replaced.**

EXODUS CHAPTER 16

Exo 16:1 They took their journey from Elim-
After one stop over to camp by the Red Sea (Num. 33:10,11). This stop next to the Red Sea was perhaps to help them reflect further upon the wonder of their deliverance through that sea.

This is the time of Jer. 2:2, when God saw Israel as following after Him in love into the wilderness. Yet at this very time the entire congregation murmured against Moses (:2). So this was His desire to see them positively because they still had their idols and were rebellious against Him from the day He knew them. Because He was so in love with them He was eager to interpret any move from them as love for Him. He likewise does not behold iniquity in Jacob, in us, His love imputes righteousness to us. He sees the positive and not the negative, and this is how we should see each other who are in Christ.

And all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt-
"All the congregation" could be stressing the totality of deliverance. Although it is possible some Israelites preferred Egypt and remained in Egypt, they were not now part of the congregation. Crossing the Red Sea, like baptism for us (1 Cor. 10:1,2), defined who was in the congregation.

Exo 16:2 The whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron in the wilderness-
Israel continually "murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to

salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12). The Hebrew for "murmur" is the word for "stop", and is usually translated in that way. The idea is that they didn't want to go further on the journey; they wanted to return to Egypt. Despite the wonder of the Red Sea deliverance. Their hearts truly were in Egypt. This sense of not wanting to go onwards towards the Kingdom, to put a brake on God's saving process, is the same temptation which in essence afflicts all God's people who have started the journey with Him.

Presumably the food taken with them from Egypt was now exhausted, and perhaps they had found fish to eat during their encampment by the Red Sea mentioned in Num. 33:10,11.

Exo 16:3 and the children of Israel said to them, We wish that we had died by the hand of Yahweh in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots, when we ate our fill of bread, for you have brought us out into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger- The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did all Israel eat the Passover? Were many in fact slain. My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, “the Destroyer” Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). “The Destroyer” is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer” (*olothreutes;* this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the ‘Destroyer’ Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of “He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. *olothreuo*) the firstborn”. *Very* soon afterwards, the people reminded Moses of this incident: “Would to God *we* (maybe this is the emphasis) had (also) died by the hand of the Lord (a phrase often associated with Angel’s work at Passover: Josh. 4:24; Is. 11:11; 19:16; Dan. 9:15; Heb. 8:9) in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pot (Young’s Literal) and when we did eat bread” (Ex. 16:3). They weren’t just saying they wished they had died in Egypt; they wished they had died by the hand of the Lord. Sitting by the flesh pot and eating bread is perhaps a reference to eating Passover that night, when in (perhaps) 90% of Hebrew families the firstborn had slumped down in death. They wished they too had died that Passover night. They felt Moses was going to kill them as, by implication, they blamed him for killing the firstborn.

Moses had been weak and discouraged in the same way, accusing God of wanting to do them evil rather than save them (Ex. 5:23). And now this was what the people concluded in the desert, when they complained Yahweh had brought them into the desert to slay

them. Moses would have found patience with them, because he would have realized that this same desperate conclusion, in the heat of desperation, was what he too had been guilty of. It is awareness of our own failures which provides the basis for others in theirs. God is without that aspect; His patience with human sin is therefore the more wonderful than ours.

It may seem incredible that the people so often assumed God was evil and not good, and wanted to destroy them. But we too are faced with these two choices- if we don't believe God is going to save us, then we are faced with the alternative of believing that He brought us out of the world just in order to condemn us. And it is unthinkable that God is evil. He is good and had already historically demonstrated that to Israel through the exodus and the plagues.

The test as to "What shall we drink?" in Ex. 17 was a repeat of that in Ex. 15 and Num. 20. The same basic test, although in regard to "What shall we eat?", was repeated in Ex. 16. The Lord alludes to this when warning us not to ask what we shall eat or drink but to live life trusting in God's provision. And this is how life goes- tests repeat, in essence, and we are intended to learn from how God provides and acts in earlier tests in our lives. And also from how He has provided historically, in the Biblical record. It's the same with how God had carefully instructed Moses how to use his rod, and therefore his failure with his rod was seen as so culpable.

The people complained they had had both bread and meat in Egypt. God gave them the manna every day, but they were not satisfied. So He now gives them meat, but that didn't continue. By the time of Kibrothhattaavah in Num. 11, they were complaining that they had no meat and were bored of manna. It is the basic human feature of never feeling satisfied. The flesh is indeed insatiable. The quail were therefore only sent on two occasions. Unlike quail, manna was specially designed and created food for God's people. Verse 38 is clear that they ate manna 40 years, but no reference to eating quail. The simple message from the gifts of quail was that we do not in fact need extras beyond what God has provided.

Exo 16:4 Then Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from the sky for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law, or not-
Ex. 5:13 speaks of the 'daily work quota' of Israel under Egyptian abuse. But the phrase is used of their daily work for Yahweh, in collecting manna (Ex. 16:4) and serving in the tabernacle (Lev. 23:37). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him

rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

"A day's portion" is literally 'a word for a day'. "Portion" is *dabar*, the common word translated "word". Their obedience to the commandments relating to this gift of bread was to be a test of their obedience to God's word. **The Lord, quoting Dt. 8, taught that man does not live by bread alone but by every word from God. The idea was that the manna was not "bread alone", but was created by God's word. And in Jn. 6 He interprets the manna as Himself, in the sense that He was God's word and was begotten by that word.**

The Hebrew is, "The thing / word of the day on its day ". The Lord alludes to this when teaching that we should allow the evil if each day to be dealt with on that day, not worry about the future, and just believe in God's daily provision. Truly it is in living life like this that "I will test you". The idea is to gather enough for the day. But I suggest the idea is also that whether or not they gathered less or more, it still worked out as an omer / person. And this was the test- a daily test, a test of their daily discipline in this matter, a test every day of whether they would put what they wanted over what they needed... wants over needs is the spirit of our age. Those who thought they were gathering more and thereby getting on better in life... found that for all their gathering more, it came out at the same. We need to learn that now, rather than learn it too late as we face our grave planks after a wasted life. For you can't keep any extra manna until the morning...

Ps. 78:18,19 gives us more insight- they tested God in their hearts by asking for bread, thinking "Will God be able to set a table in the desert?". Yet despite this, God graciously gave them the manna. And thereby, He tested *them*.

We need to imagine the tone of voice in which God spoke this, and how He felt as He provided food and drink for them:

He fed and watered them as a doting parent does a young child. Consider: "In the wilderness, you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you traveled until you reached this place (Dt. 1.29–31). Or Hos. 11:1-4:
"When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
The more I called them,
the more they went from me;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,

I took them up in my arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.
I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks,
I bent down to them and fed them"

Note that last line: "I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks, I bent down to them and fed them". That was the spirit of love behind His feeding of them. And yet they demanded food and water like an ungrateful person assumes that the royal "they" must provide for me... and worshipped their idols more and more instead of being grateful. You could weep for God.

And yet God saw their very small love for Him, despite their idol worship, as wonderful: "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, How you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown" (Jer. 2.2). "Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond to me as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt" (Hos. 2.14,15). This all sounds like the lover almost over eager to wildly over interpret any sign of love for him or even interest in his approaches. And we... love God. We thereby touch His heart, given His tragic experience with Israel.

Exo 16:5 It shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily-
Israel's wilderness journey is a clear enough type of our own path after baptism. They were fed with manna one day at a time- this is so stressed (Ex. 16:4,19,20). There was to be no hoarding of manna- anything extra was to be shared with others (Ex. 16:8; 2 Cor. 8:15). But we live in a world where the financial challenges of retirement, housing, small family size [if any family at all]... mean that there appears no other option but to 'hoard manna' for the future. To some extent this may be a reflection of the way that life in these very last days is indeed quite different to anything previously known in history; but all the same, we face a very real challenge. Are we going to hoard manna, for our retirement, for our unknown futures? Or will we rise up to the challenge to trust in God's day by day provision, and share what's left over? "Give us this day our bread-for-today" really needs to be prayed by us daily.

The idea is that the same amount of manna was gathered on Fridays but when they came to use it, it was miraculously doubled. They lived with these daily and weekly miracles, let alone the water and cloud of fire... and still wanted to return to Egypt

and eat their food. The believer experiences this kind of thing time and again. All basic needs are taken care of and we do not need to worry about how we shall live tomorrow. It is through the daily practice of this kind of life that we come to know / have relationship with Yahweh.

Exo 16:6 Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, At evening, then you shall know that Yahweh has brought you out from the land of Egypt-
The stress is upon "Yahweh". The people wanted to perceive Moses as the one who had brought them out of Egypt, perhaps attributing the Red Sea deliverance to some ability to work magic which they supposed he had. Despite all the stress upon Yahweh as their deliverer, they preferred to think it was all due to a man. We have here a window onto the mindset which human nature so easily slips into; attributing God's clear action in our lives to human power.

It is living in this experience of daily provision and not worrying about tomorrow which makes us know / experience the Lord, and realize that indeed we were brought out of Egypt by baptism. No unbeliever has this amazing life experience. And knowing Him as our saviour, the One who brought us out of Egypt, is paralleled with seeing or perceiving His glory, just as powerful as Moses did on Sinai. For all Israel are called the men who saw His glory, although they turned away from it (Num. 14:22). They had His constant guidance in the cloud just as we do. But they didn't want to see it and perceive the wonder of it, whilst being technically aware of it.

Exo 16:7 and in the morning, then you shall see the glory of Yahweh-
I will suggest on :14 that when the cloud of glory went up from them in the morning, the manna was revealed. The glory of Yahweh was therefore not simply a visible aura of Divine light, but His glory was revealed in providing food for them at the very time of their rebellion. For His glory is in His grace to sinners.

Because He hears your murmurings against Yahweh. Who are we, that you murmur against us?-
Israel's rejection of Moses was a rejection of the God who was working through Moses to redeem them. Thus Korah and his followers "strove against Moses... when they strove against Yahweh" (Num. 26:9 cp. 16:11). Moses understood that when Israel murmured against him, they murmured against Yahweh (Ex. 16:2,7; Num. 17:5; 21:5). They thrust Moses away from them (Acts 7:27,39) - yet the same word is used in Rom. 11:2 concerning how God still has not cast away Israel; He has not treated them as they

treated Him through their rejection of Moses and Jesus, who manifested Him. "Who are we...?" has the flavour of Moses' first response to his Divine commissioning: "Who am I?". Through the experience of their complaining and murmuring, he was further humbled.

Exo 16:8 Moses said, Now Yahweh shall give you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to fully satisfy you-
It's twice emphasized in Ex. 16:8,12 that the manna would completely fill them. In the morning, said Moses, you shall be filled. So the families were to have one big meal a day. Most rural African cultures likewise survive quite happily on one big meal in the morning. The manna gave complete satisfaction; and Jesus commented on this when He said that through His word we would be completely filled, we would eat and not hunger, drink and not thirst.

Because Yahweh hears your murmurings which you murmur against Him. And who are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against Yahweh-
Israel's murmurings about the lack of food did not discourage Moses, because he now better perceived the degree to which he was manifesting God. Here we see the beginnings of some real humility in Moses, due to his appreciation of God manifestation in him.

Exo 16:9 Moses said to Aaron, Tell all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before Yahweh, for He has heard your murmurings'-
"Come near before Yahweh" is usually translated "offer [sacrifice] before Yahweh", and is translated that way multiple times. Although rarely (Ex. 16:9; Lev. 9:5) it is used of the congregation coming near before Yahweh. But the congregation didn't generally want to come before Yahweh, and so He chose just the Levites to come before Yahweh (Num. 8:10; 16:9 s.w.). It was God's intention that all Israel should be His servants, a nation of priests. But He changed and ammended His approach, and chose just the Levites for this. We see here how open God is to change, so that by all means He may have relationship with His people. Under the new covenant, all believers are part of a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) as He initially intended even under the old covenant. And yet there is always the tendency to leave the priestly work to specialists rather than perceiving our personal call to do it.

Exo 16:10 It happened, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of Yahweh appeared in the cloud-
The Angel dwelt in the cloud, which at that time stood ahead of them in the surrounding

desert. But it seems now that Angel revealed himself more, so that the glory of Yahweh visibly appeared through the cloud. But see on :14.

Exo 16:11 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Moses wrote the Pentateuch, but there may well have been a Divinely inspired editor who added comments like this.

Exo 16:12 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread: and you shall know that I am Yahweh your God'-
Israel were to be filled with the manna, so that they would know that "I am Yahweh your God" (Ex. 16:12). This was to be the meaning of the manna. There was a daily manifestation of God's glory along with the manna (Ex. 16:7 cp. 12). The daily sense of living with God's glory is so vital for each of us in our deeply personal spirituality. We know that faith comes from hearing God's word; so our feeding on God's word should lead us to know Yahweh. There was something intensely personal about the teaching of the manna: "He fed thee (singular- not "ye") with manna, that he might make thee know that (every) man (lives spiritually) by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Dt. 8:3).

Exo 16:13 It happened at evening that quail came up and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay around the camp-
"The quail was among the ancient Egyptians the emblem of safety and security". In which case we marvel at God's grace; assuring His rebellious people of their security at the very point of their rebellion against Him. Num. 11:31 says they were brought by a wind, and we have noted how Angel-winds had brought the plagues and driven back and forth the waters of the Red Sea. They were being taught how the essence of God's previous work for them (at their deliverance from the world and Red Sea baptism) was continuing for them. Ps. 78:28 stresses that God thoughtfully made the birds settle immediately around their tents- as if delivering food to their door, showing such grace at the very time of their murmuring against Him. **The one off gift of quail at this time was to answer their desire for the meat of Egypt; they were fully satisfied by the manna, and were given quail to just demonstrate that actually, they didn't need it.**

Exo 16:14 When the dew that lay had gone, behold, on the surface of the wilderness was a small round thing, small as the frost on the ground-
The dew would have come from a low lying cloud, and when it lifted the manna was revealed. The cloud of dew may have been part of the cloud of glory, through which the glory of God was to be revealed (:7). The glory of Yahweh was therefore not simply a visible aura of Divine light, the so called shekinah glory, but His glory was revealed in

providing food for them at the very time of their rebellion. For His glory is in His grace to sinners.

Exo 16:15 When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? For they didn't know what it was. Moses said to them, It is the bread which Yahweh has given you to eat-
As noted on :14, the provision of manna was the revelation of God's glory, in that He was being gracious to sinners. But they didn't perceive His glory in providing food for their needs; just as they didn't perceive His glory in the Lord Jesus, who taught that the manna, the bread of God, represented Himself.

Exo 16:16 This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded: Gather of it everyone according to his eating; an omer a head, according to the number of your persons, you shall take it, every man for those who are in his tent-
An omer is three pints, about 1.5 liters. The Mosaic command to give, every man according to the blessing with which God had blessed him (Dt. 16:17), is purposely similar in phrasing to the command to eat of the Passover lamb, every man according to his need; and to partake of the manna (cp. the Lord Jesus), every man according to his need (Ex. 12:4; 16:6,16). According to the desperation of our need, so we partake of Christ; and in response, according to our blessing, we give, in response to the grace of His giving.

This may not so much be a command, as a statement that no matter how much you try to gather, you only get what you need; it still came out at 1.5 liters, an omer. Theae profound truths are not just warnings for wealthy or materialistic. They are warnings for the poor, who may consider that wealth comes from abilities which they assume they lack. All of us in the end gather and get only what we need. Because beyond food, drink and shelter of God's provision, there is no further need.

Unlike the quail, the manna was miraculously in various ways. No matter how much was gathered, it was an omer per person. Those with greater appetites or need for food intake were all the same satisfied by an omer of manna. This was miraculous. Whatever gender or age, their needs were met by it. Again, our perceived needs are all equally met by God's daily provision. For the daily provision of manna is the basis for the Lord's teaching about trusting God's provision for our needs, and the manna likewise becomes the symbol for God's spiritual provision in the Lord crucified. The lesson of the manna is a radical attack upon consumerism and the quest for luxury living which has become the heartbeat of our society. Over consumption, obsession with expensive luxury food, chocolates, clothes, homes,

holidays... is what wrecks society and dehumanizes individuals to deform the image of God. And it breeds pride. Yet "He humbled you... feeding you with manna" (Dt. 8:3); to trust on Him daily and seek for nothing else is indeed humbling, and yet human pride seeks for so much more. This is no call to asceticism, but to 'gathering enough' and trusting in Divine provision.

Exo 16:17 The children of Israel did so, and gathered some more, some less-
They failed the test of simple obedience to the regulations given. They were to gather enough for their families. But some gathered more than that. See on :18.

We may think that some men gather more than others in this life, because some generate more wealth than others. The challenge of the manna story is to believe that actually we all gather the same. God provides for His rich and poor people alike. Those who worked harder to gether still found they had an omer of it / person.

Exo 16:18 When they measured it with an omer, he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. They gathered every man according to his eating-
This states that the Israelites in the wilderness went out and gathered manna, they returned and measured it with an omer measure, and found that each person had the same omer of manna. The Jewish Midrash strayed from the Bible text, claiming that the stronger men gathered more manna and gave to the weaker, so that everyone had the same. This is a twist of the actual Biblical text; and yet Paul alludes to the idea in 2 Cor. 8:15 in order to make a point to his audience- that the wealthy should support the poorer. He does so in the same spirit as a Christian might quote the Koran in order to make a point to a Moslem- but this doesn't mean that the Christian believes the Koran is God's word. Paul and the Bible writers weren't so on the back foot all the time that they as it were footnoted their allusions to incorrect beliefs with comments to the effect that "Now this is not actually what happened".

Exo 16:19 Moses said to them, Let no one leave of it until the morning-
The Lord alludes to this in bidding us take no anxious thought for tomorrow (Mt. 6:34). They were not to store it up for the next day, but trust in God's provision each day. And again, the Lord's prayer alludes to this, in asking for the bread of today to be given us. The implications of these principles are huge, larger for us than for any other generation- living as we do in an age where we generally have no personal agricultural provision for our food, and must plan our savings in order to survive. Nothing was to be left until morning, just as with the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:10 s.w.). See on :24,29.

This could mean that they were to eat the entire omer. Because by a miracle this would satisfy their needs. They were not to eat just part of the omer. The supernatural nature of the manna is shown by the way it stunk and bred worms in the hours between midnight and morning if not eaten on the day it was given (:20). And yet this didn't happen on the sabbath (:24), again reflecting the supernatural nature of this food. Indeed some of the manna was as it were eternal in that it was kept in the ark for future generations. It was Angels' food (Ps. 78:25). This is why it was called manna, 'What is it?', because it was so outside their experience.

Exo 16:20 Notwithstanding they didn't listen to Moses, but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and became foul: and Moses was angry with them-
"Foul" is s.w. "stink", used of the results of some of the plagues upon Egypt (Ex. 7:18,21; 8:14). Again we see the theme of a disobedient Israel being treated as Egypt, and experiencing their judgments. For their hearts were in Egypt.

Exo 16:21 They gathered it morning by morning, everyone according to his eating. When the sun grew hot, it melted-
As discussed on :22, it could be that this means that when they measured what they had gathered, they found it was just enough for their needs. We note too that they were encouraged to be morning people, to gather the food in the morning, before the sun was high in the sky.

Exo 16:22 It happened that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one, and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses-
There is an apparent confusion as to whether Moses had told them on the sixth day to gather twice as much. I suggest that when they measured what they had gathered, they found it came to two and not one omer. And Moses then explained why this was the case (:23).

Again this is not describing what they did, but the miraculous way that manna gathered on a Friday became two omer worth per person. They told Moses about this experience because he had not previously explained to them what would happen. He wanted them to experience how God provides and that provision means we never have to sin (in this case to break the sabbath by collecting manna) in order to survive. It is in the context of the manna that Israel are formally told for the first time to keep the sabbath, :23, which is likewise a command about trusting in God's provision rather than our own works. Remember that the ten commandments, which include the sabbath, had not yet been given. The sabbath is therefore a gift from God to man, :29, and not a chain nor burden. The Sabbath is

not so much a command to rest from work because we all need a break; but rather a mechanism to stop people working all the time because they think this can lead them to success. It was a mechanism to stop materialism and the pursuit of wealth by work. And this is why it is introduced to man in the same context as the manna, inculcating trust in God's provision rather than trust in our own works. And it is therefore God's gift to man. The principle was to "gather enough", for you and your family. And if you gathered more in disobedience, it still didn't come to anything ultimately more.

Exo 16:23 He said to them, This is that which Yahweh has spoken, 'Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to Yahweh. Bake that which you want to bake, and boil that which you want to boil; and all that remains over lay up for yourselves to be kept until the morning'-
This was so that they did not bake nor boil on the Sabbath- even though the legislation about the Sabbath had not yet formally been given. But clearly the law of Moses was a codification of previously existing conceptions and Divine requirements.

Exo 16:24 They laid it up until the morning, as Moses asked, and it didn't become foul, neither was there any worm in it-
I suggested on :19 that not storing manna for the next day was the basis of the Lord's command to not worry about tomorrow, and not to think we must prepare against it. But what we are to do is instead store up against the eternal tomorrow of God's Kingdom, which was represented by the Sabbath of rest, the seventh day of the creation week (Heb. 4:9).

Exo 16:25 Moses said, Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to Yahweh. Today you shall not find it in the field-
These were the words of Moses on the first Sabbath after the manna was given. That morning, they were told to eat "that" which they had gathered on the previous day.

Exo 16:26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath. In it there shall be none-
The concept of the Sabbath may have been around prior to the time of Moses. But Israel in Egypt had not kept it, and so they are now being helped to get into the rhythm of keeping it- through the manna being given in double rate on the sixth day. We note how gentle God is in preparing the way towards obedience.

Exo 16:27 It happened on the seventh day, that some of the people went out to gather, and they found none-
Their disbelief and disobedience is quite astonishing. The miracle of the Red Sea obviously meant little to them; and Pentecostalism needs to note that it is simply not Bible teaching that dramatic miracles are required in order to believe. Israel had such miracles, and clearly were unaffected beyond an initial "Praise God!", no matter how sincerely that was felt at that moment.

The manna represented the word of God and the salvation which comes through its revelation of Christ (Jn. 6). Israel could gather it on six days of the week, but not on the seventh. The seventh day represents the Kingdom of God (Heb. 4:9; cp. how the manna ceased as soon as they entered Canaan, representing the Kingdom). Yet on the seventh day Israel sought to collect manna (Ex. 16:27), but found none- as the foolish virgins of the new Israel will seek the oil of the word when it is no longer available.

Exo 16:28 Yahweh said to Moses, How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?-
See on :27. Again, their disobedience is presented in terms of how Pharaoh and the Egyptians had sinned. For it was Pharaoh who had "refused" to obey God's commandment to let Israel go (s.w. Ex. 4:23; 7:14). Indeed, "How long do you refuse...?" was the very phrase addressed to Pharaoh (Ex. 10:3). Israel never left Egypt in their hearts, and acted as Egyptians, worshipping their gods still (Ez. 20:8).And so they are spoken to as the Egyptians they really were.

Despite having been given double bread on the Friday, they still wanted more. The manna shows God's provision contrasted with man's tendency to never be satisfied by it.

Exo 16:29 Behold, because Yahweh has given you the Sabbath, therefore He gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days. Everyone stay in his place. Let no one go out of his place on the seventh day-
There are a number of similarities between the record of the gathering of the manna and that of the Passover. They were to gather the manna according to the size of their families, and the collection was to be organized by the head of the house. Nothing was to be left until morning (Ex. 12:10 = Ex. 16:19,20). They were to not go out of their houses [to get manna] on the seventh day, as Israel had to remain at home on Passover night. This is all the language of the Passover. The lamb represented Jesus, and so did the manna. In John 6 the Lord says that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood to have eternal life; and He says the same about eating His words, which He has likened to the

manna (Jn. 6:63). The idea may also be that they were to keep every seventh day as if it were a mini Passover, a celebration of the exodus deliverance. No wonder Paul compares the weekly breaking of bread service in Corinth to the Passover (1 Cor. 5:8).

Exo 16:30 So the people rested on the seventh day-
The Divine record is being very generous to them. Because some of them didn't rest that seventh day (:27).

Exo 16:31 The house of Israel called its name Manna, and it was like coriander seed, white; and its taste was like wafers with honey-
"Manna", literally "What is it?", suggests they never really grasped what it was. It was the revelation of Yahweh's grace to them, in that despite their deep apostacy and unbelief, He was daily feeding and saving them. And so the Lord Jesus likens Himself to the manna in Jn. 6, seeing that He was likewise not comprehended by Israel. The taste was as of "fresh oil" (Num. 11:8). The freshness of the taste was to demonstrate that it had been created specifically for them every morning.

One possible meaning of the Hebrew word for manna is "gift", that which is given as a present for no hope of return. Just like the Sabbath was a gift from God, and is mentioned in the very same context. Our pride recoils against grace because we don't like pure gifts. We prefer to work for them. The amazing manna was amazing grace, but it was not satisfying to Israel. They preferred the hard labour and flesh pots of Egypt. The amazing grace of manna is therefore applied by the Lord to Himself. To His word and specifically to the gift of Himself on the cross.

The manna was "what you knew not, neither you nor your fathers" (Dt. 8:3,16). Those who literally received it did not know or perceive the amazing grace behind it. And neither did "you", i.e. subsequent generations. This is our challenge, to know the manna. It is not simply a challenge to believe in God's material provision, but also in His spiritual provision in the Lord, the true bread from Heaven. We eat this even we break bread, for the Lord's words about drinking and eating Him in Jn. 6 are clearly John's version of the breaking of bread teaching. The simple truth is that God provides for us spiritually every day. His word, His spirit, His salvation assured, are daily experiences. As a result we live with no fear nor worry of tomorrow.

Exo 16:32 Moses said, This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded, 'Let an omer-full of it be kept throughout your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt'-
"An omer" is LXX "the omer", suggesting that the pot in which it was placed contained an omer in volume. If the pot of manna was to be kept "hidden" within the ark in the most

holy place, briefly visited once / year by the High Priest alone, we wonder how this could be 'seen' by subsequent generations. Was the high priest on their behalf to report back to them about it each year? I suggest however that God's purpose is open, and He changes the details as the Divine-human encounter progresses. Maybe it was initially His view that the pot of manna be kept in a more openly accessible place, but He withdrew the witness into the ark in the most Holy, as He perceived Israel's hardness of heart.

Exo 16:33 Moses said to Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer-full of manna in it, and lay it up before Yahweh, to be kept throughout your generations-
The manna, which went bad after only 12 hours, was miraculously preserved. It was a testimony to God's grace. He gave them manna at the very time that they rebelled against Him; and had as it were immortalized this piece of very temporary manna. The message was that His grace can likewise immortalize the weak human beings whom His grace engages with.

Exo 16:34 As Yahweh commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept-
It was to be "before the Testimony" and yet somehow visible to all Israel (:32). I suggest that God's primary intention was that the place of "the testimony" was to be regularly opened to the common people, or the pot of manna regularly displayed to them. It was intended to be in front of the ark, or the tables of the covenant [both of which could be termed "the Testimony"], perhaps not even in the Most Holy Place; but it ended up being placed inside the ark (Heb. 9:4), and became known as the "hidden manna" (Rev. 2:17), when it was intended to be a public, openly beheld witness. But as Israel retreated from God, so it seems to me did Yahweh as it were retreat from His people, hiding Himself ever deeper within the ark, the Most Holy place etc.

Before the testimony meant before the tables of testimony, bearing the 10 commandments. Those stone tables are called the testimony in Ex. 25:16. The principles behind the manna, of living day by day in trust in God's provision and.not seeking more, were to be before God's law, they are the essence of all Divine law about human life.

Exo 16:35 The children of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land. They ate the manna until they came to the borders of the land of Canaan-
This could suggest that we feed on the Lord Jesus and His word throughout our journey to the Kingdom, but then there will spiritual sustenance of a completely different nature. We will have no need of spiritual nutrition in the sense we required it during the journey

there. The Bible is often not precise with figures and numerics, as was the case with all Semitic writings. God didn't feel the need to defend Himself against petty critics. And so here, the actual period was one month less than 40 years (Ex. 16:1 cp. Josh. 5:10-12).

Exo 16:36 Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah-
Roughly 1.5 liters or three pints. Here and :35 would be examples of where a later, Divinely inspired editor [Ezra?] added explanatory words to the Pentateuch.

EXODUS CHAPTER 17

Exo 17:1 All the congregation of the children of Israel travelled from the wilderness of Sin, by their journeys, according to Yahweh's commandment, and encamped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink-
The events of Ex. 17 are the basis for Ps. 95. This is largely a Psalm of praise for what God did for Israel in the wilderness, whilst also commenting on the way they tragically put God to the test, and complained about His care for them. Now the words of Ps. 95:7- 11 are directly quoted in Heb. 3:7- 11 concerning the experience of the new Israel. The simple conclusion from this is that we are really intended to see the events of Ex. 17 as directly relevant for us.

At this time, Israel were faithless and complaining. But this first movement of Israel from the Red Sea towards Sinai was seen quite differently by God, years later. He saw their very small love for Him, despite their idol worship, as wonderful: "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, How you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown" (Jer. 2:2). This for all the world sounds like the man madly in love with a faithless woman, who over eagerly sees every slight movement of her towards him as a sign of her love. God's love for Israel at this time was huge, and He saw their travelling towards Sinai as a requite to that love.

Exo 17:2 Therefore the people quarrelled with Moses, and said, Give us water to drink. Moses said to them, Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test Yahweh?-
Stephen in Acts 7 stresses the way in which Moses was rejected by Israel as a type of Christ. At age 40, Moses was "thrust away" by one of the Hebrews; and on the wilderness journey the Jews "thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:27,35,39). This suggests that there was far more antagonism between Moses and Israel than we gather from the Old Testament record- after the pattern of Israel's treatment of Jesus. It would seem from Acts 7:39 that after the golden calf incident, the majority of Israel cold shouldered Moses. Once the point sank in that they were not going to enter the land, this feelings must have turned into bitter

resentment. They were probably unaware of how Moses had been willing to offer his eternal destiny for their salvation; they would not have entered into the intensity of Moses' prayers for their salvation. The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to “the Lord spake unto Moses” (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books.

Exo 17:3 The people were thirsty for water there; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?-
Israel continually "murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12). The Hebrew for "murmur" is the word for "stop", and is usually translated in that way. The idea is that they didn't want to go further on the journey; they wanted to return to Egypt. Despite the wonder of the Red Sea deliverance. Their hearts truly were in Egypt. This sense of not wanting to go onwards towards the Kingdom, to put a brake on God's saving process, is the same temptation which in essence afflicts all God's people who have started the journey with Him.

Moses had been weak and discouraged in the same way, accusing God of wanting to do them evil rather than save them (Ex. 5:23). And now this was what the people concluded in the desert, when they complained Yahweh had brought them into the desert to slay them. Moses would have found patience with them, because he would have realized that this same desperate conclusion, in the heat of desperation, was what he too had been guilty of. It is awareness of our own failures which provides the basis for others in theirs. God is without that aspect; His patience with human sin is therefore the more wonderful than ours.

The test as to "What shall we drink?" was a repeat of that in Ex. 15 and Num. 20. The same basic test, although in regard to "What shall we eat?", was repeated in Ex. 16. Exodus explains their journey up to Sinai, and Numbers ["In the wilderness", in Hebrew] their journeys afterwards. The Lord alludes to this when warning us not to ask what we shall eat or drink but to live life trusting in God's provision. And this is how life goes- tests repeat, in essence, and we are intended to learn from how God provides and acts in earlier tests in our lives. And also from how He has provided historically, in the Biblical record. It's the same with how God had carefully instructed Moses how to use his rod, and therefore his failure with his rod was seen as so culpable.

They counted Moses as responsible for their coming out of Egypt and lack of water. Clearly God had receded from their thinking. They related to Moses as if he were God. Just as people don't separate church from God, and just as they only see His representatives, rather than looking through them to the God behind them. The Jews likewise told the Lord that Moses gave them manna. The Lord replied that it was God and not Moses who gave them manna.

God allowed the people to hunger and thirst, and had them squeal for help, before He met those needs. Seeing food and water are obvious needs for a wilderness journey, we enquire why God didn't tell then ahead of time that these needs would be provided. Surely it is an example of how God leads us to know our needs before He fulfils them. He wants us to see what our core heart desires are. We think of asking the blind man what he wanted, appearing to walk past the disciples, appearing to be asleep in the boat. He does the same with us.

Exo 17:4 Moses cried to Yahweh, saying, What shall I do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me-
As at the crossing of the Red Sea, Moses responds to the people in a very confident manner, when his own cries to God indicate the depth of his distress. Death by stoning was a punishment for religious apostacy; perhaps this reflected their commitment to the gods of Egypt which they then worshipped (Ez. 20:8).

Exo 17:5 Yahweh said to Moses, Walk on before the people, and take the elders of Israel with you, and take the rod in your hand with which you struck the Nile, and go-
Again, unbelieving Israel are made parallel to Pharaoh and his Egyptian courtiers. For the miracle was to persuade Israel and bring them to repentance, just as had been intended with the Egyptians through the miracle performed with water through striking with the rod.

It was Aaron who struck the river, so we can see that someone's representative can be spoken of as them without being them. This explains the relationship between God and Jesus.

We need to imagine the feelings of God as He provided food and drink for them:

He fed and watered them as a doting parent does a young child. Consider: "In the wilderness, you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you traveled until you reached this place (Dt. 1.29–31). Or Hos. 11:1-4:
"When Israel was a child, I loved him,
and out of Egypt I called my son.
The more I called them,
the more they went from me;
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,
and offering incense to idols.
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them up in my arms,
but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness,
with bands of love.
I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks,
I bent down to them and fed them"

Note that last line: "I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks, I bent down to them and fed them". That was the spirit of love behind His feeding of them. And yet they demanded food and water like an ungrateful person assumes that the royal "they" must provide for me... and worshipped their idols more and more instead of being grateful. You could weep for God. Israel's desire for food and drink was not a simple request of a child to the parent for sustenance. "They had a wanton craving in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert" (Ps. 106:14). "You have been rebellious against the Lord as long as he has known you" (Dt. 9:24).

And yet God saw their very small love for Him, despite their idol worship, as wonderful: "I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, How you followed me in the wilderness in a land not sown" (Jer. 2:2). "Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond to me as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt" (Hos. 2:14,15). This all sounds like the lover almost over eager to wildly over interpret any sign of love for him or even interest in his approaches. And we... love God. We thereby touch His heart, given His tragic experience with

Israel. We at least can say "Father I am ashamed for how my people treated you. I am not much of a lover, not much of a partner for You, but I swear with all my little heart, I will be loyal to You, I love You".

Exo 17:6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb-
God through the Angel stood upon a rock in Sinai with Moses next to Him (Ex. 17:6). Later, Yahweh asks Moses to stand upon a rock in Sinai next to Him (Ex. 33:21 s.w.). We see how God gently and progressively leads His people closer to Him, using every experience He gives us to prepare for the next one, on an ever more intimate level with Him.

The LXX suggests the text means that I, Yahweh in the Angel, will be standing there before [you get there], understanding "before" in terms of time rather than space. So often we find this in our crises- that God is already there. We think of the women worrying as to who would roll away the stone, to find it already rolled away by Angels.

You shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink. Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel-
Moses was asked to throw down wood into the waters (Ex. 15:25). His staff, also made of wood, had to be lifted up in order to open the Red Sea. He was being taught careful obedience to commandment about wood, and yet he failed to learn- for the sin which excluded him from entering Canaan was that of not obeying commandment about his rod / the wood. He was told to take the rod in his hand but not use it. This may explain the apparent harshness of God's condemnation of him over this incident.

The first time Moses struck the rock, he was standing in the presence of the Angel- "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock" (Ex. 17:6), but it would seem that the second time Moses took the rod "from before the LORD (the Angel)" (Num. 20:9) and went alone to the rock; this lack of Angelic presence perhaps accounts for his rashness at this time.

Paul in 1 Cor. 10:4 alludes to a Jewish tradition that the rock followed Israel through the wilderness, always giving water. Some traditions suggest Miriam carried it; the supposed “Rock of Moses” is a piece of rock which could have been carried. Paul emphasizes that the point of his allusion is that the water which they drank of represented “Christ”, the strength which comes from Him as the smitten rock; he alludes to the tradition just as he quotes pagan poets and makes a point out of their words (Acts 17:28). The Bible often features this kind of thing; and God isn’t so paranoiac and apologetic that He as it were has to footnote such things with a comment that “of course, this isn’t true”.

It should be evident enough that the rock which Moses smote in the desert was simply a rock; it wasn't Christ personally. The Jewish book of Wisdom claimed that "the rock was Wisdom" (Wisdom 11). Paul, as he so often does, is picking up this phrase and saying that more essentially, the rock represented Jesus personally, and not 'Wisdom' in the Jewish misunderstanding of this figure. It "was" Him in the sense that it represented Him. Likewise He said about the communion wine: "This is my blood". It wasn't literally His blood; it was and is His blood only in that it represents His blood. Paul is describing the experience of Israel in the wilderness because he saw in it some similarities with the walk of the Corinthian believers towards God's kingdom. The whole of 1 Cor. 10 is full of such reference. And this is why he should speak about the rock which Moses smote as a symbol of Christ. The Israelites had been baptized into Moses, just as Corinth had been baptized into Christ; and both Israel and Corinth ate "the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink". "Spiritual food... spiritual drink" shows that Paul saw the manna they ate and the water they drank as spiritually symbolic- just as He saw the rock as symbolic. Paul goes on in 1 Cor. 10:16,17 to write of how Corinth also ate and drank of Christ in the breaking of bread, and in chapter 11 he brings home the point: like Israel, we can eat and drink those symbols, "the same spiritual meat... the same spiritual drink", having been baptized into Christ as they were into Moses, and think that thereby we are justified to do as we like in our private lives. This is the point and power of all this allusion. The picture of their carcasses rotting in the wilderness is exhortation enough. Baptism and observing the 'breaking of bread' weren't enough to save Israel.

The Lord Jesus Himself had explained in John 6 how the manna represented His words and His sacrifice. He spoke of how out of Him would come "living water", not still well water, but bubbling water fresh from a fountain (Jn. 4:11; 7:38). And He invites His people to drink of it. It was this kind of water that bubbled out of the smitten rock. Ps. 78:15,16,20; 105:41; Is. 48:21 describe it with a variety of words: gushing, bursting, water running down like a high mountain stream, "flowed abundantly".....as if the fountains of deep hidden water had burst to the surface ("as out of the great depths", Ps. 78:15). So the Lord was saying that He was the rock, and we like Israel drinking of what came out of Him. **All this speaks of the gift of the Spirit which was given as a result of the Lord's death. He there becomes the source of endless inspiration and spirituality; which is why we regularly focus upon Him there, not least through the breaking of bread.**

The Law of Moses included several rituals which depended upon what is called "the running water"(Lev. 14:5,6,50-52; 15:18; Num. 19:17). "Running" translates a Hebrew word normally translated "living". This living water was what came out of the smitten rock. The Lord taught that the water that would come out of Him would only come after His glorification (Jn. 7:38)- an idea He seems to link with His death rather than His ascension (Jn. 12:28,41; 13:32; 17:1,5 cp. 21:19; Heb. 2:9). When He was glorified on

the cross, then the water literally flowed from His side on His death. The rock was "smitten", and the water then came out. The Hebrew word used here is usually translated to slay, slaughter, murder. It occurs in two clearly Messianic passages: "...they talk to the hurt of him [Christ] whom thou hast smitten"(Ps. 69:26); "we esteemed him [as He hung on the cross] smitten of God"(Is. 53:4).

It was in a sense God who "clave the rock" so that the waters gushed out (Ps. 78:15; Is. 48:21). "Clave" implies that the rock was literally broken open; and in this we see a dim foreshadowing of the gaping hole in the Lord's side after the spear thrust, as well as a more figurative image of how His life and mind were broken apart in His final sacrifice. Yahweh, presumably represented by an Angel, stood upon [or 'above'] the rock when Moses, on Yahweh's behalf, struck the rock. Here we see a glimpse into the nature of the Father's relationship with the Son on the cross. He was both with the Son, identified with Him just as the Angel stood on the rock or hovered above it as Moses struck it... and yet He also was the one who clave that rock, which was Christ. As Abraham with Isaac was a symbol of both the Father and also the slayer, so in our far smaller experience, the Father gives us the trials which He stands squarely with us through. And within the wonder of His self-revelation, Yahweh repeatedly reveals Himself as "the rock"- especially in Deuteronomy. And yet that smitten rock "was [a symbol of] Christ". On the cross, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself". There He was the most intensely manifested in His beloved Son. There God was spat upon, His love rejected. There we see the utter humility and self-abnegation of the Father. And we His children must follow the same path, for the salvation of others.

The rock "followed [better, 'accompanied'] them" (1 Cor. 10:4). We must understand this as a metonymy, whereby "the rock" is put for what came out of it, i.e. the fountain of living water. It seems that this stream went with them on their journey. The statement that "they drank" of the rock is in the imperfect tense, denoting continuous action- they kept on drinking of that water, it wasn't a one time event, it continued throughout the wilderness journey. A careful reading of Ex. 17:5,6 reveals that at Rephidim, Moses was told to "Go on before the people", to Horeb. There he struck the rock, and yet the people drank the water in Rephidim. The water flowed a long way that day, and there is no reason to think that it didn't flow with them all the time. The records make it clear enough that the miraculous provision of water was in the same context as God's constant provision of food and protection to the people (Dt. 8:15,16). The rock gave water throughout the wilderness journey (Is. 48:21). This would surely necessitate that the giving of water at Horeb was not a one-off solution to a crisis. There is a word play in the Hebrew text of Is. 48:21: "He led them through the Horebs [AV 'desert places']" by making water flow from the rock. The Horeb experience was repeated for 40 years; as if the rock went on being smitten. Somehow the water from that smitten rock went with them, fresh and bubbling as it was the first moment the rock was smitten, right through

the wilderness. It was living, spring water- not lying around in puddles. The water that came from that one rock tasted as if God had opened up fresh springs and torrents in the desert (Ps. 74:15 NAS). It always tasted as if it was just gushing out of the spring; and this wonder is commented upon by both David and Isaiah (Ps. 78:15,16,20; 105:41; Is. 48:21). It was as if the rock had just been struck, and the water was flowing out fresh for the first time.

In this miracle, God clave the rock and there came out rivers (Hab. 3:9; Ps. 78:16,20; Is. 43:20). Each part of Israel's encampment had the water as it were brought to their door. And so it is in our experience of Christ, and the blessing enabled by His sacrifice. The blessings that come to us are deeply personal, and directed to us individually. He died once, long ago, and yet the effect of His sacrifice is ever new. In our experience, it's as if He has died and risen for us every time we obtain forgiveness, or any other grace to help in our times of need. We live in newness of life. The cross is in that sense ongoing; He dies and lives again for every one who comes to Him. And yet at the end of their wilderness journey, Moses reflected that Israel had forgotten the rock that had given them birth. The water had become such a regular feature of their lives that they forgot the rock in Horeb that it flowed from. They forgot that 'Horeb' means 'a desolate place', and yet they had thankfully drunk of the water the first time in Rephidim, 'the place of comfort'.

Exo 17:7 He called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because the children of Israel quarrelled, and because they put Yahweh to the test, saying, Is Yahweh among us, or not?-
The continual presence of the stream of water amongst them (see on :6) was evidence that He was among them. The Angel was visibly dwelling amongst them in the pillar of fire and cloud; and yet faith is clearly enough not based upon that which is seen. The visible evidence was clearly not enough to convict them; for as Heb. 11:1,2 explains, faith is not based upon that which is visible.

Clearly Israel did far more than simply cry out to their Heavenly Father for water. Dt. 6:16 warns them never again to put Yahweh their God to the test as they did at Massah. This reveals that their motives were not simply the need for water, but to test whether Yahweh was really amongst them- despite the pillar of cloud and fire with them and the daily gift of manna. Nobody gets angry with a thirsty child who begs for water. But what they did was a kind of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Again we see that the daily presence of miracles does not of itself convict anyone of faith in God; for "faith" really means "trust". And they had none of that. And yet despite this lack of faith and cynicism of God, He still gave them water. This grace was to humble them- and humility is an intended outcome of grace: "He [God] made water flow for you from flint rock [at Massah and Meribah], and fed you in the wilderness

with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and test you, and in the end to do you good" (Dt. 8:15,16). And yet God was working on another level too. Dt. 33:8-11 seems to say that Yahweh tested Moses and Aaron through this incident, and they came through that test: "Of Levi [the Levite descendant Moses] he said, Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your word and keep Your covenant". The LXX there speaks of "the holy man whom they put to the test by testing. They reviled him (Moses) at the water of testing", referring to Moses.

We learn from Dt. 33:8-11 that in some way at this time, some of the tribe of Levi showed themselves faithful to God, whilst others didn't, and the faithful Levites opposed the unfaithful ones- although this isn't here recorded. This kind of faithfulness was shown again at the time of the golden calf, and therefore the system of the firstborn being priests was changed so that the tribe of Levi became the source of the priests. Priesthood was therefore given on the basis of qualification, and Levi's behaviour at this point was one of those qualifications: "Of Levi he said, Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one [the faithful Levites] whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove [the unfaithful Levites] at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your word and keep Your covenant.
They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering on Your altar".

Exo 17:8 Then Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim-
Dt. 25:18 fills us in with some more details: "(Amalek) smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary". **God's special hatred of Amalek was perhaps reflective of how He so hates an abuse of power and picking upon the weak, in whatever way.** So Israel were "faint and weary", some of them had fallen by the wayside, others were being picked off almost daily by the bands of aggressive Amalekites. Israel were living through the aftermath of their rebellion against Moses; they had been chronically thirsty, and perhaps their spiritual tiredness was matched by the mental and physical faintness of clinical dehydration. The effects of this can last quite some time after liquid is received. So they were at low ebb.

After Israel's blasphemy of the Holy Spirit discussed on :7, the attack of Amalek could be seen as Divine judgment upon them. Amalek would have destroyed them, despite Israel's huge numerical superiority. Israel were only saved by the intensity

of Moses' intercesesion; for when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed against Israel. So Moses saved Israel from destruction, preparing him for how he would do so after the golden calf incident.

Dt. 25:18 says that Amalek attacked Israel whilst they were thirsty, weak and feeble. So the attack happened whilst they were thirsty and demanding water. They were also spiritually feeble and weak. But God so loved Israel that He was angry with those who punished them in their weakness, just as He was to be with the Babylonians and Assyrians. His special hatred of Amalek was maybe because they picked on the weak. God is so sensitive to abuse of the weak, especially the spiritually weak.

Exo 17:9 Moses said to Joshua, Choose men for us, and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with God's rod in my hand-
Despite his youth, Joshua's love of the word, and subsequent spiritual insight, led him to be chosen to accompany Moses, to witness the mighty theophany in the mount. In his relative youth, soon after leaving Egypt, Joshua was made the leader of the Israelite army which fought Amalek. He was told to compose that army of men of his personal choice (Ex. 17:9). One wonders if the condemned generation had much heart for a fight. Can we not imagine him choosing the zealous young reformers of Egypt, along with the warrior-priests?

The attack by Amalek can be read as a punishment for the sense they had that Yahweh was not among them. We could go so far as to say that it was intended to destroy them, but they were saved by the intense intercession of Moses. Remember that although Amalek were outnumbered, surely, by Israel- they were winning whenever Moses let down his hands. All this was to prepare Moses for his finest moments when later be intercedes for 40 days and changes God's intention to destroy Israel. At this point he had Aaron and Hur to encourage him, but up the mountain he would be alone. God leads us likewise- doing something with human encouragement, and then, giving us a greater opportunity for service but alone.

Moses was asked to *throw down* wood into the waters (Ex. 15:25). His staff, also made of wood, had to be *lifted up* in order to open the Red Sea and in order to get victory over Amalek (Ex. 17:9). He was being taught careful obedience to commandment about wood, and yet he failed to learn- for the sin which excluded him from entering Canaan was that of not obeying commandment about his rod / the wood. He was told to take the rod in his hand but not use it. This may explain the apparent harshness of God's condemnation of him over this incident.

Exo 17:10 So Joshua did as Moses had told him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill-
The battle which swayed to and fro between Israel and Amalek clearly points forward to our battle with the flesh. Moses/Jesus is away above us, earnestly praying for our victory. Yet in the same way as Israel had Joshua actually with them in the field, so Joshua- Jesus is not only some remote Heavenly helper. He is with us, leading us in the practical business of fighting this war. The personal effort which the Israelites had to make to follow Joshua is surely implied by the fact the victory was no walk-over. The weak among Israel were killed by the Amalekites (Dt. 25:17,18); despite the incredible level of Christ's mediation for us, such is the power of sin and the apathy of human nature that we can still lose the battle.

Given the similarities with the battle against Amalek, were Joshua's arms held up in fervent prayer in Josh. 8:26 [**"Joshua didn't draw back his hand with which he stretched out the javelin, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai."**]? This is a common association with upholden arms. Moses held his hand up, and Joshua led the army into battle, succeeding because Moses had his hands held up in prayer (Ex. 17:10). Now, Joshua is the one holding his hands up in prayer, whilst Israel are in battle. Lesson: We go through experiences which later repeat; and we are in the position of those who had before prayed for us, and are expected to replicate their examples.

Exo 17:11 It happened, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed-
Uplifted hands are something consistently- and frequently associated with intense prayer, often for the forgiveness of God's people Israel (Lam. 2:19; 2 Chron. 6:12,13; Ezra 9:5; Ps. 28:2; 141:2; 1 Tim. 2:8). The only time we read of Moses lifting up his hands elsewhere is in Ex. 9:28,29, where his spreading out of his hands is made parallel with his entreating of God to lift the plagues on Egypt. It must be significant that uplifted hands is also related to a confirmation of God's covenant (see especially Ez. 20:5,6,15,23,28.42; 36:7; 47:14); for this is exactly what Christ did on the cross. And in a sense, this is what was happening in Ex.17; Israel had sinned, God had forgiven them, and was reconfirming the covenant through Moses (notice that one of the terms of the covenant was that God would save Israel from their enemies, e.g. Amalek). See on Jn. 19:18; Gen. 49:22.

As the Lord Jesus prayed on the cross, so we should arm ourselves with the same attitude of mind in prayer (1 Pet. 4:1).. **We are to have the mind that was in Him there (Phil. 2).** Heb. 12:12 alludes here: "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees". This is an allusion back to feeble-kneed Moses, with his hanging-down hands being held up. And the apostle says: 'You are the one with feeble knees and hands, represented by Moses in Ex. 17!' - although Moses is also representing Christ praying for

us on the cross. So the Spirit is teaching us that with the intensity that Moses prayed for Israel's salvation on that hill in Ex. 17, with the intensity that Christ prayed on the hill of Golgotha - so we should be praying for each other's salvation, and our own.

Typically a leader would be on the top of a hill holding up the national or tribal flag to inspire the troops. But Moses subverted this by holding up his rod, the symbol of his workaday life in God's power. Holding a mere piece of word whilst in intense prayer... naturally suggests a type of the Lord's intercession for us on the piece of word now known as "the cross", with a man on each side of him until sunset. Afterwards he speaks of Yehovah Nissi, Yahweh (as opposed to any flag) is my banner. It was the principle of prayer, of God working through a man's working ordinary life, that was the real basis for victory. Hence :16 GNB "He said, "Hold high the banner of the LORD! The LORD will continue to fight against the Amalekites forever!"". The banner was invisible, it was "Yahweh", His salvation of His people by grace. The rod in the hand of a shepherd may as well have been a paint brush or roller in the hand of a house painter. It was the symbol of how Yahweh's salvation works through the ordinary and obscure.

Exo 17:12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side. His hands were steady until sunset-
A righteous man, Moses the superb and detailed type of Christ, with his hands above his head in prayer, fellowshipping Israel's sufferings, battling with intense spiritual, mental and physical weariness, praying intensely, with a man either side of him, until sundown. Of course this is pointing forward to our Lord's crucifixion- on account of which our weariness can really be overcome, we really can find the victory over sin which we fain would have.

Moses began to pray standing up, with his hands above his head, with the blazing midday sun beating down upon him (so is implied by the fact that he kept his hands steady until the sun went down. The battle would surely have lasted a few hours; perhaps eight, **from morning to sunset,** which was the length of time the Lord hung on the cross. But he just couldn't maintain this intensity of mental and spiritual concentration; he let down his hands. But from his high viewpoint, he could see (and hear?) the panic of Israel as they started to flee before their enemies. So he returned to his mental battle. No doubt when he let down his hands, he continued praying, but not so intensely. Yet he came to realize, perhaps after a few cycles of Israel starting to flee before Amalek, that his prayer was absolutely essential for Israel's survival and victory. But he knew that he just couldn't physically go on. His knees were weak, he was going to have to abandon his favourite prayer posture of standing (cp. the earlier records of his prayers in Exodus). His mind must have desperately raced as to how he could go on. At

the back of his mind, he would have thrown his predicament upon the Lord. And a way was made. "They took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands" (v.12). Note how Moses did not waste his energy in getting the stone for himself; we get the picture of total mental devotion to Israel's cause, a man all consumed with his prayer, being humanly helped by lesser men. Israel's salvation depended on his totally voluntary intercession. The type is powerful. Peter reasons that Christ's attitude in prayer should be ours (1 Pet. 4:1). His prayers then, and ours now, were a struggle, after the pattern of Jacob.

John's Gospel has many references to Moses. When John records the death of the Lord with two men either side of Him, he seems to do so with his mind on the record of Moses praying with Aaron and Hur on each side of him (Ex. 17:12). John's account in English reads: "They crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one" (Jn. 19:18). Karl Delitzsch translated the Greek New Testament into Hebrew, and the Hebrew phrase he chose to use here is identical with that in Ex. 17:12. Perhaps this explains why John alone of the Gospel writers doesn't mention that the two men on either side of the Lord were in fact criminals- he calls them "two others" (Jn. 19:18) and "...the legs of the first and of the other" (Jn. 19:32). Thus John may've chosen to highlight simply how there were two men on either side of the Lord, in order to bring out the connection with the Moses scene.

Gen. 49:22 speaks of the Messianic descendant of Joseph as a fruitful vine, with branches. The Lord Jesus seems to have quarried His description of Himself as a vine with branches from this very passage (Jn. 15:5). Verse 23 continues: "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; from thence is the shepherd, the stone (more Messianic allusions here) of Israel". The upholding of Moses' arms is being unmistakably prophesied here; in a Messianic prophecy. The "God of Jacob" in Gen. 48:15,16 refers to God manifest in Angels; Jacob there defines his God as "the Angel that redeemed me". There are plenty of other reasons for thinking that "the God of Jacob" is Angelic language. So Messiah's arms were to be upheld with Angelic strength. But we have seen that Christ's uplifted hands on the cross refer to the way in which he was intensely praying at the time. The hymn writer put two and two together and came to the right conclusion: '...and Angels there / sustained the Son of God in prayer'. This was one of the ways in which "God was in Christ" in his sufferings; He gave Him special Angelic encouragement to keep on praying, to keep on asking for help, without forcing Christ in any way to be righteous. Surely in this we get some light on the mystery of the atonement; the mystery of the degree to which the Father helped the Son to overcome without in any way affecting Christ's freewill. It is perhaps significant that there were two men (Aaron and Hur) upholding Moses' arms, in enacted prophecy of how the Angels would strengthen Christ in prayer. Does this point forward to the two Angels especially associated with Christ,

Gabriel and Michael? Physically, of course, it was the nails which kept Christ's hands uplifted above his head; yet are we to infer that the Angels even overruled that for a purpose?

Exo 17:13 Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword- "Amalek" appears to be a title like "Pharaoh". **We note how little is recorded of the ebb and flow of the battle. No acts of heroism are recorded, the strategy and battle plans are insignificant in the story. But the spotlight is very much on the details regarding Moses- the stone brought for him to sit on, his weariness, his rod, his arms, the men upholding his arms etc. And so it is with us- it is the Lord's intercession which is all important, and which is the ultimate issue in our victory, rather than the ebb and flow of our own efforts.**

Exo 17:14 Yahweh said to Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under the sky- This points forward to God's purpose to obliterate the memory of the "former things" - i.e. Amalek, the things of our moral weakness (Rev. 21:4); note how the "former things" in several Old Testament passages refer to the things of Israel's sad spiritual past. The forgetting of the former things therefore refers to the lack of awareness of the things with which we battled in this life. In the same way as God can 'forget' our sins, so one of the Kingdom joys will be the lack of memory of anything sinful.

Yahweh's Name, by contrast, was to be an eternal memory (Ex. 3:15). He was to be remembered for how He had articulated His Name in how He had historically acted in saving the patriarchs, and He would be remembered for how He was going to act to save His people from Egypt. What was to be memorialized was therefore His actions, rather than simply the letters YHWH. It was His wonderful works which were to be remembered [Ps. 111:4, s.w. "My memorial"]. By contrast, the sinful works and persons of the wicked would not be remembered / memorialized, be they Amalek (s.w. Ex. 17:14; Dt. 25:19), or God's apostate people (s.w. Dt. 32:26).

The intended fulfilment of this was at the hand of Saul in 1 Sam. 15. But he didn't fulfil it totally, he was told to "utterly destroy Amalek" but he didn't. We see here how the fulfilment of Bible prophecy can depend upon human freewill obedience. We have here a window onto the flexible nature of the outworking of God's purpose. "I will blot out the rememberance of Amalek" depended upon whether Israel as God's instrument would do this- for Dt. 25:19 is clear: "*You* shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens.
You shall not forget". But Israel did not fully blot out Amalek, and so in that sense God allowed Himself to be limited by man. Had Saul eliminated Amalek, there would have been no Haman the Agagite, the Amalekite.

Exo 17:15 Moses built an altar, and called its name Yahweh our Banner-
That memorial was physically symbolized by the building of the altar called Jehovah-Nissi. This literally means 'Jehovah is my pole'; this is a word used indirectly in prophecies about the cross of Christ. “There is no God else beside; a just God and a Saviour (Jesus)... look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Is. 45:21,22) is evident allusion to the snake on the pole to which all Israel were bidden look and be saved. And yet that saving symbol of the crucified Jesus is in fact God Himself held up to all men. The other reading "YHWH is my banner" suggests that the raised staff was as a flagpole, but Moses wanted to show that the victory was in Yahweh and not in the rod of itself.

Exo 17:16 He said, Yah has sworn: ‘Yahweh will have war with Amalek from generation to generation’-
The work of Moses led to the declaration that God will be perpetually at war with Amalek; in prospect, Amalek was destroyed when the sun went down. The same happened with our sinfulness on the cross. In a sense Amalek was destroyed for good, in another sense a long warfare was started; "the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation". Within our natures, as well as in our dealings with the world, we are experiencing this warfare. There is no respite from it. Yet we have this marvellous assurance: God is at war with sin, He is truly on our side in these struggles, these wrestlings with our very natures, which we all go through. This is the comfort as we strive onwards.

Some manuscripts have: "Because a hand was lifted up upon the throne of Yahweh...". Amalek had put his hand upon God's throne, which was Israel. He did dwell in their midst, although they doubted this. And yet Amalek did this as punishment for their not wanting to be Yahweh's throne. We conclude that by grace God accepted Israel as His throne even though they were so rebellious against Him, and punished those who sought to lay hands upon them.

EXODUS CHAPTER 18

Exo 18:1 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses’ father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, how that Yahweh had brought Israel out of Egypt-
Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had

done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46;), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

Jethro was a Kenite (Jud. 1:16; 4:11), and the Kenites lived among the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15 tells them to separate from them lest they also be destroyed). This explains why this incident follows the victory over Amalek and their threatened obliteration in Ex. 17. Yet Jethro returned to his place when urged to remain with Israel. He allowed an argument over divorce and remarriage and the related family feelings to stop him joining God's people. This continues the theme of openness, which we.noted when discussing how God said He would destroy Amalek, and yet that task was given to Israel- and they failed to do so. Likewise Jethro could have come out from the condemned Amalekites and avoided their judgement, but he chose to return. Despite coming at this point to Moses in homage because of his victory over Amalek. This is why Balaam's prophecies specifically condemn the Kenites in Num. 24:21,22. But they could have avoided that by joining in with Israel as they were here invited to. Just as if Saul had destroyed Amalek as asked, there would have been no Haman.

Exo 18:2 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, received Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her away,-
Moses "sent / put away" his wife- Ex. 18:2 LXX is the same "put away" as in 1 Cor. 7:11-13. Moses allowed divorce for the hardness of Israel's hearts (Mt. 19:8) and yet he himself appears to have divorced her- for the hardness of his heart? Her anger with him is seen over the circumcision of their sons, the night when she saved him from the Angel who sought to slay him.

Exo 18:3 and her two sons. The name of one son was Gershom, for Moses said, I have lived as a foreigner in a foreign land-
Moses' children had names which showed some faith, and a recognition he was a stranger in the land where he was living; he lived as a stranger in Midian. Few people live in a country for 40 years without feeling they belong to it. But his mind was in the past, in how God had been good to his father, and how God had saved him from Pharaoh's death threat. He hardly felt Egypt was his homeland, and neither was Midian. Like us, he was set up by God's hand in life experiences to desire "another country", the Kingdom of God.

Exo 18:4 The name of the other was Eliezer, for he said, My father's God was my help and delivered me from Pharaoh's sword-
Although Moses had little contact with his father, he praises his father's God. Moses was only with his parents in babyhood and maybe very early childhood. They inculcated in him the faith of Yahweh at that early age. They likely died whilst he was still in the court of Pharaoh and looked like an ungrateful child who had gone the way of the world and forgotten his God and his people and their efforts to raise him in the faith. Moses here and in Ex. 15:2 pays tribute to them. What a surprise awaits them in the Kingdom!

Exo 18:5 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses into the wilderness where he was encamped, at the Mountain of God-
Moses is described as encamping in the wilderness, when the reference clearly is to all Israel. He, like the Lord Jesus, was clearly the representative of God's people. See on Ex. 34:27.

Exo 18:6 He said to Moses, I, your father-in-law Jethro, have come to you with your wife, and her two sons with her-
This is not in chronological sequence. Moses speaks in Ex. 18:16 of how "I judge between a man and his neighbour, and I make them know the statutes of God, and His laws". Those laws were not given at the time of Ex. 18, so the passage there is out of chronological order. For the people only arrived at Horeb ("the mountain of God", Ex, 18:5) at the time of Ex. 19:1,2. It was only when they left Horeb on the 20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year that Moses established the system of judges as Jethro had advised (Dt. 1:12-15). At the time of Num. 10:11,29, Moses asks Jethro ["Hobab"] to remain with the people as a guide through the desert. I suggest that the events of Ex. 18 should be inserted after Num. 10:10 and before Num. 10:11. In this case the argument between Moses, Aaron and Miriam about Zipporah in Num. 12:1 would have occurred after Zipporah had been accepted again by Moses as his wife.

The children are described as belonging to Moses in :5. But Jethro says the children belong to Zipporah his daughter. This is the petty politics of divorce and family politics. He came with an agenda.

Exo 18:7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and bowed and kissed him. They asked each other of their welfare, and they came into the tent-
"The tent" could refer to the tabernacle, which at that time was effectively Moses' own personal tent. The Septuagint tells us that Moses "pitched his own tent" and called it the tabernacle (Ex. 33:7 LXX); in which case we can speculate that the Angel as it were lived with Moses in his own tent.

Exo 18:8 Moses told his father-in-law all that Yahweh had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardships that had come on them on the way, and how Yahweh delivered them-
God "delivered" His people from Egypt and Pharaoh, just as He delivered Moses personally from the sword of Pharaoh (Ex. 18:4,8 s.w.). Moses was the representative of his people, they were saved "in" him, and baptized into him (1 Cor. 10:1,2). They were apostate idolaters (Ez. 20:8), and were in a way only saved "in" Moses, just as we are saved "in Christ". They were saved really for Moses' sake, for the sake of his faith Egypt had been judged (Heb. 11:28,29), but with characteristic humility, Moses says that this had all been for their sakes.

Exo 18:9 Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which Yahweh had done to Israel, in that He had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians-
The phrase "delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians" is used three times by Jethro here and in :10. It could be that he sung a little ditty about it, in his evident joy.

Exo 18:10 Jethro said, Blessed be Yahweh, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians-
See on :9. This is the phrase used for how Moses had delivered his wife from the shepherds, perhaps Egyptians related to the shepherd king dynasty. Israel rejected Moses as their deliverer, they failed to see in that dead Egyptian the ability of Moses to save them completely from the life of slavery. And so Moses fled away from them, he came to Gentile, pagan Midian, and rescued a Gentile woman from the persecution of men, married her, and started a new life in the wilderness- to return many years later in the power of the Holy Spirit and redeem Israel when they were in truly desperate straits. All this naturally points ahead to the work of Jesus after Israel failed to respond to his work on the cross. The word used to describe Moses rescuing his future wife from the shepherds is the same used concerning God rescuing Israel from Egypt (Ex. 2:19; 18:10). Thus Moses was manifesting the redemptive work of God when he saved his wife. But the marriage broke up, as it did between God and Israel- but was apparently restored.

Exo 18:11 Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all gods because of the thing in which they dealt arrogantly against them-
This implies Jethro thought Yahweh was only one of many gods. **Midian, where Jethro lived, were idolaters (Num. 25; 31:16), and Jethro was a priest of Midian, who "returned to his own country" (:27)- all very much identifying him with Midian.** Yet he apparently came to respect Yahweh as the greatest of them all. Likewise over time in the Lord's ministry, and in the whole NT, reference to demons becomes less and less, as His

preaching of Truth by example and miracle made the point that these things really don't exist. Likewise the gods of Egypt were not specifically stated to not exist: but through the miracles at the Exodus, it was evident that Yahweh was unrivalled amongst all such 'gods', to the point of showing their non-existence (Ex. 15:11; 18:11). See on Ex. 20:3.

Exo 18:12 Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God. Aaron came with all of the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God-
The usage of the word "God" rather than "Yahweh" could suggest that Jethro still saw Yahweh as one of many gods, although the greatest of them (see on Ex 18:11). And yet the elders of Israel ate bread with him "before God", clearly an expression of religious fellowship. They were not at all caught up with the idea of a closed table. They were happy to fellowship with Jethro where he stood, although he didn't ever fully identify with the covenant people, and returned to his own home.

Exo 18:13 It happened on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood around Moses from the morning to the evening-
We are hereby given the impression that the people were endlessly arguing with each other. They were not wholly devoted to Yahweh, and this was reflected in their disunity and animosity between each other. **In Ex. 17, Moses had sat down with the people around him, and interceded for them unto exhaustion. In Ex. 18 he is presented doing just the same, but this time he gives in to the easy way out. We likewise may pass one test but then fail an identical one.**

Exo 18:14 When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that you do for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning to evening?-
Surely what Jethro suggested had already occurred to Moses. The fact was that he probably didn't consider that there were many who were able to be judges, because they were still idolaters and not familiar with Yahweh's laws. **Moses was alone because he was the sole mediator between the people and God at the tent of meeting with God. But Jethro didn't get that. For him, democracy trumped spirituality. The statutes and commands (:16) he made known to them were later codified into the "law of Moses". And Jethro wanted to stop that process. "It will be easier for you..." (:22) was the reasoning of the flesh, and it's one of Moses' negative traits that he often spiritually gave in when under pressure. And I suggest this is an example of that. Even in :23, Jethro ventures that his advice should only be followed if God confirmed it: "If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure". God didn't confirm it, but Moses still did it. And despite that, he did endure and his natural strength was not abated even at 120 years old.**

Exo 18:15 Moses said to his father-in-law, Because the people come to me to inquire of God-

Although they were idolaters (Ez. 20:8), they still wanted to have Yahweh's opinion, and sought to prove that they had Him on their side in their disputes with their brethren. This is absolutely imaginable and true to observation of human behaviour when it comes to this kind of thing. "Inquire" is the same word translated "require". The judgment will be the time when God 'requires' of us our behaviour. And yet the Hebrew word is used about our enquiring / searching to God in prayer now (Gen. 25:22; Ex. 18:15; Dt. 4:29; 12:5; 1 Kings 22:5), as well as His 'requiring' / searching of us at the last day (Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 1 Sam. 20:16; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8). There is a mutuality between a man and his God.

Their enquiry of God suggests the people were coming to Moses to hear God's word. Jethro reasons from a secular perspective, separating church from state. He reasons as if the other judges would all judge rightly; but surely Paul had the situation in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians that likewise there was not one wise man amongst them. But they didn't know Yahweh's law. The law of Moses was revealed to Moses and he had to reveal it to the people. So what Moses was doing was not wrong but necessary at the time. We note in :7 a reference to "the tent", and wonder if this refers to the tent of meeting where Yahweh met with Moses and gave him His laws- for "the tent" is usually used in this way in Exodus. The terms "all the people" and "the tent" are used like this in Ex. 33:8-10: "It happened that when Moses went out to the Tent, that all the people rose up, and stood, each one at their tent door, and watched Moses, until he had gone into the Tent. It happened, when Moses entered into the Tent, that the pillar of cloud descended, stood at the door of the Tent, and spoke with Moses. All the people saw the pillar of cloud stand at the door of the Tent". This hunch is then confirmed when in :15 we read that all the people came to Moses to enquire of God. This is just what they did at the tent of meeting: "It happened that everyone who sought Yahweh went out to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp" (Ex. 33:7). "The tent" spoken of in Ex. 33 is the same "the tent" of Ex. 18:7. The law of Moses had not yet been given, but it was surely in this process that the principles and judgments contained in it were first communicated to Israel. The people came to Moses to hear him speak God's word to them, given to him by the Angel in the tent, regarding their various practical issues. Jethro was therefore wrong to urge this to cease and instead for people to listen to human wisdom and teaching on their issues. And he was obviously inappropriate to suggest that in an apostate, rebellious Israel as they were, there would be righteous, spiritually wise men of integrity in such abundance. There was hardly a wise man amongst them. I suggest Jethro was jealous that Moses had

suddenly risen to be leader of millions of people, after having spent 40 years as Jethro's underdog. And he was obviously upset about Moses having divored Zipporah and returned her to Jethro's house along with the children. But Amalek, amongst whom he lived, had just been defeated by Moses. He wanted peace, and yet wanted to undercut Moses' authority. The whole incident is often used by those who argue for a broad based, democratic system rather than a single strong leader; but the fact is, the system Jethro proposed failed. By the time of Num. 11:16,17, it was again the Spirit which was critical in being a teaching elder, and not the system of Jethro: "Yahweh said to Moses, Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit which is on you, and will put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you not bear it yourself alone". It was being Spirit filled which was the qualification for leadership, not simply being randomly appointed by democratic process.

Exo 18:16 When they have a matter, they come to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbour, and I make them know the statutes of God, and His laws-
I suggested on :6 that this incident is inserted here out of sequence, and refers to a time after God had given His laws to Moses. Moses had perhaps delayed appointing judges over the people because he was using the ceaseless stream of cases as an opportunity through which he could teach God's law to the people. Jethro's suggestion had surely already occurred to him, but he was doing as he did in order to introduce God's laws to the people. But he accepts Jethro's suggestions because he concluded that perhaps he had for long enough been teaching them personally.

Exo 18:17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, The thing that you do is not good-
As explained on :18, Jethro's advice and statements was not quite as "good" as may appear.

Exo 18:18 You will surely wear away, both you, and this people that is with you; for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to perform it yourself alone-
Moses accepts Jethro's advice on the basis that he will "surely wear away"; even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7), and God surely would not have asked him to do the impossible. So Jethro is presented as wrong on this point, and perhaps Moses need not have taken his advice. Jethro at this time seems to have seen Yahweh as only one of many gods; he was a pagan priest. He prophesied that if Moses followed his advice, "all this people shall go to their place in peace"(:23)- which they didn't.

Exo 18:19 Listen now to my voice. I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You represent the people before God-

Moses like the Lord Jesus did indeed represent the people before God; the basis of their redemption by him was predicated upon him being their representative. When he later offered his eternity as a substitute, that was not accepted. **Moses therefore obeyed the voice of Jethro rather than God's words of judgment. "Listen to my voice" recalls the bad advice of Eve and Rebekah. But in Dt. 1, at the end of his life, Moses rewrites the narrative. He justifies what he did, although he carefully omits reference to Jethro: "I spoke to you at that time saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone; Yahweh your God has multiplied you and behold, you are this day as the stars of the sky for multitude. May Yahweh the God of your fathers make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as He has promised you! How can I myself alone bear your encumbrance and your burden and your strife? Take wise men of understanding and well known according to your tribes and I will make them heads over you. You answered me and said, The thing which you have spoken is good to do. So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men and known, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, captains of hundreds, captains of fifties and captains of tens and officers, according to your tribes. I commanded your judges at that time, saying, Hear cases between your brothers and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the foreigner who is living with him. You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it, I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do". Here Moses wishes to claim that he had the idea and the people agreed it and liked it. He is not at all penitent for listening to man over God. And in Dt. 1 we are at the end of Moses' life. If a man of his spiritual stature had a way of rewriting his own narrative- how much more do we have this tendency? It's like his way of always blaming his bar on entry to the land upon the people, "for your sakes", rather than accepting it was a judgment for his own sin.**

And bring the causes to God-
From :22,26, we are to read him as meaning "the more important or difficult cases".

Exo 18:20 You shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and shall show them the way in which they must walk, and the work that they must do-
Moses had been using the various interpersonal difficulties amongst the congregation as an opportunity to teach Yahweh's newly given laws to the common people, on an individual basis. Jethro suggests just teaching them to their elders, and allowing the laws to filter down that way. Moses accepts this, but we wonder whether that was God's ideal intention. We may compare this with the way that God wanted to speak His words to all the people, but they backed away from Him, wanting Moses to tell them what God had said. So we see the theme continued here, of the ordinary people being increasingly

isolated from the direct engagement with God's word which He ideally wished. And this is a theme which has continued amongst God's people to this day.

Exo 18:21 Moreover you shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God: men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens-
If indeed 600,000 men left Egypt (although see on Ex. 12:37), this would have meant at the very least 600 rulers of thousands, 6000 rulers of hundreds, 12,000 rulers of fifties and 60,000 rulers of tens; making in the whole 78,600 officers. Were there really such a huge number of men of integrity in the congregation? All the evidence is that there were not. This again leads us to consider that Jethro's advice had secular common sense to it, but was not God's ideal desire.

Exo 18:22 Let them judge the people at all times. It shall be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they shall judge themselves. So shall it be easier for you, and they shall share the load with you-
"The load" of God's people was carried by Moses; yet it had been carried by Yahweh; for He was the One who had carried Israel out of Egypt and through the desert (s.w. Ex. 19:4; Is. 46:3). Moses was carrying the people too, through patiently bearing with their petty squabbles and trying to help them see through them by wise judgment.

But in Num. 11:14 Moses laments: "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me". This complaint of Moses had supposedly been answered by Jethro's suggestion to appoint elders "to share the load with you" (Ex. 18:22); and I suggested that Ex. 18 is out of chronological sequence, and should be inserted between Num. 10:10 and Num. 10:11 (see note there, and on Ex. 18:6). So in reality, Jethro's secular advice hadn't worked.

Exo 18:23 If you will do this thing, and God commands you so, then you will be able to endure, and all of these people also will go to their place in peace-
Jethro perceived the vital personal role of Moses in Israel's salvation; if Moses 'endured', then he would bring the people to Canaan. This is the power of just one man's faith, and indeed so much in Israel's salvation was predicated upon Moses' faith (Heb. 11:28,29). But "these people" did not come in peace to their place of inheritance; that generation perished in the wilderness. Jethro's advice didn't really work. See on :18.

Exo 18:24 So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said-
As discussed on :18, not all that Jethro said was true, nor was it true that his plan would succeed in bringing Israel to their inheritance in peace. It didn't. So we wonder whether Moses was correct in just accepting his advice; perhaps he did it in order to achieve

reconciliation with his wife, Jethro's daughter. Even Jethro advised that his suggestions should only be accepted if "and God commands you so" (:23). There is no statement to the effect that Moses did await God's commands, and there were various problems with the entire suggestion, as noted in this section.

Exo 18:25 Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens-
There is no evidence that this system really worked. However we do read the same word translated "ruler" used of the "captains" of Dt. 1:15; and whenever we later read of "rulers / captains of thousands", it refers to captains of military divisions (1 Sam. 8:12; 2 Kings 1:9). So it could be that this system was used not for judgment but for military organization. Again we see that Jethro's secular advice, much as it made good common sense, was not really God's way- and it didn't work. **If the suggested system had been put in place, there would've been no need for Moses to later command in Dt. 16:18 "You shall make judges and officers in all your gates which Yahweh your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment".**

Exo 18:26 They judged the people at all times. They brought the hard causes to Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves-
Here we have another example of how the record of Israel at this time is very positive about them. For as noted throughout this section, the vision of Jethro didn't really work well in practice. But in His love, God saw no iniquity in Israel, He saw them as the wonderful, attractive young women whom He fell in love with in the desert. And the Divinely inspired record reflects that.

Exo 18:27 Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way into his own land-
We note from 1 Chron. 23:15-17 that there were descendants of Moses through Gerhsom and Eliezer in Israel at David's time, who could demonstrate their pedigree. They were given designated roles of service within David's plans for the new temple system; which is why they are mentioned in 1 Chron. 23. So we can deduce from this that they did not remain in Midian but identified themselves with Israel. In Num. 10:29 we read that Jethro turned down Moses' invitation to remain with Israel and be their guide in the desert. But Ex. 18:27 says that "Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way into his own land". Here we have another example of where we need to put the scriptures together in order to get a full picture of what really happened. Perhaps the Biblical narrative is constructed in this way so that we must indeed read and meditate upon it all, respecting it all as God's word, in order to more fully see the entire narrative as God wishes us to.

Num 10:29-32 appears to be relevant to this point in the history. Moses begs Jethro

to remain with them and be to them instead of eyes, a rather faithless request because the Angelic "eyes" of Yahweh were to go ahead of Israel in the pillar of fire and cloud and seek out a resting place for them. So this is not Moses at this spiritual best at all: "Moses [had] said to Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying to the place of which Yahweh said, 'I will give it to you'. Come with us, and we will treat you well; for Yahweh has spoken good concerning Israel. He said to him, I will not go; but I will depart to my own land, and to my relatives. He said, Don't leave us, please, because you know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you can be to us instead of eyes. It shall be, if you go with us, yes, it shall be, that whatever good Yahweh does to us, we will do the same to you". But Jethro refused, and the good Yahweh did to His people didn't apply to Jethro- as he didn't want it. We see here the same basic weakness- Moses preferred his ex-father in law to guide them, rather than relying upon the Angel in the pillar of cloud, with whom he spoke face to face as a man speaks to his friend. And likewise he preferred Jethro's idea of secular judges rather than giving people individual judgments from God's word. The essence of this failure is in us all. If it was in a man of Moses' spiritual stature, how much more will it be with us.

Had Jethro joined Israel, perhaps the judgment of the Kenites spoken of by Balaam need not have happened. God stated there that He would destroy the Kenites along with the Amalekites (Num. 24:20,21); yet in 1 Sam. 15 He tells the Kenites to depart from amongst the Amalekites so they wouldn't be destroyed. We see here how God hates to judge and condemn people, and will ever seek not to do this.

EXODUS CHAPTER 19

Exo 19:1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt- "Gone out" is s.w. "brought forth". Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

On that same day they came into the wilderness of Sinai-
There are various options in understanding "that same day". It could mean the same day

of the month, the 15th, in which they had departed from Egypt. Or it might mean the same day of the same month, i.e. the 3rd day of the 3rd month. Or we could follow the Jewish view that the phrase implies "the first day of the month". This would mean it was 45 days after leaving Egypt, on the fifteenth day of the first month. On the next day, Moses went up to the mountain, and then the people are given three days to sanctify themselves. The day after that, the glory of God appeared. This would have been fifty days after Passover, the day which was to be called the day of Pentecost. And thus the Jewish tradition is confirmed- that the law was given on the day of Pentecost.

Exo 19:2 When they had departed from Rephidim, and had come to the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mountain-
We are intended to connect this with how they had arrived in Rephidim and rebelled (Ex. 17:1). They moved on from there apparently repentant, and now encamp before Yahweh in the mountain. The impression is of a repentant people, now suitably humble to receive God's law. At least that is the idealized picture given. For God fell in love with Israel in the wilderness and spread His skirt over them at Sinai, accepting them as His wife, despite all their idolatry and weakness. **And despite their failure to sanctify themselves, and their turning away from the intimacy of coming up to the mountain to the close fellowship with Yahweh which Moses enjoyed.**

Exo 19:3 Moses went up to God, and Yahweh called to him out of the mountain, saying, This is what you shall tell the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel-
The way they were the descendants of the historical Jacob is stressed, as is his name change from Jacob to Israel. They were being reminded that Jacob too had been so weak, as they were. And yet he had been accepted and transformed by God's grace. And this was God's hope for them too.

At this point, all Moses had to go on was Ex. 3:12 "He replied, “Surely I will be with you, and this will be the sign to you that I have sent you: When you bring the people out of Egypt, you and they will serve God on this mountain”. He, Moses, was to serve God on the mountain they had now arrived at. And so Moses takes the initiative in going up the mountain. And he who seeks, finds. God responded by reaching out to him in His word, and by a huge theophany in response to his faltering initiative.

The stress on leaving Rephidim could be to remind us of their poor behaviour there and how they must move on. This may explain the parallel between Jacob and Israel made here, to show the possibility of transformation from Jacob to Israel. "House of Jacob" is female, children of Israel is male, perhaps suggesting the

covenant was for men and women. His religion was not just to be a hobby for males, as was often the case with contemporary religions.

Exo 19:4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings- **The point is that God judged Egypt but saved Israel. Although they wanted to remain in Egypt, worshipped their idols and were Egyptians at heart. Israel were taken to God by grace alone.**

See on Num. 11:12, where Moses later doubts these words . God wants us to be independent, as good parents wish for their children; He wants us to serve Him on our initiative and not merely obey a set of legal codes. Thus He carries us an eagle teaching its young to fly, pushing them out of the nest, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them (Ex. 19:4; Ps. 17:8; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4). The pushing out of the nest in Israel's context refers to their leaving Egypt (cp. baptism for us); and throughout the wilderness journey the Father was teaching them to fly independently. But does God know in advance every failure we will commit? It seems to me that He doesn't, for in our efforts to 'learn to fly', we have freewill- the whole enterprise could go this way, or that, or the other. **But as in Dt. 32:11, the idea may be that the mother eagle [or vulture, Heb.] flies beneath the young bird as it teaches it to fly, in case it fails and drops from the air. Hence Dt. 32:11 speaks of the eagle "catching" its young on its wings as it flies beneath them. In this case, the young bird alights on the back of the mother bird. And Israel failed. They had to be caught on the wings of God. But were all the same brought by God to Himself. This is the huge significance of how God brought Israel out of Egypt. Or the allusion could be to how the eagle can carry other smaller birds on its wings. The eagle was unclean- and yet is a symbol of God here.**

"The load" of God's people was carried by Moses (Ex. 18:22); yet it had been carried by Yahweh; for He was the One who had carried Israel out of Egypt and through the desert (s.w. Ex. 19:4; Is. 46:3). Moses was carrying the people too, through patiently bearing with their petty squabbles and trying to help them see through them by wise judgment.

And brought you to Myself-
Israel's passing through the Red Sea was an undoubted type of baptism and the new creation (1 Cor. 10:1). God brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea baptism, "and brought you unto myself" (Ex. 19:4). It was as if God was waiting for them there, in the wilderness; as He waits to receive every man or woman who passes through the waters of baptism. Time and again they were bidden look back to their exodus/ Red Sea experience. In times of dire spiritual failure or sluggish indifference to their God, as well as at their pinnacles of faith, the Spirit in the prophets directed their minds back to these things- either by explicit statement, or by indirect allusion. We too, as the

baptized new Israel, ought to likewise look back to our baptism with an ever-increasing appreciation.

Literally, 'I will take you unto Myself as a people', as in Ex. 6:7. This is similar to the formulae used for adoption of children into a family. This could continue the family allusion of :6, where we read that God would redeem / act as a family redeemer, a *ga'al*, for His people. The idea may not be that they became His people at the point of the exodus, but rather that He took them to Himself "as a people", they received a collective redemption, not one of them was left behind, not even the most faithless. But the collective nature of Yahweh's salvation, in our times seen in Jesus, Yehoshua, Yah's salvation, must be responded to on an individual level.

"To Myself" could be a reference to the actual personal descent of Yahweh onto Sinai. We note that God "brought" Israel to Himself; not led them. They didn't want to come, but He so wanted them.

Exo 19:5 Now therefore-
Israel were to be a Kingdom of priests exactly because "You have seen what I did... how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself" (Ex. 19:4-6). The redemption which we have personally experienced must be the motivation to rise up to this challenge. The spirit of priesthood should therefore be seen in each of us.

If you will indeed obey My voice, and keep My covenant, then you shall be My very own possession from among all peoples; for all the earth is Mine;-

"My very own possession", as a child desires to own something "of my very own", is a concept hard to appreciate in our days of private ownership and private wealth. Wealth, lands, homes etc. at that time were all collectively owned, as a family or group. Your "very own possession" was something unusual and of deep personal sentimental value; something you had personally acquired. And this was how God saw His people; they were very significant and personally valuable to Himself, and how He defined Himself as an individual. Whilst all of creation is God's in another sense, that too has [by His grace] become of collective ownership. But Israel, His people, are His very own personal possession. He likewise allows Himself, in a sense, to be defined by us.

We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they would be His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to

by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His "peculiar treasure" by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that "the Lord has avouched you this day to be His peculiar people [s.w.]... *that* you should keep all His commandments" (Dt. 26:18). See what's happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

The Hebrew word for 'hear' is also translated 'obey' (Gen. 22:18; Ex. 19:5; Dt. 30:8,20; Ps. 95:7). We can hear God's word and not obey it. But if we really hear it as we are intended to, we will obey it. If we truly believe God's word to be His voice personally speaking to us, then we will by the very fact of hearing, obey. The message itself, if heard properly and not just on a surface level, will compel action. We can delight to know God's laws and pray daily to Him, when at the same time we are forsaking Him and His laws; if we are truly obedient, then we will delight in God's law (Is. 58:2 cp. 14). We have a tendency to have a love of and delight in God's law only on the surface. John especially often uses 'hearing' to mean 'believing' (e.g. Jn. 10:4,26,27). And yet the Jews 'heard' but didn't believe. We must, we really must ask ourselves: whether we merely hear, or hear and believe. For we can hear, but not really hear.

God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). He fulfilled His promise here at Sinai that if they were obedient, He would make them His people; and He did, counting them as obedient. Yet the events of the intervening forty years hardly sound like Israel being obedient; He "suffered their manners" forty years (Ps. 95:10; Acts 13:18). And yet at the end of that period, they were counted as having been sufficiently obedient to be made God's people (Ex. 19:5 cp. Dt. 27:9).

Dt. 4:19,20 reasons that God had chosen Israel out of the nations when He refined them in Egypt. But this was conditional upon their obedience. They were disobedient, but God in His love chose them. Simply because He loved them: "When you look up to the sky and see the sun, moon, and stars – the whole heavenly creation – you must not be seduced to worship and serve them, for the LORD your God has assigned them to all the people of the world. You, however, the LORD has selected and brought from Egypt, that iron-smelting furnace, to be his special people as you are today".

Exo 19:6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation'. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel-
God intended Israel to be "a Kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). **This could be read as meaning they were to have priests for kings; but they turned away from this by wanting a singular king who was not a priest. Or we can understand it as meaning that the entire kingdom were to be priests. A priest teaches and mediates for**

people; so we see here the mission of Israel in this world, as a whole nation who were intended to bring the world to Yahweh. This is what it is to be Israel, as God intended. And these words are transferred to us in 1 Peter 2:5. "All the people of Israel" were the builders of the spiritual house of God, i.e. His people (Acts 4:10,11). It was God's intention that there should be no specialist priests. It was everyone's job, to teach their neighbour and family God's word. But His plans were ammended as their general failure became apparent, and the Levites were chosen. But His ideal intention remained. Thus when Israel were rejected, they were told that they as a nation could no longer be God's priest (Hos. 4:6). By baptism, we become spiritual Israel; and this idea is relevant to us too. Peter picks up these words in Exodus and applies them to every one of us, for the new covenant returns to this original intention of the old covenant: "You also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5,9, quoting Ex. 19:6 LXX).

As it was God's intention that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to *all* discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should *all* teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Indeed, God told Israel [unrecorded in the historical records]: "Ye are gods [*elohim*] and all of you are sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6 RV). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.). Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11). Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord…praise *ye* the Lord". All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3).

The "Kingdom of God" is not only a future political entity to be established on earth; the term refers also to whatever God has Kingship over now. A Kingdom is essentially a people. God's people are His Kingdom, here and now. By entry into the body of Christ by baptism, we are like Israel being declared as God's Kingdom on earth (Ex. 19:5,6) after their Red Sea 'baptism'. Life in [the body of] Christ now, the Kingdom life now [as the Lord speaks of it in Mt. 5-7], the life to be eternally experienced in the future manifestation of the Kingdom of God on earth… it's all about life in a community. It's not about splendid isolation now, because it won't be about that in the eternal future either.

Exo 19:7 Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and set before them all

these words which Yahweh commanded him-
"All these words" were the invitation to be God's priestly kingdom. The first simple step in relationship with God is to say "Yes" to that general invitation. And then the details follow, but it seems God saw their initial agreement as so significant. There is some parallel in the way that the very simple gospel of the resurrected Lord Jesus is to be taught, accepted in baptism, and then after that, those who have accepted it are to be taught "to observe all things whatever I have commanded" (Mt. 28:20). See on :11.

Exo 19:8 All the people answered together, and said, All that Yahweh has spoken we will do. Moses reported the words of the people to Yahweh-
*"*Answered together" could imply that they spoke these words in unison, at the same time. **But there was a group think here. For the people were soon drawing back from personal meeting with God because they refused to be personally sanctified.** God of course heard those words, but Moses "reported the words" as if this was required in order for the proposed covenant to be formally ratified. See on :19.

Exo 19:9 Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, I come to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever. Moses told the words of the people to Yahweh-
The Angel told Moses that the people would hear him, "and believe you for ever". But this was only true potentially, as are many such statements. For things turned out the opposite. At this time, God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21), He was the young man in love with the girl called Israel whom He had met in the desert. And so the record reads very positively about them. See on :21. **The people didn't believe Moses. The idea was that God's personal descent and Israel hearing His words ought to have permanently persuaded them. But it didn't and neither did God's descent in His Son.**

Exo 19:10 Yahweh said to Moses, Go to the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments-
This command to sanctify themselves suggests separation from something. And surely the idea was that they were to repent of their idolatry and ditch the idols of Egypt which they had taken with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8). There is no evidence they did so, for they carried the tabernacles of other gods through the desert, along with Yahweh's (Acts 7:43).

Exo 19:11 and be ready against the third day; for on the third day Yahweh will come down in the sight of all the people on Mount Sinai-
"Be ready" is the phrase used in the covenant to David, rendered "be established... be

confirmed" (2 Sam. 7:16,24,26). Their readiness or preparedness, basically their willingness, was to be the qualification for entering the covenant. See on :7. In one sense, all we have to do is say yes.

Exo 19:12 You shall set bounds to the people all around, saying, 'Be careful that you don't go up onto the mountain, or touch its border. Whoever touches the mountain shall be surely put to death-
Moses apparently obeyed this (:23), although there is no record of his doing so. The Hebrew for "bounds" is literally to tie a rope; it was but a rope. The boundary therefore made the mountain holy / sanctified (:23). They were not to touch the holiness of Yahweh, whereas later whatever touched holy things was made holy (s.w. Ex. 29:37; 30:29; Lev. 6:18). The implication could be that God knew that in reality, they were not a sanctified / holy people. He had asked them to make themselves holy by rejecting their idols, but they had not done so (:10). And so they were warned not to touch the holy mountain, or else they would die for having defiled God's holiness by their unholiness.

Exo 19:13 No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether it is animal or man, he shall not live'-
The commentary of Heb. 12:20 is that "They could not endure [s.w. "uphold"] that which was commanded- If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned". The argument in the context seems to be that Israel were disobedient even to the peripheral command not to touch the mountain; let alone to the actual content of the covenant. Although they disobeyed, there is no record of their being slain. Their curiosity overcame any respect they may have had for God's law, and thus they repeated in essence the sin of Adam and Eve in touching and taking the forbidden fruit.

When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come up to the mountain-
LXX "when the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on :14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on :10. **The cordonning off of the mountain was not therefore to stop the people coming up it; it was to stop them coming up it prematurely. But as it happened, they chose not to go up the mountain. They asked Moses to deal with this amazing God, and report to them about what He wanted. They thereby shunned intimacy with their God, in the way so many do today. They had a passing curiosity in wanting to gaze upon their God, but when they realized His greatness and the need for sanctification before approaching Him- they wanted Moses to do their religion for them.**

Exo 19:14 Moses went down from the mountain to the people, and sanctified the

people; and they washed their clothes-
I suggested on :10 that this command to sanctify themselves suggests separation from something. And surely the idea was that they were to repent of their idolatry and ditch the idols of Egypt which they had taken with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8). But Moses sanctified them in a ritual sense. But I have argued on :10 that they were not in fact sufficiently holy, and therefore they did not ascend the mountain as originally planned (:13).

Exo 19:15 He said to the people, Be ready by the third day. Don't have sexual relations with a woman-
They had three days to sanctify themselves, and I suggested on :10 that this meant throwing away their idols and being sanctified to Yahweh alone. But as noted on :14, they merely went through external rituals of sanctification, and thought that washing their clothes and abstaining from sex for three days would make them sanctified. It didn't.

Exo 19:16 It happened on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain, and the sound of an exceedingly loud trumpet; and all the people who were in the camp trembled-
"Thunders" is LXX "voices"; the thunders were to be understood as the great voice of God. And then according to Ex. 19:13 LXX "when the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on :14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on :10. Moses himself trembled (Heb. 12:21).

Exo 19:17 Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the lower part of the mountain-
The idea was as in :13 LXX "when the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on :14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on :10. Instead of all of them ascending the mountain, only Moses was invited to ascend (:20). This was a departure from the initial intention. And when he got to the top, he was simply told to go down and ensure the people didn't break through the cordon and come up the mountain as originally planned. Some of them had already touched the mountain; for the commentary of Heb. 12:20 is that "They could not endure [s.w. "uphold"] that which was commanded- If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned". The argument in the context seems to be that Israel were disobedient even to the peripheral command not to touch the mountain. The whole narrative is the story of an intimacy with God which didn't come

about as potentially possible. And that is the sad story of so much of the Divine-human encounter.

Exo 19:18 Mount Sinai, all of it, smoked, because Yahweh descended on it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly-
This reference to fire, smoke, furnace, earthquake and the descent of Yahweh is very similar to the language of Divine judgment, especially of Sodom (Gen. 19:28; Rev. 9:2). And we know from the prophets that Israel were considered by God as Sodom. We could read this as His wrath with Israel for breaking His simple commandments about not touching the mountain, and for not having sufficiently sanctified themselves (see on :10,14,18). The argument of Heb. 12 appears to be that the scene here is one of condemnation of sinful man- and we have not been called to that, but to salvation by grace in the new covenant in Christ. But this condemnation wasn't the original intention; which had been rather that all Israel would ascend Sinai and meet God (:13).

Dt. 4:11 explains that the "mountain burned with fire unto the very midst of the heavens". It was as if the pillar of fire now extended to Heaven itself, from the top of the mountain. The whole image suggests the direct connection between God Himself and the mountain. As if He Himself had directly descended. The pillar of fire went with them to daily remind them of this connection. Indeed it could be that the pillar of fire now had moved onto the top of the mountain, but it turned into an infinitely tall pillar, extending into the centre of Heaven itself.

Exo 19:19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice-
What did Moses speak? Presumably the words of :7,8, whereby the people had agreed to enter covenant with Yahweh. The response was that Moses alone, and not the people as originally planned (see on :13), was invited up to God. And was simply told to return to the people, with no covenant, but rather a repeated message not to touch the mountain in their unclean state (see on :10,14,15). **Alternatively we can see this as enigmatically unstated- Moses asked for 'something' and Yahweh "answered". What Moses asked for on Sinai at other times was the salvation of Israel. God responded by accepting them into covenant anyway.**

The fact Moses spoke and God answered would implies He asked at least one question. Perhaps he intercedes for the people in asking that they might hear God's voice. Hence Dt. 5:5 saysbthat Moses stood between the people and Yahweh at this time. Or maybe the idea is that Moses spoke a commandment and then God spoke the next one, as if God was answering to Moses as a choir or singer answers to

another. A matchless picture of the Divine human symphony between God and a mere man. No wonder Heb. 12 says that Moses feared and quaked.

The people were not allowed near the base of the mountain. Yet they each heard Moses speaking and God's reply, clearly by a miracle. Dt. 5:4,19 stress that Yahweh spoke directly to the people out of the fire. God's word likewise is brought personally to each person in the new covenant.

Exo 19:20 Yahweh came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. Yahweh called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up-
See on :19. Wherever an ordinary Israelite offered sacrifice, "I will come unto thee ['you' singular] and bless thee" (Ex. 20:23 AV). This is the very language of God coming unto Moses on the top of Sinai (Ex. 19:20 RV)- as if to imply that the very pinnacle of Moses' relationship with God, meeting Him on the top of the mount, is just as attainable for each of God's people who truly sacrifices to Him.

God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity (e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so- but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time (1 Pet. 3:18-21).

Exo 19:21 Yahweh said to Moses, Go down, warn the people, lest they break through to Yahweh to gaze, and many of them perish-
We eagerly await the words of Yahweh to Moses. The narrative sets us up to expect some profound revelation; but Moses is told simply to go all the way back down the mountain and warn the people of their tendency to disobedience. Heb. 12:20 says the people had touched the mountain, and they were not sufficiently sanctified. See on :10,14,15. They had religious curiosity, they wanted to gaze upon God- but not to personally sanctify themselves in order to enter true relationship with Him. And that is so true of people today.

The way Moses in Deuteronomy sees Israel as far more righteous than they were reflects the way the Lord imputes righteousness to us. He says that Israel didn't go near the mountain because they were afraid of the fire (Dt. 5:5), whereas Ex. 19:21-24 teaches that Israel at that time were not so afraid of the fire, and were quite inclined to

break through the dividing fence and gaze in unspiritual fascination at a theophany which was beyond them. See on Dt. 13:6.

Exo 19:22 Let the priests also, who come near to Yahweh, sanctify themselves, lest Yahweh break forth on them-
Clearly there were some priests before Aaron and his sons were consecrated. So many elements of the Mosaic law were in operation before it was given, so that some of it was really just a codification of existing concepts. But it was God's intention that all His people be priests, and under the new covenant, this priestly language of coming / drawing near to God is applied to all believers (Heb. 7:19). Indeed it is through having the sure hope of the Kingdom that we are inspired to "draw near to God" in such priestly service.

Exo 19:23 Moses said to Yahweh, The people can't come up to Mount Sinai, for you warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain, and sanctify it'-
Moses over-estimated their obedience, so much did he love them. Unknown to him at the time, they had touched the mountain and had broken the command not to touch it (Heb. 12:20). And as explained on :10,13,14, they were not sufficiently sanctified before God.

Exo 19:24 Yahweh said to him, Go down and you shall bring Aaron up with you, but don't let the priests and the people break through to come up to Yahweh, lest He break forth on them-
They had religious curiosity, they wanted to gaze upon God- but not to personally sanctify themselves in order to enter true relationship with Him. And that is so true of people today.

If Israel broke through to gaze, Yahweh would break through upon them (Ex. 19:24); their punishment would be appropriate to their sin. Under the Law, every sin received an appropriate judgment, and this anticipates the final meting out of punishment at the last day (Heb. 2:2,3). Because Israel said "No; for we will flee upon horses [and not need Yahweh's protection]; therefore shall you flee [in the condemnation process]: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift" (Is. 30:16). Because Israel thought they could flee God's judgments on swift horses, therefore their judgment came to them on swift horses. Adam and Eve were punished in ways appropriate to their individual failures. The lazy servant was punished out of his own mouth (Lk. 19:22); and even in Job's time, this principle of Divine condemnation was known (Job 9:20; 15:6). The Judaizers too were to have an "end [that] will correspond to their deeds" (2 Cor. 11:14,15 RSV).

Exo 19:25 So Moses went down to the people, and told them-
We are left to imagine him making the long journey back to the people, without having received the covenant as expected. He had merely been told to ensure the people didn't break through and touch the holy mountain. He would have realized on the climb down that they must have sinned. Something had gone wrong, and they had not in fact been invited up the mountain as initially planned (:13).

EXODUS CHAPTER 20

Exo 20:1 God spoke all these words, saying,-
The ten commandments are unique amongst the legal codes of ancient peoples, in that they speak of Divine commands given to individuals- AV "thou", you singular, shall do this, or not do that. God shows in this crucial covenant statement that He wished for personal obedience from every one of His people, not just certain sacrifices offered by representatives of the tribe.

Exo 20:2 I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage-
The language echoes that of God to Abraham: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments.

"You" is you singular, AV "thee". This was addressed primarily to those who heard it, so that Dt. 5:3,4 could reflect: "The Lord made this covenant with *us*, even *us*, who are all of *us* here alive this day". The whole theme is of personal intimate relationship with Yahweh, concluding with the encouragement to kick some earth together to make an altar, and personally have that as their Sinai where God would likewise come down.

The decalogue was written in God's handwriting and engraved upon stones (Ex. 32:16). The Hebrew for "engraved" is *haruth*, the same consonants as *heruth*, freedom / liberty. This connection between law and freedom is played on in James 1:25; 2:12. The law, therefore, is not a leash, a chore to be performed, but as David often observes, God's law is the way to run free. Divine law is the way to help man find his true identity and spiritually blosssom. This of course is the opposite to human law, which seeks to constrain and 'keep the loonies on the path'. A comparison of God's law with other legal codes of the time, such as the laws of Hammurabi, reveals how God seeks to value the human person. His law was the same for all, unlike the contemporary human laws which excused the higher

classes from obedience. Human life always trumped material issues; the death penalty was used very sparingly in God's laws. And above all, the Divine laws are always positioned in relation to the fact that "I am Yahweh your [personal, AV "thy"] God". Obedience was part of a personal covenant relationship with God, and an act of gratitude for His personal salvation. There is constant connection between law and covenant relationship; hence Hos. 8:1 "they have broken My covenant, and rebelled against My law". Related to this is the constant repetition that the law was given by God, and "You shall be holy, for I am holy"- and not arrived at from human consultation and development of legal tradition. This is why God's law begins with the statement "I am Yahweh your God" (Ex. 20:2). Thus the Sabbath rest was because God had rested on the seventh day; and the ten "He said..." statements of the Genesis creation can be connected with the ten commandments, which were aimed at a new spiritual creation of people. The command not to have other gods was because Yahweh is a jealous God. The laws are always based around who God is.

Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2; Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God's Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God 'is' not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He 'is' there with and for us. The verb behind 'YHWH' was "originally causative", i.e. God not only 'is' but He causes things to happen. We aren't to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name... but rather passionately active and causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

Dt. 4 and 5 repeatedly stress the wonder of Israel hearing the very voice of God. How awesome to hear Him pronounce His own Name. "Yahweh spoke with you face to face on the mountain out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between Yahweh and you at that time to show you the word of Yahweh, for you were afraid because of the fire, and didn't go up onto the mountain)" (Dt. 5:4,5). Hence Moses urges them to obedience because they have been given these commands from God's own voice. Grasping the wonder of Biblical inspiration should inspire us likewise. The fact God brought them out of Egypt us likewise cited as an inspiration to obedience.

As discussed on Ex. 6:1, the first commandment is to accept that Yahweh is our God; we are in relationship with Him, and therefore we have no other gods than Him. Our relationship is one of family, because Yahweh will be our redeemer, the kinsman redeemer. This is why the ten commandments begin with the command to accept that "I am Yahweh your God". All this is really true. "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:2,3). This is so much more than 'You must

believe that God is one'. It is a command to accept the wonder of the fact that this one God is our God.

T**he Exodus is the most alluded to historical incident of the Old Testament- it's a pattern to us all. Israel were not to be passive to their history of redemption, and neither can we be. Both the ten commandments and the rest of the law began with reference to Israel's exodus deliverance: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me..." (Ex. 20:2,3); the rest of the law began with the commands about releasing slaves because this was the outcome of their own exodus experience: "Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything" (Ex. 21:1,2). And throughout the law, there were references to the exodus as the motive for obeying the law, e.g. Ex. 23:9 "You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt".**

Exo 20:3 You shall have no other gods before Me-
"Before Me" can mean that Yahweh is to be the most honoured of all gods. This could suggest a tolerance of having other gods, but in the hope that Yahweh's supremacy would become so obvious that faith in the other gods would fade away. This was the attitude taken by the Lord Jesus in His tolerance of belief in demons, which were also false gods and connected with idols. But "before Me" can also mean 'in My presence'. To come into Yahweh's presence with any idol... would be unthinkable. See on Ex. 18:11.

"Before Me" means "in My presence". Israel were in God's presence but had not separated / sanctified themselves from the Egyptian gods:"I said to them, Throw away every man the abominations of his eyes, and don't defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God. But they rebelled against Me, and would not listen to Me; they didn't throw away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt" (Ez. 20:7,8). We are no less in His presence. If we read "before Me" as meaning 'I must be your number one god', then we have Yahweh saying that having other gods was acceptable if He was the first one. Through the promise of the Comforter, which alludes to Yahweh's presence amongst Israel, we likewise are bound to serve Him alone. That presence is more than an eery awareness of the supernatural at times, e.g. when encountering a beautiful sunset. It is a deeper and abiding sense of His presence, His commitment to us and ours to Him, which only He can give.

Exo 20:4 You shall not make for yourselves an idol, nor any image of anything that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the

earth:-
"Likeness" is used in the LXX in the frequent warnings not to make an image or likeness of any god, let alone Yahweh (Ex. 20:4; Dt. 4:16-25; Ps. 106:20; Is. 40:18,19). The reason for this prohibition becomes clearer in the New Testament; the ultimate likeness of God is in His Son, and we are to create the likeness of His Son not as a mere physical icon, but within the very structure of our human personality and character.

We wonder whether the command to make the molten cherubim over the ark was therefore a concession to the human desire for some kind of image; for it was a "pattern of the things in the heavens" as Paul puts it.

Exo 20:5 you shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them, for I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and on the fourth generation of those who hate Me,-
The prophets were up against the same passionless spirit that pervades our societies today. "The Lord thy God [is] a jealous God" (Ex. 20:5) was changed in the Targums to "I am a God above jealousy" (*Mechilta*). The prophets speak so often of God's wrath, love, hurt, pain, passion, anger, pathos... And they speak too of the terrible "repentings", the kindling of contradictory impulses, which there apparently is in the mind of God. But jealousy is a lead feature within Yahweh's personality (Ex. 20:5; 34:14). It speaks specifically of the jealousy of a man concerning the faithfulness of his wife (Num. 5:14). God was the passionate lover and husband of His people, and it is inevitable therefore that the extent of that love would produce jealousy when they spurned Him and went after other men, the idols.

We may well enquire why God limits the effect of sin to the third or fourth generation; and why He speaks generally of "third or fourth". I suggest the reason is that He doesn't have generational curses in view, but rather judgment upon an extended family living together, which typically included three or four generations under the same roof. This interpretation enables us to easily square this passage with the other statements that God doesn't punish generations for the sins of their ancestors. But a head of house does bring blessing or curse upon those within his house. Likewise :6 speaks of blessing coming upon "thousands" of those who love God. But that word for "thousands" often means a family, tribe, or some unit of population. This would continue the theme- that the head of family brings blessing or curse upon their family. The apparently parallel statement in Dt. 7:9 "unto / upon a thousand generations" doesn't contradict this, once we realize that "generations" is strangely singular. The idea is therefore 'a generation of a family', as discussed on Ex. 20:5.

Exo 20:6 and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep my

commandments-
God is His word (Jn. 1:1); to love God is to love His word. If we love Christ, we will keep His words (Jn. 14:15,21; 15:10). This is evidently alluding to the many Old Testament passages which say that Israel's love for God would be shown through their keeping of His commands (Ex. 20:6; Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,13,22; 30:16; Josh. 22:5). Israel were also told that God's commands were all related to showing love (Dt. 11:13; 19:9). So there is a logical circuit here: We love God by keeping His commands, the essence of which is love of people, therefore His commands are fundamentally about love. Thus love is the fulfilling of the law of God; both under the Old and New covenants (Rom. 13:10). **I discuss on :5 how "thousands" refers to family units. The idea may be that thousands, or "many", will be blessed for the sake of a faithful third party, far more than the numbers of those cursed because of the disobedience of a wicked man (:5). Blessing or curse for the sake of a third party is found throughout the Bible, coming to full term in the blessing of all the sinners who are "in Christ".**

Exo 20:7 You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain-
One reference of this is to the idea of a wife taking her husband's name; just as we do when we call the Name upon ourselves in baptism (Acts 15:17; 22:16). The Hebrew for "take" is also translated "marry" or "accept". Perhaps 2 Cor. 6:1 alludes to the idea in urging us not to "accept" or 'take' God's grace [the essence of His Name] "in vain". The vulnerability and sensitivity of God is reflected in the way that He is concerned that His covenant people, His wife, who bears His Name, might profane His Name (Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11). His repeated concern that His Name be taken in vain doesn't simply refer to the casual use of the word "God" as an expression of exasperation. God is concerned about His people taking His Name upon themselves (Num. 6:27) in vain- i.e., marrying Him, entering covenant relationship with Him, taking on His Name- but not being serious about that relationship, taking it on as a vain thing, like a woman who casually marries a man who loves her at the very core of his being, when for her, it's just a casual thing and she lives a profligate and adulterous life as his wife. When God revealed His Name to His people, opening up the very essence of His character to them, He was making Himself vulnerable. We reveal ourselves intimately to another because we wish for them to make a response to us, to love us for what we revealed to them. God revealed Himself to Israel, He sought for intimacy in the covenant relationship, and therefore was and is all the more hurt when His people turn away from Him, after having revealed to them all the wonders of His word (Hos. 8:12).

But the idea of not taking Yahweh's Name "in vain", 'vanity', is often associated with idolatry. Israel never formerly rejected Yahweh, and never became atheists. They mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry on the basis that they claimed that they worshipped Yahweh through worshipping the idols. This is what emboldened them to later place

idols in Yahweh's temple. They were taking Yahweh's Name as a form of vanity, "in vain", a kind of idol. Thus their relationship with Yahweh was not to be a "vain thing" (Dt. 32:47).

"Guiltless" is a term which can mean "clear of responsibility to covenant relationship' (Gen. 24:8,41). God would not overlook the fact they were in covenant with Him and had taken His Name upon them, just as we take His Name upon us in baptism. And we are therefore not guiltless or clear of responsibility to Him.

To take on the Name in vain refers to entering covenant in vain, in a lighthearted, not serious way. As Israel first heard these words, they were being offered covenant and were warned not to enter it in vain. Likewise they are told in :4 not to hew out images, the same word for the hewing out of the stones on which the decalogue was written. This was all the first context of the 10 commandments, they were an invitation and warning to Israel as they were first offered the covenant. Hence they there in God's presence were to have no other gods in that presence. The 10 commandments are not much referenced in their later history because they were specifically relevant to Israel then and there. The rest of the law was likewise for them there and then, and was an extension of the 10 commandments. The 613 letters of the decalogue are the essence of the 613 later Mosaic commandments.

Exo 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy-
"Remember" could mean 'celebrate', but that seems axiomatic. More likely the idea is that the Sabbath was established from creation onwards, and Israel were being bidden "remember" that. We note that the Sabbath was one of the ten commandments. But the Sabbath was specifically "a sign between them (Israel) and Me (God), that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them" (Ez. 20:12). As such, it has never been intended to be binding on Gentiles (non-Jews). "... the Lord has given *you* [not all mankind] the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29); "... You [God] made known to them [Israel] Your holy Sabbath" (Neh. 9:14). The Old Covenant refers to the Law of Moses, which was replaced on the cross by the New Covenant. The ten commandments, including that concerning the Sabbath, were part of the Old Covenant which was done away by Christ. God "declared to you (Israel) His covenant which he commanded you (Israel) to perform, that is the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone" (Dt. 4:13). God "wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments" (Ex. 34:28). If we argue that keeping the covenant made in the ten commandments is necessary, we must also observe every detail of the entire Law, seeing that this is all part of the same covenant. It is evidently impossible to do this. "There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb ... the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:9,21). Those tablets, on which were the ten commandments, were the covenant. Heb. 9:4 speaks of "the tablets of the

covenant". The ten commandments were written on the tablets of stone, which comprised "the (old) covenant". Paul refers to this covenant as "written and engraved on stones", i.e. on the tablets of stone. He calls it "the ministry of death... the ministry of condemnation..." that which is "... passing away" (2 Cor. 3:7-11).

However, nine of the ten commandments have been reaffirmed, in spirit at least, in the New Testament: 1st. - Eph. 4:6; 1 Jn. 5:21; Mt. 4:10; 2nd. - 1 Cor. 10:14; Rom. 1:25; 3rd. - James 5:12; Mt. 5:34,35; 5th. - Eph. 6:1,2; Col. 3:20; 6th. - 1 Jn. 3:15; Mt. 5:21; 7th. - Heb. 13:4; Mt. 5:27,28; 8th. - Rom. 2:21; Eph. 4:28; 9th. - Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25; 2 Tim. 3:3; 10th. - Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5. Numbers 3,5,6,7,8 and 9 can be found in 1 Tim. 1 alone, and numbers 1,2 and 10 in 1 Cor. 5. But never is the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath repeated in the New Testament as obligatory for us.

Exo 20:9 You shall labour six days, and do all your work-
The idea is that man's week of labour is to reflect God's six days of labour during the creation week (:11). This parallel empowers us to see the grind of daily work as ultimately creative, and not mere vanity. The daily work which was part of the curse in Eden now becomes creative- if done "as unto the Lord". But we could also consider "you shall labour" to be a command to work, rather than laze around and by all means seek to avoid the results of the curse. Rather we are to see in the six days of labour an opportunity to reflect God's creative work; to use our labour to create, rather than to merely exist. This lifts the curse of labour so far above what it otherwise is.

Exo 20:10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God. You shall not do any work in it, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your livestock, nor your stranger who is within your gates-
The Lord Jesus invites those who follow Him to accept the "rest" which He gives (Mt. 11:28), using the word which is used in the Septuagint for the Sabbath rest. Jesus was offering a life of Sabbath, of rest from trust in our own works (cp. Heb. 4:3,10). We shouldn't, therefore, keep a Sabbath one day per week, but rather live our whole lives in the spirit of the Sabbath. Just as we are to live the "eternal life" now, the type of life we will eternally live in the Kingdom is to be lived and experienced now. In this sense, as Hebrews makes clear, we "have entered into rest", and yet in another sense we labour now to enter into that rest at the Lord's return. This is a classic case of the "now but not yet" theme of the Bible.

Exo 20:11 for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy-
Yahweh *blessed* the Sabbath (Ex. 20:11). Work was not to be done so as to rest and

remember God's creative grace, His salvation of man without works; whereas in pagan thought, work wasn't done because 'Sabbath' was an unlucky day on which it was best to do as little as possible in case some 'Satan' figure struck. Such belief was being deconstructed in the Sabbath law. The Mosaic 10 Commandments included the unique commandment not to covet / lust. This was unknown in any Mesopotamian legal code- because obviously it's impossible to know what a person is thinking within themselves, and so impossible to judge or punish it. But God's law introduced the whole idea that sin / transgression of law is ultimately internal, and this will be judged by the one true God. See on Ex. 35:3.

The Israelite Sabbath was instituted, it seems, in antithesis to the Mesopotamian system. Thus most pagan festivals of the time were begun by the lighting of a candle in the home; but a candle was not to be kindled on the Sabbath (Ex. 35:3). Yahweh *blessed* the Sabbath (Ex. 20:11). Work was not to be done so as to rest and remember God's creative grace; whereas in pagan thought, work wasn't done because 'Sabbath' was an unlucky day on which it was best to do as little as possible in case some 'Satan' figure struck. Such belief was being deconstructed in the Sabbath law.

God spoke the words He did on six literal, consecutive days, and the orders ('fiats' is the word Alan Hayward uses) were therefore, in this sense, as good as done. But the actual time taken to carry them out by the Angels may have been very long. The Genesis record can then be understood as stating these commands on six literal days, and then recording their fulfilment- although the fulfilment wasn't necessarily on that same day.

Exo 20:12 Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you-
Paul quotes this in Eph. 6:2, with the comment that this is "the first commandment with promise". Paul clearly saw "the promise" of the old covenant as being the hope of the new covenant; the hope of the promises made to the Jewish fathers was the Christian hope, as Paul so clearly stated at his trials. This involves eternal possession of a glorified earth- and not going to Heaven on death as an immortal soul. **But the promise of long life "in the land" could also reinforce the idea that these commandments were specifically given to that generation who stood on the brink of the promised land of Canaan.**

The contemporary Near Eastern legal codes prescribed the most severe penalties for crimes against the wealthy and their property. Rich people were given lesser punishments than poor people for the same crime. The value of persons reflected in Yahweh's law meant that all people were judged equally before the law, and truly there was no respect of persons with the true God. Both father and mother are placed together as worthy of equal honour (Lev. 19:3; Ex. 20:12)- whereas the contemporary laws were oriented towards respect of the male rather than females.

The Lord Jesus saw as parallel the commands to honour parents and also not to curse them. These two separate commands (from Ex. 20:12 and 21:17) He spoke of as only one: "*the* commandment" (Mk. 7:9). He therefore saw that not to honour parents was effectively to curse them (Mk. 7:10). *Omitting* to honour parents, even if it involved appearing to give one's labour to God's temple, was therefore the same as *committing* the sin of cursing them. Sins of omission are perhaps our greatest weakness.

The first five commandments relate to love towards God, and the second five commandments concern love of our neighbour. So this fifth commandment to honour parents is presented as a direct part of loving God.

Exo 20:13 You shall not murder-
The command not to murder has as its basis the fact that human life is not for us to use as we will (Ex. 20:13; Lev. 17:11; Gen. 9:6). It is God's life and is His- and this applies to our view of others lives as well as our own. Others, therefore, are not for us to use as we will. Gentleness and sensitivity to the life of others, in family life, the workplace, on the road... is therefore an outcome of our belief that the 'other' person likewise has been created by God and has life from Him. To drive in an unkind way, to act in a thoughtless way to others detriment, is therefore the same basic error as taking human life in murder.

The command "You shall not murder" must be understood in the context of a situation where the same Law also commanded certain sinners to be put to death within the community, and at times Israel were Divinely commanded and enabled to kill others outside of the community. We have to look, therefore, for a more specific meaning for this commandment- and it seems it is speaking specifically of blood revenge, killing the person who murdered one of your relatives. According to Num. 35:25-28, if the murder was unintentional, i.e. manslaughter rather than murder, then the person could flee to a city of refuge lest he be slain by the avenger of blood. There is no guidance for the avenger of blood in these 'cities of refuge' passages; rather is there the assumption that he might well attempt to take revenge even for manslaughter, and in this case the unintentional murderer should flee from him into a city of refuge. But clearly enough, this was not God's will- for "You shall not kill". But such is God's grace that He built into His law a recognition that His people would fail. This isn't what we would expect of a 2+2=4 God, where broken commandments are to be punished and period. In this case, we see here a tacit recognition even within the Mosaic Law that the commandments- in this case "You shall not kill"- wouldn't always be obeyed, and therefore extra legislating was added to enable this situation to be coped with. This isn't only an example of God's sensitivity to human sin and weakness of hot blood [although it is that]. It's an insight into how the very structure of His law is such that He understands human weakness, and is eager to ensure that it hurts others as little as possible. No mere human 'god'

would have dreamed this up. This grace has the stamp of the ultimately Divine, and any attempt to understand it within the frames of literalistic, legalistic analysis are doomed to failure.

Exo 20:14 You shall not commit adultery-
This is as is, but we note the majority of references to "adultery" in the Hebrew Bible refer to unfaithfulness to God. And we cannot rule out the possibility that God also had that in view; for these commandments were the basis of His relationship with His people.

Exo 20:15 You shall not steal-
The Hebrew indeed means to steal, but also carries the idea of deceit. For to deceive another is to effectively steal from them, to take away and misuse their belief and trust in you and your integrity. And all deceit is ultimately in order to gain something wrongly, even the thing gained isn't anything material.

Exo 20:16 You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour-
AV "bear false witness". But the Hebrew for "bear" means not only "to give" in a legal sense. Otherwise this commandment would only apply to the need to be truthful in a court case. The Hebrew *anah* is literally "to eye", 'to give heed to'. Don't pay attention to lies, don't listen to gossip- understood like that, this commandment becomes relevant to daily life, and not just to the occasional times when a person might have to bear legal witness against someone.

Exo 20:17 You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's-
The command not to covet what looks good is very much rooted in a warning not to commit Eve's sin of seeing the fruit and yielding to temptation (Ex. 20:17 = Gen. 3:6). The sin in Eden was every sin; we see elements of every one of our own sins in that sin. The frequent command "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17 etc.) uses the same Hebrew word translated "desire" when we read of how Eve "desired" the fruit (Gen. 3:6); yet Israel "desired" the wrong fruit (Is. 1:29). As Eve saw the fruit and fell for it, so the people of Reuben and Gad saw the land East of Jordan and imagined how good it would be to have it, despite having been given 'all the land' West of Jordan to enjoy [cp. Adam and Eve's dominion in Eden] (Num. 32:1,2,7). In all these allusions [and they exist in almost every chapter of the Bible] we are being shown how human sin is a repetition in essence of that of our first parents. The insistent emphasis is that we should rise above and *not* be like them. And yet this call for personal effort and struggle with ourselves in order to

overcome sin is muted and misplaced by all the stress upon a supposed Devil tempting Eve, pushing the blame onto him, and thereby de-emphasizing our role in overcoming sin within ourselves. And so we see so many loud-mouthed condemners of the Devil totally not 'getting it' about the need for personal self-control and spiritual mindedness in daily life and private character.

God's law differs from human laws in that it criminalizes internal attitudes. It was impossible to prove the sin of covetousness, nor enforce the law against it- because it's invisible to others. Yet the God who sees all stands in judgment upon our innermost thoughts and desires.

Exo 20:18 All the people perceived the thunderings, the lightnings, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. When the people saw it, they trembled, and stayed at a distance-
The Angel told Moses that the people would probably want to come up the mountain, closer to God, when in fact in reality they ran away when they saw the holiness of God; almost suggesting that the Angel over-estimated their spiritual enthusiasm (Ex. 19:21-24 cp. 20:18). Likewise the Angel told Moses that the people would hear him, "and believe you for ever" (Ex. 19:9). Things turned out the opposite. At this time, God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). His enthusiasm and positive hope for them was the outflow of an amazing love and grace toward them, and it is reflected all throughout the record.

The original plan had been as in Ex. 19:13 LXX: "When the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on Ex. 19:14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on Ex. 19:10. The people "perceived" Yahweh's holiness and their sinfulness and continued idolatry. And they shied away from Him, whereas His intention was that they came close. These words are so sad. It was a rejection of intimacy with God**, and so Dt. 5 records that God confirmed this by telling Israel to return to their tents**.

Exo 20:19 They said to Moses, Speak with us yourself, and we will listen; but don't let God speak with us, lest we die-
People prefer not to have a direct relationship with God, hence the hierarchies and pyramid structure of many churches. But God wants to have a direct personal relationship with us as individuals. They failed to see that Divine words given through another person really are the voice of God to us personally. Perhaps our difficulty with appreciating an inspired Bible is similar; we know the theory, but do we really see the wonder of the fact that what we read is the awesome voice of God Himself to us?

Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God

manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. Thus the law was “a law… which I (Yahweh) have written” (Ex. 24:12). Yet the Lord Jesus speaks of Moses writing the precepts of the Law (Mk. 10:5). “The book of the law of Moses” is parallel with “the book of the law of Yahweh” (Neh. 8:1; 2 Chron. 17:9); it was “the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses” (2 Chron. 34:14). His personal blessing of the people was that of God (Dt. 33); and when he looked with pleasure upon the completed tabernacle and blessed Israel, he was imitating God’s inspection and blessing of the completed natural creation (Ex. 39:43). Yet Israel tragically failed to appreciate the degree to which God was manifest in the words of Moses, as they did with Christ. This is shown by them asking for Moses to speak with them, not God; they failed to realize that actually his voice was God’s voice. They failed to see that commandments given ‘second hand’ really are the voice of God (Ex. 20:19). Perhaps our appreciation of inspiration is similar; we know the theory, but do we really see the wonder of the fact that what we read is the awesome voice of God Himself?

Exo 20:20 Moses said to the people, Don’t be afraid-
As discussed on :18, God's initial plan had been for the people to come close to Him. But they had shied away. Moses urges them to come close to him and to Yahweh, as Joseph did with his doubting brothers. **We note Moses asks them not to be afraid, but then says that this coming down of God is so that "His fear may be before you, that you won't sin". We have here the explanation of what it is to fear Yahweh, which is the beginning of wisdom. Not to fear Him in the quaking, guilty sense that Israel feared, but to fear in the sense of reverence, given His majestic presence in our lives.**

For God has come to test you-
God wanted the people to come close to Him, as explained on :18. So why then did He give them such a fearful display of His might and holiness, replete with thunder and some kind of volcano (:18)? To test them- whether they would really believe that despite His holiness and great power, He passionately loved them and was eager to overlook their sin and idolatry. But they failed the test- they didn't believe in His love and grace. And that finally is what faith is about- believing in the extent of His love, grace and salvation, to little me.

And that His fear may be before you, that you won’t sin-
The commentary of Heb. 12:20 is that Israel could not endure what God had spoken at this time. As explained above, the display of physical power and glory was in order to help them realize that despite all that, God was so eager to forgive and accept them. Believing that of itself would inspire them not to sin; a far stronger motivation than a

bald statement of law and consequence for disobedience. But they couldn't believe it. And so they fled from Him both physically (see on :18) and finally, morally.

Because God saved them from Egypt by grace [cp. baptism- 1 Cor. 10:1,2], with they themselves so spiritually weak at the time, still taking idols of Egypt through the Red Sea with them- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 11:7,8). Because God gave them the land of Canaan, a land for which they did not labour, didn't do any 'work' to receive, but were given because "You did a favour unto them" (Ps. 44:3)- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 26:15,16; 29:8,9; Josh. 23:5,6). David said that he loved keeping the law *because* God's testimony to him was so miraculous (Ps. 119:129 Heb.). There is an awesomeness to God's grace in all this. Hence the paradox of Ex. 20:20: "Fear not... that the fear of God may be before your faces". We are not to fear Him, for such perfect love casts out fear... yet it is exactly because of the wonder of all this that we live life in some fear / awe of misusing and abusing that grace.

The fear of judgment is used by Paul as a motivation for obedience in Heb. 2:1-4; 4:1. An element of fear is not wrong in itself. Israel in the wilderness had the pillar of fire to remind them of God's close presence, and to thereby motivate them not to sin: "His fear (will) be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Ex. 20:20).

God wanted to speak directly with Israel at Sinai; and yet they urged Moses personally to go and hear what God wished to say, and tell them about it: "Go thou [you singular] near and hear" (Dt. 5:23,27 AV). Moses urged them not to fear, and told them that this was all a test from God for them (Ex. 20:20). But they didn't rise to it. Yet God accepted this lower level, so did He wish to communicate with them. And He used Moses as a mediator through whom He spoke His word to His people.

The statement that Pharaoh didn't fear Yahweh (Ex. 9:30) is alluded to in Ex. 20:20. Israel were warned to fear Yahweh and not to be hardened in sin; hence their judgments were expressed in terms allusive to the plagues upon Egypt. The point is that Pharaoh stands as the classicized warning to all God's people for all time.

Exo 20:21 The people stayed at a distance-
In Ex. 24:1, Yahweh tells the people to "worship from a distance" (s.w.). They shied away from Him (Ex. 20:18), whereas His intention was that they came close. But they retreated to "a distance" (s.w. Ex. 20:18,21). And yet God wanted at least some level of relationship with them, and so He still allows and encourages them to worship Him "from a distance", even although that was not His ideal initial intention. He had hoped for more intimacy with them.

And Moses drew near-
Although it had been God's intention that the priests should "draw near" to Him (Ex. 19:22 s.w.) and that the people "shall come up on the mountain" (Ex. 19:13 LXX). Moses

alone did this. Whilst he did so as their representative, it is all a tragic reflection of their rejection of intimacy with God.

To the thick darkness where God was-
The personal relationship which we have had with Christ will be very evident at the judgment. What we say to the Lord Jesus in His ear in the bedroom in the darkness, will be openly spoken by Christ at the judgment (Lk. 12:2,3). God dwells in darkness (Ex. 20:21; 1 Kings 8:12). Speaking in the bedroom in secret with the knowledge we will be openly rewarded is the language of prayer (Mt. 6:6). Our private relationship with the Lord now, praying to Him in our bedroom, meditating about Him there, will then be spoken out loud. But there is a related statement from the Lord: What we hear from Him in the ear, we must speak openly (Mt. 10:26,27; after the pattern of Isaiah in Is. 22:14). Putting these passages together, we get the picture of us speaking to God through Christ, talking in His ear, as one might whisper something very personal into a friend's ear, in the darkness of our bedroom. And then the Lord whispers back in our ear, i.e. His revelation to us (through the word) is very personal and not perceived by others; but we must openly, publicly act upon it.

Exo 20:22 Yahweh said to Moses, This is what you shall tell the children of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven-
A true understanding of the word of God for what it is will be related to realistic response to it. Insofar as we believe that the Bible is inspired, we will feel the passion and power of it the more, and thereby its impact upon us will be the greater. Because of the wonder of having heard God's voice, therefore idolatry of any form will be meaningless for us. They 'saw' that God "talked with you"; they didn't "hear", but they had seen the visible evidence of His voice. No nation had a God like this. We see that it was through the testimony of His word that Yahweh revealed Himself as uniquely real, and no other god was therefore possibly real (see on :23). The inspired Bible which we have today is similar witness to us.

Exo 20:23 You shall most certainly not make alongside Me gods of silver, or gods of gold for yourselves-
Having seen the awesome theophany of Yahweh, it was utterly inappropriate and even laughable to consider that He cold somehow be placed alongside a piece of gold and worshipped as one of a line of deities upon a shelf. There was no comparison. And yet men worship gold and silver not only as Yahweh's equal, but even more than Him. In this lies the deep blasphemy of all materialism and worship of wealth. And yet this is the spirit of our age. For the Hebrew word for "silver" is that also translated "money".

"Make alongside Me" is literally "make with Me". Again the allusion is to the fact that Israel at this point stood in the very presence of Yahweh. Appreciating that

meant that any construction of other gods was naturally outlawed. We see the contrast between "make with Me" and "make for / next to yourselves". Making anything for yourself, having any idol next to you, was inappropriate if indeed you are standing before God Himself. This is the practical import of appreciating the promise of God's presence in Christ, especially as we have it in the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. And we wonder whether the Israelites even now were doing, or considering doing, what they did when Moses was up the mountain in Ex. 32- making a graven image, with the adultery etc. which went with it. Again we suspect the ten commandments were all specifically relevant to them at that time.

Exo 20:24 You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your cattle-
God told Israel that He wanted altars made of earth; but He knew they would want to make altars of stone like the other nations, and He made allowance for this (Ex. 20:24,25). The Law has several examples of this living on different levels. "You shall let nothing of (the Passover) remain until the morning; and that which remain of it until the morning you shall burn with fire" (Ex. 12:10) is an evident example. God foresaw their disobedience to His stated principle, and made a concession and provision. Or take the Law's ruling about tithes: "...neither shall he change it: and if he change it..." (Lev. 27:33).

We are made from the dust of the earth, which Genesis says was cursed. God doesn't want beautiful externalities, He wants us to worship Him from the heart, accepting us as we are. The Law of Moses recognizes so often that Israel wouldn't be fully obedient, hence the next verse goes on to speak of how *if* they still insisted on building not an earth altar but a stone one, then even if they make use of God's concession to human weakness, they must still abide by His principles.

However it could be argued that later Israel did make more permanent altars, and God went along with this and allowed acceptable sacrifice to be offered upon them. The commandment to make altars of earth could therefore be one of the many parts of the law of Moses which only applied to Israel in the wilderness. For they were constantly on the move. **Dt. 12 is clear that God wanted a single, centralized place of worship. We could read this as implying these laws of Ex. 20 were relevant only for the wilderness generation; or that after 40 years, He accepted that this system was not working. The Israelites are never recorded as making such altars in the wilderness, and so God perhaps changed this attempt to inculcate spontaneous spirituality, whereby anyone could just build a simple altar and offer upon it with no priest as mediator.**

Ex. 27:8 commands the building of the bronze covered altar, with hollow boards. It could be that the hollow nature of the altar meant that a pile of earth was made, and the

altar structure placed on top of it. But this would make it hard to understand how the ashes of the sacrifices could be collected. Surely the idea of a "grate" as commanded would have been meaningless if effectively the altar was solid earth inside it. So we are left with the conclusion that the 'altar of earth' instruction was not to apply to the tabernacle, but to altars for sacrifice which were used more local to the tents of the people. Or perhaps it was intended to only apply in the wilderness until the tabernacle was built. For clearly later altars were accepted by God, when they were not made of earth. We see in these considerations that the law of Moses was not inflexible, and God is not a literalist. Changed circumstances for His people changed His operational style with them, and His expectations of them.

In every place where I record My name-
It is man who is to record or remember / memorialize the things of Yahweh's Name (s.w. Ps. 20:7; 45:17; Is. 12:4; 26:13), making no mention / record of the name of other gods apart from Yahweh (s.w. Ex. 23:13; Zech. 13:2). But in Ex. 20:24 it is God who records or remembers His Name when He is worshipped acceptably. We see here the mutuality between God and man which is achieved in worship when it is done His way.

I will come down to you and I will bless you-
They had just witnessed Yahweh coming down in awesome majesty. Now they were told that He would in essence do this every time His people offered to Him on a humble earthen altar. There is a conscious juxtaposition between His coming down, and the idea of coming down upon an earthen altar. **But clearly they didn't want this, and so Dt. 12 ammends this law to the idea of one centralized place of worship. Again we reflect that the commandments of Ex. 20 were specific to the generation of Israelites that first heard them. They were to realize that a mound of earth kicked together, with them acting as their own priest, be they male or female, was to be their personal Sinai. But they didn't want this, just as they didn't want intimacy with God and asked Moses to do it all for them. The connection with Yahweh's 'coming down' explains why these commands about altars occur straight after the giving of the ten commandments at Yahweh's 'coming down' upon Sinai.**

“You” is you singular in the Hebrew here. Wherever an ordinary Israelite offered sacrifice, God would come to them personally. Yet this is the very language of God coming unto Moses on the top of Sinai (Ex. 19:20 “came down”)- as if to imply that the very pinnacle of Moses’ relationship with God, meeting Him on the top of the mount, is just as attainable for each of God’s people who truly sacrifices to Him. Wherever an ordinary Israelite offered sacrifice, “I will come unto thee [‘you’ singular] and bless thee” (Ex. 20:23 AV). This is the very language of God coming unto Moses on the top of Sinai (Ex. 19:20 RV)- as if to imply that the very pinnacle of Moses’ relationship with God, meeting Him on the top of the mount, is just as attainable for each of God’s people who

truly sacrifices to Him. It is the equivalent of the promised presence of the Lord Jesus wherever two or three gather in His Name (Mt. 18:20).

Exo 20:25 If you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of cut stones; for if you lift up your tool on it, you have polluted it-
Ex. 20:25 says that the use of any tool upon an altar would defile it (also see Dt. 27:5). This is how strongly God despises chic externality, and wants us to offer to Him as we are, uncut stones. He wants us, as we are, and not covered by cosmetics. In this we see the deep unspirituality of the altars in the temple, as designed by David and Solomon. I have suggested that although Solomon claims all this was commanded by God, in fact that was merely His assumption. Solomon attempted to get around this law by ensuring that the stones were cut away from the temple construction site (1 Kings 6:7). But this surely was breaking the spirit of the law.

Israel had lived generations in Egypt, and had taken the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:7,8). The Egyptian altars were all of hewed stones, with images of their gods engraved upon them. Perhaps the insistence that "cut stones" must not be used was in order to strengthen them against the temptation to engrave images upon the sides of the altar, as they had seen in Egypt. We see how God's laws are designed not as a burden, but to ease our overall obedience to His ways.

Exo 20:26 Neither shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed to it'-
We note that the altar of Ezekiel's temple plan had steps leading up to it (Ez. 43:17), whereas this was forbidden in Ex. 20:26. The system described there was not a revival of the Mosaic system. **Israel generally failed to make use of God's invitation to every man and woman to kick some earth together and offer a sacrifice without a priest, and so His system of the tabernacle made concessions to human need for religion; there was an ornate altar with steps, and there were the cherubim, which were "patterns of things in the heavens" although the first commandment makes it clear that this was not God's ideal intention.** The picture of fallen man in Genesis is never far away from God's commandments. He had asked them to make Him an altar from the dust of the earth (:24), alluding to how man was made from dust and that dust was now cursed. They were to be aware of Adam's fall, of his nakedness, and God's covering of it. And when they worshipped, they were to be particularly aware of their fallen state; and remind themselves of their need for a covering of nakedness.

EXODUS CHAPTER 21

Exo 21:1 Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Exo 21:2 If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything-
Slaves could be bought out of slavery by others or by themselves somehow raising the required amount. Often they went into slavery in order to pay a debt. But six years was the maximum they could serve- that was enough to pay any debt. They could not be then forced to still pay some debt. This total freedom from debt may look forward to the intended "rest" of the Kingdom at the end of the 6 days / 6000 years of Biblical human history.

T**he Exodus is the most alluded to historical incident of the Old Testament- it's a pattern to us all. Israel were not to be passive to their history of redemption, and neither can we be. Both the ten commandments and the rest of the law began with reference to Israel's exodus deliverance: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me..." (Ex. 20:2,3); the rest of the law began with the commands about releasing slaves because this was the outcome of their own exodus experience: "Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything" (Ex. 21:1,2). And throughout the law, there were references to the exodus as the motive for obeying the law, e.g. Ex. 23:9 "You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt".**

Exo 21:3 If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself. If he is married, then his wife shall go out with him-

This reflects God's desire that husband and wife not separate nor be separated by others, especially for material reasons. The idea here seems to be that the husband could as it were save his wife from slavery; if he was the one in debt who had gone into slavery, or her debt was greater than his; then all the same, his redemption became hers. This too looks forward to the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus, "the servant of Yahweh" *par excellence*.

Exo 21:4 If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself-
This might possibly suggest that the "him" in "She bears *him*" is the master and not the husband. But this apparently oppressive ruling is to be read in the context of the next verses. The servant could retain his wife and children if he devoted himself to his master's house for the rest of his life. The situation was set up in order to make the servant pay a price for his wife and children. He made a free choice to marry whilst a servant; and he was to make that choice aware of the huge long term price he was going to have to pay for it. That was in order to help him understand the long term commitment required from a man in marrying and having children. It was a resignation of his personal freedom (:5), and the man had to knowingly make that choice. We can deduce that the marriage was completely his choice; if it were forced upon him by the master, then this would be the kind of personal manipulation and robbing of personal freedom which the law of Moses outlaws. And that is the take away lesson from this- all the more relevant in our age of casual relationships, married men refusing to resign personal freedom and fathering of children without taking personal responsibility. See on :5.

Exo 21:5 But if the servant shall plainly say, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children. I will not go out free;'-
The Lord's crucifixion was likened to His ear (His hearing of the master's word) being nailed to an upright piece of wood (cp. the cross; Ex. 21:6 = Ps. 40:6-8 = Heb. 10:5-12). That was the sign of His total dedication to the house of Yahweh, but it was motivated by His love for us, and commitment to entering an eternal relationship with us (see on :4). His relationship with us is described as "I and the children whom God has given me" (Heb. 2:13). This would allude to this situation, where the servant was 'given' a wife and thence children by the master, God (:4). The children were given to Him by God, the master, because He plainly declared His love for us, His wife and children. And that plain declaration was surely on the cross.

Exo 21:6 then his master shall bring him to the elohim, and shall bring him to the door or to the doorpost, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall

serve him for ever-
This speaks of bringing a slave "to God". This could refer to the *elohim*, the elders. Or it could refer to the door post of the home, and nailing his ear to it. "God" is paralleled with the door post. The servant was saying that he was now permanently attached to the household, symbolized by his ear being physically attached to it. The ear was chosen because this was a symbol of obedience to the master's word. R.E. Clements notes that this alludes to the ancient pagan practice whereby "a household god would have been kept by the threshold of a house to guard it" (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 133). Moses is attacking this idea- by saying that God, Israel's God, is the One there- and not the household gods which those around Israel believed were there. See on Ex. 12:7.

This custom is alluded to in Ps. 40:6, and applied to Christ in Heb. 10:5-10. For love of us, the wife whom He was given by God His "master" (:4), Christ chose to stay in the Father's house for ever. The nailing of the ear to a piece of wood is understood in Hebrews 10 as prophetic of Christ's nailing to the cross. The ear represented obedient listening to the Master's word. Christ on the cross was ultimately obedient to God's word- for our sakes. That we are seen as His wife should inspire us to the utmost faithfulness and support of His cause in this world.

The question is whether this apparently lifelong commitment was undone by the provisions for the release of slaves at the year of Jubilee. The nature of the language used here would suggest that the freedom of the year of Jubilee didn't apply in this case. So we again see how the law of Moses, like any legal code, had internal contradictions, and times when one law must take precedence over another. These features of the law of Moses were in order to elicit thoughtful obedience to it, rather than blind obedience of a perfectly consistent legal code. For the law was to inculcate thoughtful relationships, both with God and man.

Exo 21:7 If a man sells his daughter to be a female servant, she shall not go out as the male servants do-
Men in debt would typically sell their daughters as servants, but they were often bought with a view to marrying them- either by the purchaser, or by his children.

Exo 21:8 If she doesn't please her master, who has married her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her-
The servant who was bought may have been bought blind, never having met her. Or the 'being evil in the eyes' (Heb.) of the master may be because she was found not to be a virgin. He could then sell her to another, but not to a Gentile. His 'deceit' was in that he

had purchased a woman ostensibly as a female servant, when it was his plan to marry her.

Exo 21:9 If he marries her to his son, he shall deal with her as a daughter-
Although she had been purchased as a servant, she was now effectively to be set free from that by her marriage to his son. She was not to be allowed to slip into the category of 'wife second class'. She was to be treated fully as his daughter in law and not as a servant, to run his errands.

Exo 21:10 If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marital rights-
If a man betrothed his slave girl unto his son, he "must" ["shall"] treat her as he would his own daughter (:9). But if he didn't, she could go free (Ex. 21:9-11). There were clearly different levels of obedience envisaged. "Her marital rights" seems to refer to sex. The man was to treat this woman still as his wife, even if he took another wife. We note that sex was considered a basic human need, as much as food and clothing. And we can infer from that as we will, guided by God's moral principles elsewhere expressed. But it should guide and help us in our consideration of all the moral and sexual issues we at times encounter in church life. We also note here that to continue having sex with her was required by the law; but as with the commands not to covet and to observe intimate hygiene in order to be "clean", there could be no mechanism to ensure obedience to this. How often the man was to sleep with the first wife was not defined. The law of Moses was God speaking to the hearts and personal consciences of people, rather than being merely a legal code, obedience to which could be judged solely by external behaviour. In this way, God's law was unlike any other legal code.

Exo 21:11 If he doesn't do these three things for her, she may go free without paying any money-
"These three things" may not refer to the three things of Ex. 21:10, but rather to the three courses of action in Ex. 21:8-10. She would go out free, her father would not be required to repay any of the money which had been paid for her. Going out free might also imply that she was free to remarry. Clearly second marriage was envisaged and tolerated under the law of Moses.

Exo 21:12 One who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death-
*"*Surely" foresees situations whereby there was a temptation for the death penalty for murder not to be enforced. In surrounding cultures, a wealthy person could murder their servants with impunity; the fits of rage of the wealthy and powerful were excused. But that was not to be so with God's people.

Exo 21:13 but not if it is unintentional, but God allows it to happen-
This is a comforting perspective on manslaughter- it was allowed by God to happen.

Then I will appoint you a place where he shall flee-
That place was the altar (:14). Later, when Israel were in the land, cities of refuge were designated for these cases. And they were promised more cities of refuge if they continued in the path of obedience. We see here how God's saving purpose expands and changes form over time. It would also be an example of where many of the commands of the law of Moses were only relevant to the wilderness generation. Although in this case, using the altar as a city of refugee is found in 1 Kings 1:50; 2:28.

Exo 21:14 If a man schemes and comes presumptuously on his neighbour to kill him, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die-
The altar represented Christ (Heb. 13:10). He is the place of refuge whither we may flee, we who like the man of :13 have committed sins worthy of death and yet against our deepest will. Whilst we cannot justify all our sins by blaming them on circumstances, within some kind of 'situational ethic', it is also true that God recognizes that at times and in some ways we sin without deeply intending to.

Exo 21:15 Anyone who attacks his father or his mother shall be surely put to death-
Significantly, the mother is treated on the same level as the father. The law of Moses afforded the same human dignity to both genders, and was far ahead of its time in this- for it reflects the huge value which God places upon the human person. As in :17 the law exalts the value of parents, and seeks to inculcate particular honour towards them. Instances of hitting or cursing parents (:17) were most likely to occur in heated domestic squabbles where there was no outside witness. So here again we have an example of God's law legislating about intimate personal matters, rather like the law not to covet. There was no way that this could be legally proven. The law was intended as a personal dialogue between God and the individual Israelite.

The laws of Hammurabi stated that if a man struck his father, his hand was to be cut off. But God's law was far stricter- the punishment was death. For God so deeply wanted respect for parents. I suggest the allusions to the laws of Hammurabi were in order to explain to Israel where the existing laws they had known were wrong, where they were right, and where they were partly right and needed reframing. The greatest difference is that the law of Moses sees sin as being against God, whereas the other legal codes see failure as a sin against society alone.

Exo 21:16 Anyone who kidnaps someone and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, he

shall surely be put to death-
To deprive someone of their personal freedom is treated here in the same context as murder (:14). Whilst we may not be tempted to kidnap anyone, there are other ways in which in essence we can deprive another of their personal freedom, treating them as a thing rather than a person. The selling of the kidnapped Israelite (Dt. 24:7) was likely to a Gentile nation. This was going to distance the person from the sanctuary and the ways of God. To cause another to spiritually stumble is worthy of eternal death, the Lord was to later teach.

"Found in his hand" could mean that he had purchased such a kidnapped person. Or maybe he had kidnapped him and was keeping him as a captured person, with a view to selling him. But the idea is that he had taken another person and deprived them of their freedom, inappropriately asserting control over another. And this is a principle which can apply to many situations which may not today be judged as criminal.

Exo 21:17 Anyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death-
The Lord Jesus saw as parallel the commands to honour parents and also not to curse them. These two separate commands (from Ex. 20:12 and Ex. 21:17) He spoke of as only one: "*the* commandment" (Mk. 7:9). He therefore saw that not to honour parents was effectively to curse them (Mk. 7:10). *Omitting* to honour parents, even if it involved appearing to give one's labour to God's temple, was therefore the same as *committing* the sin of cursing them. Sins of omission are perhaps our greatest weakness. To deal with a person as if they are an object is judged by God as bad as murder. The value and meaning of the human person is paramount with God, and is reflected in His law.

Exo 21:18 If men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone, or with his fist, and he doesn't die, but is confined to bed-
The idea seems to be that the injured party was also guilty because he had been involved in the quarrel. AV "strive together" may imply that the two men were in an actual fight, rather than simply quarreling.

Exo 21:19 if he rises again and walks around with his staff, then he who struck him shall be cleared: only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall provide for his healing until he is thoroughly healed-
This is not a light punishment. Rather the injured man was paying the price for having been involved in the fight in the first place; see on :18.

The idea of the Lord as the good Samaritan taking care for the man is expressed in the language of Ex. 21:19, which says that if a man wounds another, "he shall pay... and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed". This somewhat odd allusion (at first sight)

surely indicates that the Lord took upon Himself the full blame for our stricken condition, presumably in the sense that as the second Adam He took upon Himself the guilt of Adam. This is why there are so many connections between His death and the effects of Adam's sin (e.g. the crown of thorns, the Garden etc.). The way Christ compared Himself to a Samaritan, half Jew and half Gentile, shows that especially on the cross, this is how He felt.

Exo 21:20 If a man strikes his servant or his maid with a rod, and he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished-
A slave was to be respected as a person no less than anyone else. A person's social or economic standing can never excuse abusing them. However we note the lack of a specific death penalty. The law does allow meaning to the fact that a person was a servant, and thereby the property of another. There appears to be the acceptance of corporal punishment even for a slave (Prov. 10:13; 13:24).

Exo 21:21 Notwithstanding, if he gets up after a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his property-
We may well wonder why the whole idea of slavery was permitted under the law of Moses. I see it as the same question as to why polygamy was permitted. It was a concession to their weakness. To square these commands with other principles in the law of Moses, the Rabbis suggest that the servant in view must be a Gentile one.

Exo 21:22 If men fight and hurt a pregnant woman so that she gives birth prematurely, and yet no harm follows, he shall be surely fined as much as the woman's husband demands and the judges allow-
The situation may be of men fighting between themselves, and a pregnant woman being unintentionally damaged. These may have been the situations which Moses had so far encountered whilst leading the people. Or perhaps Moses had been asked to judge a situation like this at the time of Ex. 2:13.

Exo 21:23 But if any harm follows, then you must take life for life-
The "harm [which] follows" appears to be to the child when it is born. "Follows" implies that the harm is only later revealed, and therefore the reference is to the child and not to the woman. The value of the health and state of a newborn child is thereby taught.

Exo 21:24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot-
The Lord Jesus didn't come to destroy the Law of Moses. It still stood when He gave His teaching (Mt. 5:38). Yet He said that instead of insisting upon an eye for an eye in

situations like a pregnant woman having a deformed child because of the violence of a man, she should instead try to forgive him (Ex. 21:22-24). He was not changing the Law, as some have wrongly thought. He was saying that the Law was capable of being lived on different levels, and that some aspects of it were a concession to human weakness. Thus the woman with a deformed child could legitimately express her anger by insisting on the physical deformation of the man who had attacked her during pregnancy; but this, the Lord was saying, can give way to a higher level: simply forgive the man.

Exo 21:25 burning for burning, wound for wound, and bruise for bruise-
"Burning" or (Heb.) 'branding' would refer to permanent scars, and that is likely also the idea of 'wound' and 'bruise'.

Exo 21:26 If a man strikes his servant's eye, or his maid's eye, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake-
This may seem fair enough, but then there is juxtaposed against this the command in :27 that this is also true if the tooth of a servant was knocked out. To loose a tooth is far less than to loose an eye. But the sense was that any permanent damage to another, even if they were a slave, was to result in the granting of freedom. Most people were in slavery because they had been sold into it because of debts. The debts were thereby cleared and the master stood at a financial loss because of his fit of temper.

Exo 21:27 If he strikes out his male servant's tooth, or his female servant's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake-
See on :26. We note that the law stressed the equality of male and female servants; whereas female servants were considered of far less legal value under the surrounding legal codes. Again we see the huge value attached to the human person by the Divine law, regardless of gender.

Exo 21:28 If a bull gores a man or a woman to death, the bull shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the bull shall not be held responsible-
These laws are almost verbatim with the laws of Hammurabi 250-252. The question is, who copied whom? In this section of Ex. 21 there are various allusions to the Hammurabi laws- but with significant differences. I suggest the allusions to the laws of Hammurabi were in order to explain to Israel where the existing laws they had known were wrong, where they were right, and where they were partly right and needed reframing. The greatest difference is that the law of Moses sees sin as being against God, whereas the other legal codes see failure as a sin against society alone.

Exo 21:29 But if the bull had a habit of goring in the past, and it has been testified to its

owner, and he has not kept it in, but it has killed a man or a woman, the bull shall be stoned, and its owner shall also be put to death-
Because Eli wouldn't exercise discipline, he was somehow seen as committing those very things which he failed to rebuke. The man who wouldn't discipline his wayward ox was to be treated like as if he had committed the crime the ox did, and therefore must die if the ox killed a man (Ex. 21:29).

Exo 21:30 If a ransom is laid on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is laid on him-
Remember that the Rabbis taught that salvation was impossible for Gentiles: "For the heathen nations there will be no redemption", so reads the targum on Ex. 21:30. Like us, the early Jewish converts were influenced by their backgrounds and their limited world views. Until the Lord brought experiences to bear which, when responded to, taught them what is now the obvious meaning of His words- that we each have a duty to take the good news of Him to the whole planet. After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus was *sent* to preach blessing and forgiveness to Israel (Acts 3:26). But after His resurrection, He sent His men to preach this message. His witness became expressed through, and therefore limited by, His preachers. When they willfully misunderstood His commission as meaning preaching to Jews from all nations, rather than taking the message to the whole planet literally, His work was in that sense hindered and His intention delayed.

Exo 21:31 Whether it has gored a son or has gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him-
Again we see the huge value attached to the human person by the Divine law, regardless of gender (also in :32). To gore is in Hebrew literally 'to push down'. The leaders of Israel were later condemned for pushing down the weak and vulnerable in the flock of God (Ez. 34:21 s.w.). And so a wider principle emerges- that we are culpable before God if we allow others to be pushed down by our indifference and inattention.

Exo 21:32 If the bull gores a male servant or a female servant, thirty shekels of silver shall be given to their master, and the ox shall be stoned-
The price of a slave was thirty shekels of silver, and this was the price of the Lord Jesus. He is constantly hinted at throughout the Mosaic law, as the consummate "servant of Yahweh".

Exo 21:33 If a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and doesn't cover it, and a bull or a donkey falls into it-
The Lord's story about the little boy who falls down the well spoke of how He was out to save Israel, who had fallen down the well for the sake of the inattention of others. The

legalistic mind would have gone straight to Ex. 21:33: the man who dug a well and didn't cover it was responsible for any deaths arising from it. The Lord's story would imply that the father of the child was the owner of the well. The Lord doesn't draw the lesson that 'It's your own fault for being disobedient to the Law'. He focuses instead on the need to act *urgently* to save, without maxing out on the issue of whose *fault* it was that the tragedy had occurred.

I once heard a middle class woman say to her child (in that irksome White Anglo-Saxon Protestant way): "Look at that bad man lying there in the gutter. He's been *drinking*! *Silly* man, hey!". She didn't want to imagine how that red, contoured face had once been a sweet baby, a mothers pride and joy; a mischievous little lad at school; a young man with an ambition to marry a young woman and have a family. Yes, on one level it was his fault he was in the gutter. But the heart that bleeds sees the tragedy, the human pain and wastage of it all. The heart that bleeds cant walk on by. It will realize our limited ability to judge the total circumstances in any human encounter, but more than that, it will be hopeful and seeking for Gods glory to be achieved in the most apparently hopeless of cases. God need not have grieved for the grief of Israel. It *was* their fault. But He did, and He eventually grieved for it to the extent of giving His own son to be done to death.

Exo 21:34 the owner of the pit shall make it good. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead animal shall be his-
These laws were seeking to inculcate sensitivity to others. We too should live our lives thinking about the possible consequence to others of our actions, both in what we commit and what we omit to do.

Exo 21:35 If one man's bull injures another's, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live bull, and divide its price; and they shall also divide the dead animal-
Arguments amongst herdsmen were infamous. We think of the various conflicts which the patriarchs were involved in. God shows Himself absolutely aware of and sensitive to such very common human situations. Truly man is not alone, but God knows and is aware. And seeks to guide us through them.

Exo 21:36 Or if it is known that the bull was in the habit of goring in the past, and its owner has not kept it in, he shall surely pay bull for bull, and the dead animal shall be his own-
We see here the principle that knowledge brings responsibility. The abiding principle is that of restraint of situations which are likely to lead to damage.

EXODUS CHAPTER 22

Exo 22:1 If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it, or sells it; he shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep-

We note that the Mosaic law had no concept of prisons or custodial sentences, even though this was practiced in the surrounding world. We think of Joseph in prison in Egypt. God wanted issues to be decided immediately, forgiven and resolved- and "play on". And this is reflected in the law of Moses. Prison seems not to really reform many people. And that is why we are to immediately reconcile with our brother.

Exo 22:2 If the thief is found breaking in, and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt of bloodshed for him-

The original text here is difficult. GNB suggests: "If a thief is caught breaking into a house at night and is killed, the one who killed him is not guilty of murder. But if it happens during the day, he is guilty of murder". The idea would then be that if a man kills a thief while he is in the act of breaking in to a home, this is not to be counted as murder. But if some time passes and then the owner as an act of revenge murders the thief, this is seen by God differently. Surely this reflects the fact that God is more lenient to sins committed in hot blood than those more premeditated. Yet on the other hand, sin is sin. His law, as law, can appear to make no distinction between sins of passion and premeditated sins, if the same act is committed in the end. However, this and other examples indicate God's willingness to concede to human weakness, and recognize sins of passion more leniently than others. And our judgment in ecclesial life should reflect this too.

Exo 22:3 If the sun has risen on him, guilt of bloodshed shall be for him; he shall make restitution-

See on :2. There was perhaps the possibility of making restitution with money even when guilty of murder.

If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft-

This presumably speaks of the thief, if he survived; whereas the first part of the verse speaks of the person who killed a thief.

Exo 22:4 If the stolen property is found in his hand alive, whether it is ox, donkey, or sheep, he shall pay double-

The way God restored double to Job at the end has echoes of how a thief had to restore double (Ex. 22:2-4)- as if God in His love for Job wished to show Himself as having been somehow 'guilty' for taking away from Job what He had? Is. 40:2, in the context of Israel's punishment by the Babylonians, says that their judgment had been double what it ought to have been; and yet Ezra says it was less than the promised proportionate

recompense for their sins. Here we have the utter, inconsistent grace of God; almost taking guilt for punishing them (cp. how God likewise takes the blame in Is. 54:6-8, as if He had forsaken Israel as a sweet innocent young wife).

Exo 22:5 If a man causes a field or vineyard to be eaten, and lets his animal loose, and it grazes in another man's field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field, and from the best of his own vineyard-
There was to be no excuse in claiming that an animal had done this, and not the owner. The abiding principle is that we are not to manipulate others of diminished responsibility, such as an animal in this case, and claim we did nothing wrong.

Exo 22:6 If fire breaks out, and catches in thorns so that the stacks of grain, or the standing grain, or the field are consumed; he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution-
"Breaks out" implies it gets out of control, burning beyond the intended area within one property, catching thorns on fire and thereby burning up harvested grain in time of harvest. The principle is that we may unintentionally begin something which then ignites a third party, the thorns, and this then causes huge damage. The fire in the standing grain had in fact been kindled by the man who first kindled the fire in his own territory. What we begin can have huge repercussions, because it is spread further through a third party. And we must bear some responsibility, even if the consequences were not envisaged by us initially. Thus a relationship breakdown between two people within their own home may ignite another person, who in turn spreads the breakdown on a massive scale, with large scale damage. And thus many church divisions have come about.

Exo 22:7 If a man delivers to his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house; if the thief is found, he shall pay double-
But Zacchaeus paid back four times what he had stolen (Lk. 19:8). The existence of God's law shouldn't inculcate a spirit of minimalism in us, doing the letter of the law and no more. Rather if we perceive the principles behind it, we will do far over and above what the letter of the law requires.

Exo 22:8 If the thief isn't found, then the master of the house shall come near to God, to find out if he hasn't put his hand to his neighbour's goods-
"God" is the *elohim*, the judges or priests who represented God. In the context of these situations which required a yes or no decision, it could be that the urim and thummim were used. These two stones in the breastplate flashed out binary answers to requests, so truly the case came "to God". We note how the law given in the wilderness envisaged Israel soon living in houses in the promised land.

Exo 22:9 For every matter of trespass, whether it be for ox, for donkey, for sheep, for clothing, or for any kind of lost thing, about which one says, 'This is mine', the cause of both parties shall come before God. He whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbour-

'God' here refers to the judges or elders; to come before God's representative is to come before God. Hence GNB "the two people claiming the property shall be taken to the place of worship". LXX "according to every injury alleged... and every alleged loss".

Exo 22:10 If a man delivers to his neighbour a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies or is injured, or driven away, no man seeing it-

This again is a commandment particularly relevant to the infamous quarrels between herdsmen, which would have been common in the wilderness journey. For Israel left Egypt with much cattle, whom they herded through the desert. We think of the various conflicts which the patriarchs were involved in. God shows Himself absolutely aware of and sensitive to such very common human situations. Truly man is not alone, but God knows and is aware. And seeks to guide us through them.

Exo 22:11 the oath of Yahweh shall be between them both, whether he hasn't put his hand to his neighbour's goods; and its owner shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution-

The initial intention was that Israel would so fear Yahweh that an oath before Him was assumed to be sufficient. But the Lord Jesus saw that there was a strong tendency to swear falsely, and so He urges us not to take such oaths, but to make our "yes" or "no" mean just that. This was in fact demanding an even higher level of truthfulness.

Exo 22:12 But if it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner-

The man who had his neighbour's animal with him was responsible for it if it were stolen, but not if it were killed by wild animals (:13). This might imply that the person was held responsible for finding the thief and getting restitution from him.

Exo 22:13 If it is torn in pieces, let him bring it for evidence. He shall not make good that which was torn-

The brothers allowed Joseph to be stolen away (Gen. 40:15), and then presented his garment as evidence that he had been "torn in pieces" by wild animals (s.w. Gen. 37:33; 44:28). So again we see that the essence of the Mosaic law was known well before, but was now being codified formally.

Exo 22:14 If a man borrows anything of his neighbour's, and it is injured, or dies, its owner not being with it, he shall surely make restitution-
We see the internal consistency of the Biblical record in the concern over the loss of the axe head (2 Kings 6:5), which was a situation directly envisaged in the law here. See on :15.

Exo 22:15 If its owner is with it, he shall not make it good. If it is a leased thing, it came for its lease-
The requirement to restore the lost or damaged borrowed item (:14) was only if the owner wasn't present. If the owner were present when it was lost or broken, then he would know that the item had not been stolen. It was the kind of loss which anyone who hires things out must be prepared to bear. The intention of :14 was therefore to cut off any possibility of suspicion that the item had not in fact been genuinely lost, but rather had been stolen. By all means, we too should seek to develop situations whereby the possibility of suspicion is removed.

Exo 22:16 If a man entices a virgin who isn't pledged to be married, and lies with her, he shall surely pay a dowry for her to be his wife-
Here again we have a law which spoke directly to the personal conscience of the individual Israelite. If a young couple slept with each other and she didn't get pregnant, then it was only up to their conscience as to whether they were obedient to this. We notice that there was no unduly heavy condemnation for consensual premarital sex. That is not at all to justify it, but we should note that the New Testament's heavy condemnation of "fornication", Greek *pornos*, is not generally referring to this. Rather is the reference often to the casual sex which accompanied idol worship.

Exo 22:17 If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins-
The amount of this dowry isn't defined. The father would have to set the amount; but if he had refused to let the man marry his daughter, it would surely have had to be fairly small. See on :16.

Exo 22:18 You shall not allow a sorceress to live-
The feminine form shows that a particular kind of female sorceress was in view. "To live" is literally "to revive, to live again". If the idea was simply that she must be killed, then the phrase used in :19 would be used. Hence LXX "Ye shall not save the lives of sorcerers". It seems something specific was in view which may not be immediately apparent to us.

Exo 22:19 Whoever has sex with an animal shall surely be put to death-
Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the message for us is that we are to respect ourselves as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level.

Exo 22:20 He who sacrifices to any god, except to Yahweh only, shall be utterly destroyed-
"Utterly destroyed" is *haram*, the word used for devotion to Yahweh. The person who didn't want to devote themselves to Yahweh was to be devoted to Yahweh through execution. So we see the choice which remains before us for all generations- to either totally devote ourselves to Yahweh, or be devoted to Him through the second death of condemnation at the last day.

Exo 22:21 You shall not wrong an alien, neither shall you oppress him, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt-
Israel were to be motivated in kindness to others by the recollection that they had been redeemed from Egypt; the memory of our redemption through the waters of baptism [cp. the Red Sea] should have the same effect upon us.

Exo 22:22 You shall not take advantage of any widow or fatherless child-
"Take advantage" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them.

Exo 22:23 If you take advantage of them at all, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry-
As discussed on :22, "take advantage" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). And God had heard the cry of the afflicted Hebrews. It is absolutely natural that the abused seek to abuse. But God is here asking His people to consciously break that natural cycle, and to not abuse others even if we have been abused. Only the experience of grace can motivate us to do this.

Exo 22:24 and My wrath will grow hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless-
We see here God's extreme anger against all taking advantage of others (:22,23). And

there are many ways in which we can do this; by not paying bills on time, or paying low wages to workers. What we do to others in this way will in some form have to be our experience.

Exo 22:25 If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor; neither shall you charge him interest-
In some ways, Moses became more demanding in Deuteronomy, whilst at the same time there emphasizing grace and love. Thus under the Law, Israel were not to lend to their poor brother upon usury (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:37); but in Deuteronomy Moses forbids them to do this to *any* Israelite (Dt. 23:19).

Israelites weren't to lend to each other for interest. Yet Jesus tells the rejected man that he should've done at least this (Mt. 25:7)- as if to say that the man should've done at least something with what God had given him, even if it wasn't the ideal, and even if it technically infringed God's law. Indifference and selfish laziness with God's gifts is therefore highlighted as being so reprehensible to Jesus.

Exo 22:26 If you take your neighbour's garment as guarantee of a loan, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down,-
Moses does not repeat every single commandment in the Law. Rather are there several themes of Moses in Deuteronomy presented. His choice of which ones he does repeat indicates his feelings towards Israel. His sensitivity towards the weakest and poorest of Israel comes out in this. He was reaching the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who said that the weakest of his brethren represented him (Mt. 25:40 Gk.). Thus Moses stresses how they were not to go into the house of a poor man to take back his pledge (Dt. 24:10); Moses could enter into the sense of shame and embarrassment of the poor man when a richer man enters his home. The Law in Exodus 22:26 did not stipulate that the house of the poor man should not be entered; by making this point in his farewell speech, Moses was showing his sensitivity, his ability now to enter into the feelings of the poorest of God's people. Indeed, the whole passage in Deuteronomy (Dt. 24:6-17) about pledges is quite an expansion upon what the Law actually said in Ex. 22. And this from a man who could have been the king of Egypt, who could have had the world. What marvellous similarity with our Lord!

It was forbidden by the Law to keep a man's outer garment overnight (Ex. 22:26,27). But the Lord taught whilst the law was still in operation that we should be willing to give it up, and even offer it (Mt. 5:40). The threatened man could have quoted the Law and kept his clothing. But the Lord bids us go to a higher level, beyond using God's law to uphold our own rights. And in this He raises a vital if difficult principle: Don't always enforce what Biblical rights you have against your brother. Don't rush to your own defence and

justification even if Scripture is on your side. Live on the level of true love and non-resistance to evil.

Exo 22:27 for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What would he sleep in? It will happen, when he cries to Me, that I will hear, for I am gracious-
Israel had cried to God in Egypt, and had been heard, by His grace. And they were to respond likewise. They were to give nobody any reason to cry to God because of how they were being oppressed by their brothers. And yet many are those who have cried to God in pain at how their brethren have treated them, through excluding them or judging them. God is extremely sensitive to the suffering of the abused; He could imagine the poor man shivering at night because his warm jacket was being held by his creditor.

Lev. 25:38 reasons that because of Israel's experience of the Red Sea redemption, therefore they were to have a generous spirit to their brother. Because the Egyptians were hard taskmasters, and Israel had been graciously saved from them, *therefore* they were not to be hard on each other (Lev. 25:40). If the oppressed [as Israel were oppressed] cry out unto you [as Israel cried out for their affliction], you must hear them, otherwise God will hear them and punish you, as if you are the Egyptian taskmaster (Ex. 22:24-27). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is shot through with direct and indirect reference to the Red Sea experience. It was as if this was to be the motivator for their obedience and upholding of the culture of kindness which the Law sought to engender (Lev. 23, 24; Dt. 17:7; 24:19-24). And our experience of redemption from this world ought to have the same effect.

Exo 22:28 You shall not blaspheme God, nor curse a ruler of your people-
Clearly the *elohim*, rendered "God", were the rulers of the people. The two are here placed in parallel. Paul understood 'cursing' as threatening a person with Divine judgment and calling them names like 'hypocrite' (Acts 23:3,5).

Exo 22:29 You shall not delay to offer from your harvest and from the outflow of your presses. You shall give the firstborn of your sons to Me-
"The outflow" refers to liquid products. When you perceive an opportunity to do the Lord's service, respond immediately. Say yes straight away. See it as another opportunity for "redeeming the time". This is a major Biblical theme. Israel were not to delay in offering their firstfruits to God (Ex. 22:29), lest their intentions weren't translated into practice. The disciples immediately left the ship, simply put their nets down and followed (Mt. 4:20,22); Matthew left his opened books and queue of clients in the tax office and walked out never to return (Lk. 5:17,18 implies). There is a marked theme in the NT of men and women hearing the Gospel and immediately responding by accepting baptism.

Exo 22:30 You shall do likewise with your cattle and with your sheep. Seven days it shall be with its mother, then on the eighth day you shall give it to Me-
This implies that there would be local sanctuaries (as Ex. 20:24); the intention was not that they should travel up to Jerusalem every time an animal gave birth to its firstborn. Animals often died after birth, and it was only by the eighth day that it was apparent whether or not it was deformed. This was to remind them that they were to offer the best to God, and not to offer that which cost them nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Exo 22:31 You shall be holy men to Me, therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by animals in the field. You shall cast it to the dogs-
This command wasn't only for hygienic reasons. God wished to encourage His people to have a healthy work ethic, not taking short cuts, but eating animals they had raised themselves for that purpose. We live in a society where laziness and trying to live for free has become almost an art form. We cannot ultimately get around the curse, that we shall eat only as a result of the sweat of our own labour. We have to accept our humanity and our fallen condition, looking for the lifting of the curse in God's future Kingdom.

EXODUS CHAPTER 23

Exo 23:1 You shall not spread a false report-
This is paralleled in the second half of the verse with being a false witness. Spreading gossip quietly is as bad as standing up in court as a false witness.

Don't join your hand with the wicked to be a malicious witness-
Here and in :2 we see the tendency to adopt positions based upon the view of the majority which surround us.

Exo 23:2 You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; neither shall you testify in court to side with a multitude to pervert justice-
We go astray "like sheep" (Is. 53:6)- we tend to sin because of others' influence, because we're not as strongly individualistic and independent as we like to think we are. God has never advocated democracy as a means of governing His people, because of His awareness of our tendency to follow the majority; and "crowd / multitude" can mean just that, the majority.

Exo 23:3 neither shall you show partiality to a poor man in his legal case-
As noted on :4, this could be a command not to show partiality in the heart, when we are called upon to give an opinion or judgment upon another. We are warned here

against bias in any way- feeling pity for a poor man who has done wrong is as bad as bias toward the wealthy (:6). Economic status is of no matter, compared to human behaviour and the human person.

Exo 23:4 If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again-
Those "going astray" are the spiritually weak (Heb. 5:2). We are to be concerned for them, rather than ignoring them because we don't like which stable they came from. These are further examples of how God's law differs from human laws in that it criminalizes internal attitudes. It was impossible to prove the sin of omitting to help your enemy's animal, nor enforce the law against it- because it would've been invisible to others. Yet the God who sees all stands in judgment upon our innermost thoughts and desires. Note too that sins of omission are just as bad as sins of commission; the man who refused to help the animal could've returned to his home that day feeling he hadn't actually committed anything wrong. But his sin of omission would've been noticed by God.

Exo 23:5 If you see the donkey of him who hates you fallen down under his burden, don't leave him, you shall surely help him with it-
The psychological intensity of our inner battles is recognized throughout Scripture. This Divine law perceived that in such a case, there would be the inner temptation to "forbear" assisting; but no, "you shall surely release it". The very structure of Biblical Hebrew as a language is often instructive as to how God wishes us to perceive things. There is actually no specific word in Biblical Hebrew for 'to think' – instead there is a word meaning 'to say in one's heart'. And there are times when the word is wrongly translated simply "say" (e.g. 1 Sam. 16:6 – NEB correctly renders as "thought"). This provides a window into understanding how the Greek logos means both 'speech' and 'reason'; and sets the backdrop for the repeated teaching of Jesus that God counts human thoughts as if they are the spoken word or acted deed. But my point in this context is that the Hebrew Bible continually focuses our attention upon the internal thought processes – for here is the real 'Satan', the real enemy to true spirituality.

Exo 23:6 You shall not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "justice", s.w. "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. And thereby they became the judgments or justice of Israel. His judgment / justice is to be ours. But the word also has the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's

ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing to show justice to others. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

We are warned in :3 against bias in any way- feeling pity for a poor man who has done wrong is as bad as bias toward the wealthy (:6). Economic status is of no matter, compared to human behaviour and the human person.

Exo 23:7 Keep far from a false charge, and don't kill the innocent and righteous-
These commandments seem aimed particularly at judges and witnesses in court. But all Israel were to know the basis upon which judgment should be made. Keeping far from a false charge may mean that frivolous, obviously false complaints shouldn't even be entertained. Just as those clearly innocent shouldn't be condemned. The two commandments go together in that wasting time upon that which is obviously untrue, giving thereby credibility to slander, is as bad as condemning the innocent.

For I will not justify the wicked-
GNB takes this as meaning "for I will condemn anyone who does such an evil thing". The Septuagint uses the word translated "imputed" in the NT with regard to sacrifices [symbolic of Christ's death on the cross] being "reckoned" to a person (Lev. 7:18; Num. 18:27,30); and of Shimei asking David not to "reckon" his guilt to him, to judge him not according to the obvious facts of the case (2 Sam. 19:20). The Old Testament is at pains to stress that Yahweh will *not* justify the guilty (Ex. 23:7; Is. 5:23; Prov. 17:15). This is where the unique significance of Jesus comes in. Because of *Him*, His death and our faith in it, our being in Him, God can justify the wicked in that they have died with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), they are no longer, they are only "in Christ", for them "to live is Christ". They are counted as in Him, and in this way sinners end up justified.

Exo 23:8 You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds those who have sight and perverts the words of the righteous-
"The righteous" in view may be those giving testimony, or being judged. Their words become perverted if those judging them have ulterior motives for not taking their words on face value.

Exo 23:9 You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you

were aliens in the land of Egypt-
Try to see the historical events which occurred to Israel as relevant to you personally. They were "types of us". Note how 1 Cor. 10:1 speaks of "*our* fathers"- even when Paul is writing to Gentiles. He intended them to see in the Jewish fathers a type of themselves. Israel's keeping of the Passover implied that each subsequent Israelite had personally been redeemed that night. All down the years, they were to treat the stranger fairly: "for you know the heart of an alien". The body of believers, the body of Christ, is not only world-wide geographically at this point in time; it stretches back over time as well as distance, to include all those who have truly believed. This is why David found such inspiration from the history of Israel in his own crises (e.g. Ps. 77).

T**he Exodus is the most alluded to historical incident of the Old Testament- it's a pattern to us all. Israel were not to be passive to their history of redemption, and neither can we be. Both the ten commandments and the rest of the law began with reference to Israel's exodus deliverance: "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me..." (Ex. 20:2,3); the rest of the law began with the commands about releasing slaves because this was the outcome of their own exodus experience: "Now these are the ordinances which you shall set before them. If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh he shall go out free without paying anything" (Ex. 21:1,2). And throughout the law, there were references to the exodus as the motive for obeying the law, e.g. Ex. 23:9 "You shall not oppress an alien, for you know the heart of an alien, since you were aliens in the land of Egypt".**

Exo 23:10 For six years you shall sow your land, and shall gather in its increase-
The assumption at this point was that those hearing these words would soon be established in the promised land. God foreknew they would not, but He goes ahead with His ideal potentials with absolute enthusiasm and legitimate enthusiasm. The parallel here is with six days of work followed by the seventh day of rest. The seventh year was therefore to be a temporary suspension of the curse, the possibility of having a taste of the Kingdom now; just as we today can live "the eternal life", the kind of life which we will eternally live in the Kingdom. The idea of the Sabbath year was also to lead Israel away from the mentality of justification by works. And that was to involve faith in God's provision, rather than trust in our own works.

Exo 23:11 but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the animals of the field shall eat. In the same way, you shall deal with your vineyard and with your olive grove-
It’s true that often, although not always, poverty is partly due to poor decisions and

mismanagement, and any aid given is often misused. And it's true that the materially poor are partly poor [in many cases] exactly because of that. And yet the Bible teaches generosity to "the poor". There is no attempt in the Bible teaching about "the poor" to subdivide them into the genuinely poor, and those who are poor because of their own fault or laziness, or who are asking for support when they don't actually need it. A person who comes to you claiming need is "the poor". Thus Israel were not to farm their land in the seventh year, "that the poor of your people may eat" (Ex. 23:11). This immediately raised the issue that all manner of people could eat the fruit which grew naturally on the land that year- but there is no legislation to try to limit who had access to it. Those who had food in their barns might eat what grew- but there was no mechanism within the law which controlled that. The point is, in our spiritual poverty we are just the same. We are in that position partly because of our human situation and other factors over which we have no control; but also partly and largely because we choose to be in it. We cry to God for the riches of His forgiveness- and we waste it, by doing the same sin over and again. Our hold on spiritual things is weak, we don't respond with the grace and appreciation we ought to. We're spiritually lazy. We're no better than those who are materially poor through nothing but their own fault. Our generosity to them is a reflection of our recognition of this.

Exo 23:12 Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your handmaid, and the alien may be refreshed-

God's sensitivity to animals shines through the Law- the fact even animals are living beings and not mere machines should be felt by us too. God's intention was to inculcate an all round spirit of sensitivity and culture of kindness to others in human life, and that included animals. Our hope of experiencing the "rest" of the Kingdom (Heb. 4:9) means that we are to give "rest" to others in this life.

Exo 23:13 Be careful to do all things that I have said to you; and don't invoke the name of other gods, neither let them be heard out of your mouth-

We need to let passages like Eph. 5:3–5 have their full weight with us. Fornication, covetousness, all uncleanness should not be "named amongst us", in the same way Israel were not to take even the names of the Gentile idols onto their lips (Ex. 23:13) – "but rather giving of thanks", knowing that those who do such things will not be in the Kingdom of God. A thankful attitude, thinking and speaking of those things with which we will eternally have to do, is to replace thinking and talking about all the things which shall not be our eternal sphere of thought in the Kingdom age. And yet our generation faces the temptation like none before it – to privately watch and read of those things, vicariously involved in them, whilst being under the illusion that we're not actually doing them ourselves. For this is what the entertainment industry is based around.

It is man who is to record or remember / memorialize the things of Yahweh's Name (s.w. Ps. 20:7; 45:17; Is. 12:4; 26:13), making no mention / record of the name of other gods apart from Yahweh (s.w. Ex. 23:13; Zech. 13:2). But in Ex. 20:24 it is God who records or remembers His Name when He is worshipped acceptably. We see here the mutuality between God and man which is achieved in worship when it is done His way.

Yahweh repeatedly forbad His people to mention the name of other gods. In the Ancient Near East, all conflict between peoples and nations was seen as conflict between gods. The role of prophets or priests on either side was to bring curses upon the other gods. And so they repeated the names of the other gods in incantations supposed to bring curses upon those gods. This however is forbidden to God's people. They instead were to focus upon the Name of their God Yahweh. And we see in this a pattern for ourselves; to focus upon the ultimate truth and truths of the one true God, and not be caught up in wishing cursing upon those who believe otherwise. To focus upon the positive, which is the source of all victory, rather than going on the defensive against other views by cursing them.

Exo 23:14 You shall observe a feast to Me three times a year-
The law was based around regular rituals. God knew that this was what His people needed, and although under the new covenant we don't have such structure, the true Christian life is really one of having the right habits.

Exo 23:15 You shall observe the feast of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib (for in it you came out from Egypt), and no one shall appear before me empty-
"Empty" may mean that they were to not attend without bringing a sacrifice, with empty hands. But "empty" is s.w. "without cause", "in vain". Attendance at the feasts was not to be mere ritual, appearing before Yahweh for no purpose. The meaning of the feasts was to be allowed to have the spiritual results intended. And this is a challenge to all whose Christian lives involve regular attendance at meetings. We can so easily slip into a rut of ritual observance, just going through motions "without cause".

Exo 23:16 And the feast of harvest, the first fruits of your labours, which you sow in the field: and the feast of harvest, at the end of the year, when you gather in your labours out of the field-
"Your labours" is put by metonymy for "the crops you grew with your labour". And the best of them were to be given to God. We are to understand this as a resignation of human works; the Sabbath year and weekly Sabbath sought to teach the same. Living in the spirit of this meant that daily work was no longer simply the result of the curse in

Eden; the work was done "as unto the Lord", and for Him rather than as merely for self preservation.

Exo 23:17 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord Yahweh-
The Pentateuch uses the term "before Yahweh" or 'to see the face of God', usually translated as 'to come into God's presence'; this was a pagan term used at the time to describe seeing an image of a god (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 152). But Israel were being taught that their God had no image, but all the same, they could come into His presence.

Exo 23:18 You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread, neither shall the fat of My feast remain all night until the morning-
Perhaps this was to remove the temptation to go back and take part of the sizzling fat for themselves; for this was seen as the most tasty and desirable part of the animal. We are not to place fences around the law in the legalistic way Judaism has done, but we are to be aware of our own liability to spiritual failure, our weakness in the face of temptation; and to arrange our lives appropriately. Ex. 34:25 is parallel with this, and "My feast" is defined there as Passover.

Exo 23:19 The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of Yahweh your God-
God was to be honoured with "the first of the first". Yahweh was "one", or "the first [and only]", and so all was to be devoted to Him.

You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk-
The laws in the "Book of the Covenant" abruptly end with this, as if it summed up the spirit of all the others (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Dt. 14:21). Middle Eastern goats often give birth to twins [the twinning rate of shammy goats is nearly 2.0, i.e. they nearly always have twins], and produce enough milk for both of them. It was customary to kill one of the goats so that the over supply of milk from the mother could be used by the owner, and this abundance of milk was used for boiling the killed baby goat. And kid goats were thought to be most tasty when boiled in their mother's milk. It seems that God considered this narcissistic and absolutely over indulgent, and without thought to the feelings of the mother goat; even though goats (rather than sheep) are at times a symbol of sinners and the unclean. The principle is that narcissistic over indulgence at the expense of others' feelings is wrong. And our age like none other is full of this kind of thing. The rich indulge themselves in expensive restaurants whilst the poor go hungry. And yet we note that Solomon apparently thought that abundance of goat's milk (which arose from killing one of the kid goats) was a sign of Divine blessing (Prov. 27:27). The Mosaic law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness and extreme sensitivity to all, even

animals- we are not to think that we "need not care a rush" for those who are unclean goats. Read like this, it is similar to the prohibitions of killing on the same a cow and a calf, or a ewe and her lamb (Lev. 22:28). It is likely that this was also related to a paganic fertility ritual, performed at harvest time (which is the immediate context of the prohibition); and God didn't want His people to even remotely be associated with that. For He alone was the source of all fertility. The prohibition not to boil a young goat follows straight on from the command to give the firstfruits to God. This was so that they might be blessed with fertility. Israel were not to seek to get around God requirements and principles by using a pagan ritual intended to assure fertility. The principle is that there is no short cut, no getting around God's principles, by using technology or tradition or secular wisdom.

Exo 23:20 Behold, I send an angel before you-
It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

To keep you by the way-
Israel's guardian Angel was to "keep" them in the way (Ex. 23:20), clearly echoing how the Angels kept the way to the tree of life in Eden. The same Hebrew word for "keep" occurs very often in Exodus in the context of Israel being told to keep God's commands; but their freewill effort was to be confirmed by the Angel keeping them in the way of obedience. They were to "keep" themselves in the way (Dt. 4:9 and many others; s.w. "take heed", "observe" etc.), but the Angel would keep them in it. This mutuality is developed in Ex. 23:21, where having said the Angel will keep them, Israel are told "Beware of him, and obey his voice". "Beware" translates the same Hebrew word as "keep". The Angel would keep them, but they were to keep to the Angel. And they didn't, and so that generation died and were not brought to the Kingdom as was potentially possible. This is an example of how we are intended to have a mutual relationship with the Lord, leading to Him strengthening us in the one way. This word translated "keep" is also translated "spies" in Jud. 1:24; the spies were the keepers in the way of Israel, to bring them in to the land. And yet the Angel at the exodus was their 'keeper' to bring them into the land. The spies were working in harmony with their Angels; and thus they succeeded.

This is an evident allusion to the Angel-cherubim keeping the way to the tree of life. But did all Israel remain "in the way" whilst in the wilderness? Evidently not. Did the Angel fail? No. The Angel was given power and strength in order to potentially enable Israel to remain "in the way", just as our Angels are given that same power. But Israel refused to work with the Angel; they didn't make use of the Angel's efforts to keep them in the way.

The command to prepare a way along which to flee to the cities of refuge (Dt. 19:3) is expressed with the very same words used about God through the Angels preparing a way for Israel to flee along, out of Egypt to the promised land (Ex. 23:20). This was obviously done purely at God's initiative. But now, Israel were asked to do the same- to prepare a way for their and others' salvation. When we reflect upon our own way of escape from this world, it's clear enough that it was by grace. By God's sole initiative we came into contact with the Gospel, or were born into such a family at such a time as enabled us to hear it. Our response to that grace must be like Israel's- to prepare a way for others to flee, when they like us find themselves in a situation that is spiritually against them, although not of their conscious choice.

And to bring you into the place which I have prepared-
See on Hos. 12:13. "I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:1-3) is based upon the idea of Moses and the Angel bringing Israel "into the place which I have prepared" (Ex. 23:30).

The parable of the pounds describes the reward of the faithful in terms of being given ten or five cities (Lk. 19:17). This idea of dividing up groups of cities was surely meant to send the mind back to the way Israel in their wilderness years were each promised their own individual cities and villages, which they later inherited. The idea of inheriting "ten cities" occurs in Josh. 15:57; 21:5,26; 1 Chron. 6:61 (all of which are in the context of the priests receiving their cities), and " five cities" in 1 Chron. 4:32. As each Israelite was promised some personal inheritance in the land, rather than some blanket reward which the while nation received, so we too have a personal reward prepared. The language of inheritance (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:4) and preparation of reward (Mt. 25:34; Jn. 14:1) in the NT is alluding to this OT background of the land being prepared by the Angels for Israel to inherit (Ex. 15:17 Heb.; 23:20; Ps. 68:9,10 Heb.) . We must be careful not to think that our promised inheritance is *only* eternal life; it is something being personally prepared for each of us. The language of preparation seems inappropriate if our reward is only eternal life.

Exo 23:21 Pay attention to him, and listen to his voice. Don't provoke him, for he will not pardon your disobedience, for My name is in him-
God's Name being carried by the Angel explains how Moses later is recorded as talking with Yahweh face to face, even though we are also told that He cannot ever be seen by humans. Moses spoke with the Angel who carried the Yahweh Name, and who was therefore functionally as God to men. The same principle explains how men, and especially Christ, can be spoken of as God because they carried His Name, without this making them God Himself in person.

The Angel is described as not forgiving their sins, but in Ex. 32:30-32 Moses goes up to the 'LORD' (Angel) in the mount and asks for forgiveness for the people's sin with the

golden calf- see on Ex. 34:9. Moses knew God well enough to know that He is open to dialogue. The 'Lord' in the mount must have been an Angel because Moses saw his back parts- and there is no way this is possible of God Himself in person, "whom no man hath seen ,nor can see" (1 Tim. 6:16). "No man has seen God at any time" (John 1:18). This 'Lord' on the mount gave Moses the Law- and elsewhere we are told that the Law was ministered by Angels. The Angel on the mount then says He has sent "Mine Angel before thee" (to Canaan), Ex. 32:34. So we have one Angel sending another here. And it seems one Angel was prepared to forgive, the other wasn't. What implications does this have for us, if we are to be made like unto the Angels (Lk. 20:35,36)? See on Josh. 24:17.

Exo 23:22 But if you indeed listen to his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies, and an adversary to your adversaries-
- see on Dan. 9:14. The opposite to not being forgiven (:21) is unity with God, so that our enemies are His.

Exo 23:23 For My angel shall go before you, and bring you in to the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Canaanite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite-
This happened invisibly, with the Angel working through circumstances to weaken those tribes. But the Israelites failed to believe this verse, feeling that those tribes were far too strong for them (Num. 13:30-33). Only six of the seven nations of Canaan are mentioned (although LXX includes "the Girgashites"). Perhaps these six were to be destroyed first; then the Girgashites and then finally all the other tribes who lived in the territory promised to Abraham (:31). The inheritance was therefore to be given to Israel in stages, as they could handle it. But sadly they didn't want this, and refused to even take all the territory of these six nations.

And I will cut them off-
They had seen this done to Egypt (s.w. Ex. 9:15), and they were intended to understand this as a foretaste of their overcoming of all obstacles between them and inheritance of the Kingdom. We receive similar foretastes and encouragement in this life.

Exo 23:24 You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor follow their practices, but you shall utterly overthrow them and demolish their pillars-
The pillars were erected by the Canaanites in memoriam of various things which their gods had supposedly done for them, and were then worshipped in hope that the gods would come through for them again. So to worship them would mean accepting the entire thought, history and culture of Canaan. That Israel did so reflected their lack of faithfulness to their own fathers. Moses wrote Genesis to bring this history and true culture before them.

Exo 23:25 You shall serve Yahweh your God, and He will bless your bread and your water, and I will take sickness away from your midst-
These were the blessings specifically to be experienced by Israel in the wilderness, before they actually entered Canaan (:27,28). Hence the reference to bread [manna] and water. There was not one feeble person amongst them when they left Egypt (Ps. 105:37), and this was to continue.

Exo 23:26 No one will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will fulfil the number of your days-
The idea is that there would be neither barren cattle nor barren land; because these were the blessings specifically to be experienced by Israel in the wilderness, before they actually entered Canaan (:27,28). In their resting places they would have sown and raised crops, at least to provide fodder for their animals. But these was not to be the case; for they rebelled, and wasted their years in the wilderness, as Ps. 90 laments.

Exo 23:27 I will send My terror before you, and will confuse all the people to whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you-
Jacob likens his guardian Angel to "the God before whom my fathers walked" (Gen. 48:16), who is called "the fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42,53) when Jacob describes the personal presence of God in his life. So the "fear of God" is associated with an Angel; God sent His fear, an Angel, before Israel into Canaan, as promised explicitly in Ex. 23. As Rahab testified, the Canaanites had turned their backs in fear upon Israel; but they failed to believe it, and instead turned *their* backs in fear and wanted to return to Egypt. All the potential barriers between us and the Kingdom have been overcome- but we are to believe that.

Exo 23:28 I will send the hornet before you, which will drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before you-
The sending of hornets ahead of Israel parallels the sending of the Angel ahead of them (:23). The reference may be to literal hornets devastating and weakening the Canaanites; or it could refer instead to Egyptian tribes or the Philistines, some of whom had hornets on their armour, attacking and weakening the Canaanite tribes just before the Israelites arrived. This situation was providentially arranged by the Angel who went before Israel. The obstacles to our possessing the Kingdom seem huge and strong, but in fact they have been significantly weakened by God's providence. Invisible to us, the Angels likewise are potentially preparing our way to enter the Kingdom.

The fear amongst the Canaanites prior to Israel's approach and the weakness of those nations was due to "the hornet" being sent before Israel (Dt. 7:20; Josh. 24:12); it would

seem that this is a reference to the Angels softening up the Canaanite tribes, perhaps through inciting the Egyptians to raid them and ruin the economy. And specifically, the two kings of the Amorites attacking the other Canaanites. "The hornet" could also refer to the Phoenician raiders, who had hornets as totems; they too weakened Canaan before the Israelites arrived, and would have been manipulated to do so by an Angel. In Ex. 23:27 God says He will "send My fear before you, and will destroy all the people to whom you shall come". Jacob likens his guardian Angel to "the God before whom my fathers walked" (Gen. 48:16), who is called "the fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42,53) when Jacob describes the personal presence of God in his life. So the "fear of God" is associated with an Angel; God sent His fear, an Angel, before Israel into Canaan, as promised explicitly in Ex. 23. "The hornet" could have referred to literal hornets, used by God to destroy the nations of Canaan. For they were indeed a problem in the land; "Zorah" in Judah means "place of hornets". But I prefer the idea that the Angel manipulated Gentile nations to soften up the Canaanites before Israel's arrival. The same figure is found in Is. 7:18, where God whistled for the "fly that is in Egypt and the bee that is in Assyria". We note that this was all built in to God's wider plan; for had Israel entered Canaan 40 years before they did, they would've found the Canaanites that much stronger than they were after "the hornet" had weakened them for 40 years. It's as if God recalculated the program according to the great weakness of Israel. They didn't enter when they could have done, and so He used the period of their wilderness wanderings to make their entrance to the land that much easier than it would otherwise have been.

Exo 23:29 I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the animals of the field multiply against you-
The God who is so far away from this earth foresees the situations we will face in life, and like a true Father, arranges things so that they will not be too great for us to overcome. His sensitivity to us is amazing. The truth is that God would have given them the land immediately had they wanted it; He intended giving it to them by stages because of the weakness of their faith (see on :23).

Exo 23:30 Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased and inherit the land-
The idea is as in GNB "until there are enough of you to take possession of the land". This implies that Israel were very small in number, and the land too great for them. This would confirm our suggestion on Ex. 12:37 that the numbers who left Egypt were far smaller than commonly thought.

Exo 23:31 I will set your border from the Red Sea even to the sea of the Philistines, and

from the wilderness to the River; for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you-
Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1). As discussed on :23, God's plan was to give them the Kingdom progressively. But they spurned it.

Exo 23:32 You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods-
The people are made parallel with their gods; hence the warning that to marry the people meant covenant with their gods. The tragedy was that Israel were not thus identified with their God. The temptation to make a covenant with the supposed gods of the land was because it was thought this would guarantee fertility; whereas God promised fertility if Israel were loyal to their covenant with Him (:23). But they liked to think they could just guarantee themselves a good harvest by also making covenant with the fertility gods of the land. So we could identify the prime attraction of idolatry as being the promise of material success and stability which it carried with it. And that likewise is the essence of all our modern forms of idolatry.

Exo 23:33 They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me-
We can make others sin (Ex. 23:33; 1 Sam. 2:24; 1 Kings 16:19). There is an urgent imperative here, to really watch our behaviour; e.g. to not drink alcohol in the presence of a brother whose conscience is weak.

For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you-
Twice in 1 Timothy, Paul speaks about a snare; the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7), and the snare of wanting wealth (1 Tim. 6:9). The desire for wealth in whatever form is the very epitome of the devil, our inherent sin which we must struggle against. The idea of a snare is that it results in a sudden and unexpected destruction. The unexpectedness of

the destruction should set us thinking: surely the implication is that those who are materialistic don't realize that in fact this is their besetting sin, and therefore their rejection in the end because of it will be so tragically unexpected. It's rather like pride; if you're proud and you don't know it, then you really are proud. And if we're materialistic and don't know it, we likewise really have a problem. The idea of riches being a snare connects with copious OT references to idols as Israel's perpetual snare (Ex. 23:33; Dt. 7:16; Jud. 2:3; 8:27; Ps. 106:36; Hos. 5:1). Paul's point is surely that the desire of wealth is the equivalent of OT idolatry.

EXODUS CHAPTER 24

Exo 24:1 He said to Moses, Come up to Yahweh, you, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship from a distance-
Or, "afar off". The original plan had been as in Ex. 19:13 LXX: "When the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on Ex. 19:14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on Ex. 19:10. The people "perceived" Yahweh's holiness and their sinfulness and continued idolatry. And they shied away from Him (Ex. 20:18), whereas His intention was that they came close. But they retreated to "a distance" (s.w. Ex. 20:18,21). These words are so sad. It was a rejection of intimacy with God. And yet God wanted at least some level of relationship with them, and so He still allows and encourages them to worship Him "from a distance", even although that was not His ideal initial intention. He had hoped for more intimacy with them.

"I will that they also... be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (Jn. 17:24) alludes to the 70 elders sharing some of Moses' experience in the Mount; it is as if Christ is saying that his disciples really can enter into his relationship with God, we can be where he was spiritually in his mortal life.

Exo 24:2 Moses alone shall come near to Yahweh, but they shall not come near, neither shall the people go up with him-
See on :1. "Where I am, thither you cannot come" (Jn. 7:34) sounds like Moses ascending the Mount, leaving Israel behind him. Yet "Where I am" refers to Christ's unity with God; the heights of his relationship with God connect with the physical ascension of Moses into the mount to hear God's words. Moses' ascents of the mountain were seen as representing an ascension to Heaven; but he had not ascended up to the "heavenly things" of which Christ spoke. Consider the spiritual loneliness of rising to heights no other man has reached, as far as Heaven is above earth. John the Baptist recognized this (Jn. 3:31).

Exo 24:3 Moses came and told the people all the words of Yahweh, and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Yahweh has spoken will we do-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Exo 24:4 Moses wrote all the words of Yahweh, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel-
Moses was obviously literate, having been trained with the best wisdom and education of Egypt.

There were so many similarities between Elijah and Moses; Dale Allison points out:
Confronted Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) = Confronted Pharaoh (Ex. 5:1)
Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (1 Kings 19:3) = Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (Ex. 2:15)
Miraculously fed "…bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening…" (1 Kings 17:6) = Miraculously fed "…meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning…" (Ex. 16:8, 12)
Gathered all Israel to Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19)=Gathered all Israel to Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:17)
Combated the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40) = Combated the magicians of Pharaoh (Ex. 7:8-13, 20-22; 8:1-7)
Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (1 Kings 18:36-39) = Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Ex. 32:11-14)
Elijah took twelve stones at Carmel "…according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob…" (1 Kings 18:30-32) = Moses had twelve pillars set up at Sinai "…corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel…" (Ex. 24:4)
The Lord accepted Elijah's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it

completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (1 Kings 18:36-39) = The Lord accepted Moses and Aaron's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (Lev. 9:22-24)
By Elijah's authority 3000 idolatrous prophets were slain (1 Kings 18:40) = By Moses' authority 3000 idolaters were slain (Ex. 32:25-29)
After killing the prophets of Baal Elijah climbed Carmel to pray. (1 Kings 18:42) = After killing the idolaters Moses climbed Sinai to pray (Ex. 32:30)
Went without food for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8) = Went without food for forty days and forty nights (Ex. 34:38; Dt. 9:9)
Elijah was in "the cave" on Horeb (=Sinai) when the Lord "passed by" (1 Kings 19: 9-11) = Moses was hidden "in the cleft of the rock" when the Lord passed by Sinai (Ex. 33:21-23)
Elijah saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Horeb (=Sinai). (1 Kings 19:11-12) = Moses saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Sinai (Ex. 19:16-20; 20:18; Dt. 4:11; 5:22-27).
Prayed that he might die (1 Kings 19:1-4) = Prayed that he might die. (Num. 11:10-15).
The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon his enemies (2 Kings 1:9-12) = The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon those who rebelled against him (Num. 16; cf. Lev. 10:1-3)
Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan by striking the waters with his cloak and passed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8) = Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea by stretching out his staff and passed over on dry ground (Ex. 14:16, 21-22)
His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had (2 Kings 2) = His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had the Red Sea (Josh. 3)
Was taken away in the Transjordan (2 Kings 2:9-11) = Died in the Transjordan (Dt. 34:5)
Mysteriously translated (2 Kings 9-18) = Died mysteriously and buried in a valley, but his burial place was unknown. (Dt. 34:6)
The point of these similarities was that the Angel wanted Elijah to be like Moses; to pray for the peoples' salvation, to return to the people and lead them and teach them. Moses had begged for God's mercy for His people; but Elijah was so full of self-justification that he prayed against Israel. And so with us, we are potentially led into situations where we are to discern the similarities between us and Bible characters; we are set up with opportunities to respond in a way that reflects how we have learnt the lessons from them. The way the Lord Jesus perceived this in His wilderness temptations is a great example.

Exo 24:5 He sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of cattle to Yahweh-
Joshua appears to have been only one of a group of Moses' "young men" , who moved

around the camp running his errands (Ex. 24:5; Num. 11:27,28); as a similar group did for Nehemiah and Paul years later. The young men of the New Testament were also characterized by their love of the word (1 Jn. 2:14). Moses would have had a special fondness for this generation who were to enter the land. A large part of the Law was concerned with Israel's behaviour after they had settled in the land; these would only have been relevant to that younger generation. It is fitting that both Moses and Caleb (and Joshua?) maintained their youthful vigour right up to their death (Dt. 34:7; Josh. 14:11).

Exo 24:6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar-
Some covenants of the time were confirmed by the two parties drinking, daubing or touching the blood of the other party. God has no blood, but the sprinkling of blood was as it were His maximum way of telling them that His life, His "blood", was poured out for them and to them. And this was looking forward to the pouring out of the blood of His Son on the cross; not that Jesus was God Himself, but He represented God- and His life, His blood, His essence, His love, poured out toward His people to assure them that the covenant promise of salvation would indeed come true. There is therefore the intended ambiguity of Acts 20:28, "the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood". The idea seems to be that God was manifested in the blood of His Son.

Exo 24:7 He took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people, and they said, All that Yahweh has spoken will we do, and be obedient-
Moses could read- for he had been raised with the best of the Egyptian education system (Acts 7:22). This kind of internal corroboration within the Biblical record is to me the strongest argument for the Bible's Divine inspiration. The blood represented God's side of the confirmation; their side was to vow obedience and loyalty to their covenant with Him. And this is likewise our response to the blood of the new covenant, which was God's way of showing His loyalty to us to the ultimate extent.

Exo 24:8 Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Look, this is the blood of the covenant, which Yahweh has made with you concerning all these words-
Even the old covenant, which was in a sense “eternal”, was made with Israel “upon all these conditions” (Ex. 24:8 RVmg.). It was eternal, potentially, because it had conditions. But the conditionality of it isn’t always brought to the fore when, e.g., we read of the Sabbath as being an eternal ordinance. The way conditions are not stated within the actual prophecy is similar to how blanket statements are made in Scripture, and yet there are exceptions to them. The Lord sought to kill Moses in Ex. 4:24. If He had done so, all His previous statements about delivering Israel by the hand of Moses would

not have come true. God only didn't kill Moses because Zipporah intervened. She did this purely of her own freewill and according to the depth of her spiritual vision. Thus the earlier prophecies about delivering Israel by the hand of Moses actually had at least one major, though unspoken, condition: If Moses himself remained faithful. "But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue" (Ex. 11:7) was in fact conditional on Israel remaining indoors. But that condition isn't then stated.

Moses bound the people into covenant relationship with the words: "Behold the blood of the covenant" (Ex. 24:8). These very words were used by the Lord in introducing the emblems of the breaking of bread (Mk. 14:24). This is how important it is. We are showing that we are the covenant, special Israel of God amidst a Gentile world. Indeed, "the blood of the covenant" in later Judaism came to refer to the blood of circumcision (cp. Gen. 17:10) and it could be that the Lord was seeking to draw a comparison between circumcision and the breaking of bread. For this is how His words would have sounded in the ears of His initial hearers. This is how vital and defining it is to partake of it.

It wasn't that the blood *was* the covenant, but the death of the slain animal represented the confirmation and certainty of the covenant. Christ's death confirmed the new covenant which was made in the promises to Abraham (Rom. 15:8; Gal. 3:15-19). Believers take the cup of the new covenant in the breaking of bread service (1 Cor. 11:25), as a token of the absolute certainty of God's basic promises to we who have had those same covenant promises made to us through baptism (Gal. 3:27-29). We will eternally inherit the earth- and the blood of Christ confirmed that to us.

Exo 24:9 Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up- Perhaps :1,2 were originally between :8 and :9 but became dislodged. It seems to me that God's intention was that His people Israel were to develop their nation into the world-wide Kingdom of God on earth- a calling they miserably failed to achieve in the past, even though the prophets speak of the wonderful way it will come true in the future. Their territory would have literally been "to the ends of the earth"- and perhaps that's why there's the ambiguity in the Hebrew word *eretz*, which can mean both 'the land / earth' of Israel, and the whole planet earth. Further, the 70 Jewish elders appointed in Ex. 24:9-11 were what the New Testament letter to the Hebrews calls a reflection of the things of Heaven on earth- for there were 70 Gentile nations within the *eretz* / land promised to Abraham (tabulated in Genesis 10), and I suggest that these 70 elders were intended to ultimately rule over them. This would explain the enigmatic Dt. 32:8, which speaks of the boundaries / differentiation of the Gentile nations being set according to "the sons of Israel", or (LXX) "the Angels of God". Putting the evidence together, it would seem that there were 70 Gentile nations in the *eretz* / land, represented in Heaven by 70 Angels, who in turn were represented on earth by the 70

elders of Israel. It was God's intention that His people should rule over the nations- and yet they as it were marred the reflection of what was in Heaven, the pattern of things in Heaven became ignored. And yet the day is yet to come when men will eagerly take hold of the skirts of a Jew and go with him to worship the true God. From all this I see yet again all the potentials God has made possible for us in our age... and how, despite the fact He may foreknow that we'll waste them, He still sets up those potential possibilities for us. We are too are chosen to be king-priests over this world (Rev. 5:10), we too have a representative Angel in Heaven beholding God's face... yes, *you*, and me. We have an Angel there. It's for us to go ahead and reflect the pattern of Heaven here on earth.

Exo 24:10 They saw the God of Israel-
This surely refers to His manifestation in the Angel which specifically represented Israel, Michael (Dan. 12:1,2).

Under His feet was like a paved work of sapphire stone, like the skies for clearness-
The mention that Jesus stood before Pilate "in a place that is called the Pavement" (Jn. 19:13) reminds us of Ex. 24:10, where Yahweh was enthroned in glory on another 'pavement' when the old covenant was made with Israel. The New Covenant was inaugurated with something similar. "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9) would have been easily perceived as an allusion to the way that Yahweh Himself as it were dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat (2 Kings 19:15; Ps. 80:1). And yet the Lord Jesus in His death was the "[place of] propitiation" (Heb. 2:17), the blood-sprinkled mercy seat.

Exo 24:11 He didn't lay His hand on the nobles of the children of Israel. They saw God, and ate and drank-
To eat and drink with the Lord is a sign He accepts us and does not wish to destroy us. This is the comfort of doing so at the breaking of bread meeting. The implication is that He didn't slay the elders, even though their were somehow unclean and deserved it. All the same, God fellowshipped with them in the covenant meal (cp. the breaking of bread under the new covenant). So the covenant began with grace being shown. Or the idea could be that although they "saw God", they didn't die- as was commonly supposed.

The Bible images salvation as a feast with God at His table. The salvation of Israel from Egypt forms the source material for many later allusions to our salvation in Christ- and it was celebrated by Israel being invited up to Mount Sinai to eat and drink with God (Ex. 24:9-11); and it was regularly commemorated in the Passover meal. The future Kingdom of God was spoken of as a meal on a mountain, "a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, for all peoples" (Is. 25:6-8). Then, death itself will be on the menu and God will swallow it up. It is pictured as an eternal feast which will last eternally. People from all nations of the earth are to be God's guests. No one is to be excluded. The records of the

feeding miracles are presented in terms of this Messianic banquet. We are reminded of how at the Last Supper, Jesus shared bread and wine with those who seriously misunderstood Him, of whom He had to ask "Do you now believe...?", and knowing full and painfully well that one of the twelve was to betray Him.

Exo 24:12 Yahweh said to Moses, Come up to me on the mountain, and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone with the law and the commands that I have written, that you may teach them-
The Law was "a law... which I (Yahweh) have written" (Ex. 24:12). Yet the Lord Jesus speaks of *Moses* writing the precepts of the Law (Mk. 10:5). "The book of the law of Moses" is parallel with "the book of the law of Yahweh" (Neh. 8:1; 2 Chron. 17:9); it was "the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses" (2 Chron. 34:14). God was so strongly manifest in Moses.

Exo 24:13 Moses rose up with Joshua, his servant, and Moses went up onto God's Mountain-
When Paul says that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the glory that shines from the face of the Lord Jesus, just as the glory to a lesser extent shone from the face of Moses (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). Yet the only person to behold Moses' unveiled glory was Joshua, who alone lived in the tabernacle where Moses received the glory (Ex. 33:11). And it was he who alone accompanied Moses up the mount to meet with God (Ex. 24:13). When Moses left Joshua and went out to the people, he veiled his face. But Joshua would have seen the glory shining off Moses' unveiled face.

Exo 24:14 He said to the elders, Wait here for us, until we come again to you. Behold, Aaron and Hur are with you. Whoever is involved in a dispute can go to them-
As those miserable men argued over the clothes at the foot of the cross, so when Israel stood before the glory of Yahweh at Sinai, they still suffered "disputes" amongst themselves (Ex. 24:22 NIV cp. Heb. 12:29). So pressing and important do human pettinesses appear, despite the awesomeness of that bigger picture to which we stand related.

Exo 24:15 Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain-
When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud* of *fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:17; Dt. 5:22). Ex. 13:21 says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst

many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)?

Exo 24:16 The glory of Yahweh settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. The seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud-
The six days followed by the seventh recalls creation. The idea was in those six days of contemplation of Yahweh's glory, Moses and Israel were to be suitably humbled so that Moses might enter into the things of the rest of God, the Kingdom.

Exo 24:17 The appearance of the glory of Yahweh was like devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel-
See on :15. Our God remains a consuming fire of judgment to this day (Heb. 12:29). But the idea was that Israel were intended to understand that despite this, a man like Moses could fellowship with this God. And so could they. And despite living in full view of God's judgment and His glory for 40 days, they worshipped the golden calf. This is evidence for all time that visible evidence doesn't guarantee true faith, let alone obedience (Heb. 11:1,2).

Exo 24:18 Moses entered into the midst of the cloud, and went up on the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights-
This was the more impressive when we understand that the cloud was a cloud of fire (:17; Dt. 5:22). Israel ought to have got the message that mere man could indeed fellowship with such a holy and awesome God. Yet instead they shied away from it, to the pathetic worship of gods of wood and stone. Moses neither ate nor drank during those forty days (Dt. 9:11). Ex. 24:16 says that Moses was six and a half days on the mountain waiting for the call to meet God, so he was with God for 33 and a half days. This perhaps looks forward to the 33 and a half years ministry of the Lord Jesus.

EXODUS CHAPTER 25

Exo 25:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The commands to build the tabernacle are repeated in Exodus, and there is the record of Israel's golden calf apostasy set in the middle of them. Ex. 25:1-31:18 give the

tabernacle building commands, then there's the golden calf incident, and then the commands are repeated in Ex. 35-40. Surely this was edited in this manner to give encouragement to the exiles- the commands to rebuild the temple had been given in detail in Ez. 40-48, but the exiles failed- and yet, the implication runs, God was still willing to work again with His people in the building of His sanctuary despite their failure. There is good internal reason to think that the Pentateuch likewise was re-written in places to bring out the relevance of Israel's past to those in captivity.

Exo 25:2 Speak to the children of Israel, that they take an offering for Me. From everyone whose heart makes him willing you shall take My offering-
2 Cor. 8:12 alludes here: "If there be first (i.e. most importantly) a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" . Every man was to contribute to the building of the tabernacle (cp. the ecclesia) with a willing heart (Paul surely alludes here). They weren't told: 'Whoever is willing and able to contribute, please do so'. And yet the majority of us have at least something materially; and as we have been blessed, so let us give.

Willing hearted giving to God is important- the giving must never be from a sense of unavoidable obligation. In appealing for generosity to our poorer brethren, Paul uses this idea- speaking of how a willing heart in a cheerful giver is so loved by God (2 Cor. 8:19; 9:7).

Exo 25:3 This is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, brass-
All these valuable things had mostly been taken from or given to Israel by the Egyptians. They were to now voluntarily give them back to God. For all is of Him. What we take from this world we are to give to God, and He will dwell amongst us thereby (:8). And in the wilderness, all these valuable things were of little real value; they were just a human guarantee against future needs. But God had promised to bring them to Canaan, where all would be lavishly provided for them by His grace. And that is about the view we should have of present wealth.

Exo 25:4 blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair-
There is an apparent juxtaposition between the scarlet, the clothing of kings and rulers, and goats' hair. They had taken the scarlet clothing from Egypt when they left, but the goats' hair was what they had shorn from their own animals which they had with them. So God was asking them to bring their own small offerings along with the more valuable things they had taken from Egypt / the world. This all speaks of our attitude to giving and wealth on our wilderness journey.

Exo 25:5 rams' skins dyed red, sea cow hides, acacia wood-

The acacia wood was just the common bush wood found in the desert. See on :4. The sea cow hides were what they had picked up whilst camped on the shores of the Red Sea. Likewise what we pick up along the way in our wilderness journey is to be given to God.

Exo 25:6 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense-
The incense was "sweet" in that it smelled sweet to God. But that depended upon the components being brought to Him. “A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Exo 25:7 onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate-
The precious stones were donated by the princes or elders (Ex. 35:27). Yet in Ex. 25:4-7 they are listed along with common acacia wood and goats' hair. There was to be a culture of giving, from the wealthiest to the poorest, which was to characterize the community of God's people.

Exo 25:8 Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them-
The commands concerning the tabernacle were given to Moses by the Angel- do phrases like "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8) have primary reference to the Angel speaking the words? In the same way, does Ps. 99:1 refer also to the physical presence of an Angel between the cherubim? "The LORD reigns... He sits between the cherubim (through His Angel); let the earth (land of Israel) be moved". Similarly "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel (the Angel- so Isaiah 63 describes the wilderness Angel), You that leads Joseph like a flock (the Angel lead them through the wilderness); You who dwells between the cherubims, shine forth" (Ps. 80:1). And

again in Ps. 20:1,2 "The God of Jacob (i.e. the Angel whom Jacob recognized had been so much in his life) defend you; send you help from the sanctuary", as if it was in the sanctuary (Holy Place) that the Angel was located. See on Ps. 78:60.

Exo 25:9 According to all that I show you, the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all of its furniture, even so you shall make it-
In Jn. 5:19,20 we read that the Son does (*poieo*) what He sees the Father doing, and the Father shows Him (*deiknumi*) all *(panta*) that He does. “All these works… I have not done them of mine own mind” (Num. 16:28). This is referring to Ex. 25:9 LXX, where Moses makes *(poieo*) the Tabernacle according to all (*panta*) that God shows him (*deiknuo*). The reference of Jn. 5:19,20 is therefore to the Lord Jesus working with His Father in the building up of us the tabernacle… and all things God planned for us were revealed to the Son even in His mortality, prefigured by this revelation to Moses. What great wealth of understanding was there within His mind, within those brain cells… and how tragic that the head and body that bore them was betrayed and ignored and spat upon and tortured by men…

Exo 25:10 They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Its length shall be two and a half cubits, its breadth a cubit and a half, and a cubit and a half its height-
A cubit is about 18 inches (45 cm.). The ark was not at all large, for God's glory doesn't require grandiose human artistry nor anything large scale. His glory is manifested in the small and humble things. This was a lesson which David and Solomon failed to learn in their obsession about building a grandiose building for God's glory to dwell in.

"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God’s dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

Ex. 25:10 "They shall make an ark" becomes "I made an ark" in Moses' autobiography (Dt. 10:3). The people were generous when asked, but were not real workers. Perhaps Moses himself had to make the ark because they didn't get to it. Or maybe his work was counted as theirs, as happens between the Lord Jesus and ourselves.

Exo 25:11 You shall overlay it with pure gold. You shall overlay it inside and outside, and you shall make a gold moulding around it-
The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are. The mention of a "crown" or "moulding of gold" is as if it represented a person, a King- the Lord Jesus.

Exo 25:12 You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four feet. Two rings shall be on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it-
The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God. See on :27.

The ark had feet, literally "walking feet", feet bent as if walking, to symbolize how the ark was always moving on. We recall that God spoke of how He had "walked" in the tabernacle and therefore didn't want a fixed temple (2 Sam. 7:6).

Exo 25:13 You shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold-
"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 25:14 You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark-

This was a deconstruction of the Egyptian religious arks, which were displayed and carried in processions. God's ark was concealed, and only carried when it was without religious significance, being moved between sanctuaries.

Exo 25:15 The poles shall be in the rings of the ark. They shall not be taken from it-
This was to emphasize that the ark was always to be ready to move on; see on :12. Even when Israel were settled in their land and the temple was built, the staves were always to remain in the rings of the ark to symbolize this (1 Kings 8:7). In our more settled existence, even if we live in the house we were born in for all our days, we should have this spirit of being ready to be moved on in our spiritual journey.

Exo 25:16 You shall put the testimony which I shall give you into the ark-
The tables of the covenant were only given to Moses at the end of the 40 days. Hence "which I shall give you", for Moses at this point was on Sinai hearing these commands for the first time, and was only to be given the testimony at the end of it. Again we note the internal corroboration within the Biblical record.

Exo 25:17 You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two and a half cubits shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth-
This was the cover of the ark, with the wings of the cherubim overshadowing it, and upon this the blood of atonement was sprinkled each year at the day of atonement. The blood would have built up over the years. Paul interprets this as symbolic of the blood of the Lord Jesus on the cross. It is a seat or throne in that it is upon that that God's glory is enthroned. But we note the small size of it. God doesn't need anything large scale by human standards. "Mercy seat" is a form of the Hebrew word for 'covering' which is usually used for the covering of sins; literally "the means of propitiation". The LXX word used here is directly applied to the Lord Jesus in Rom. 3:25. It was the blood which was the basis of atonement (Lev. 17:11), but the actual mercy seat, the slab of gold which was the cover of the ark, was put by metonymy for the blood. It is upon this that God's glory dwells and is revealed. His forgiveness is Yahweh at His most glorious, and it is in this that God meets with man (Ex. 25:22). We note that the mercy seat or cover was of pure gold, not acacia word overlaid with gold. It may have been a literal cover over the ark which was detachable.

Exo 25:18 You shall make two cherubim of hammered gold. You shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat-
The cherubim had wings (:28) and could have human and animal forms, according to Ez. 1,10. In this sense they could be said to resemble the sphinx forms which were such a common part of Egyptian religion. The similarity is in the fact that God was

deconstructing Egyptian religion, just as the plagues were aimed at the gods of Egypt. Instead of openly displayed sphinx like creatures memorializing the dead, these were the hidden symbols of God's living presence amongst His people, hidden away in the holiest place, and only briefly seen once every year by the high priest.

Exo 25:19 Make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end. You shall make the cherubim on its two ends of one piece with the mercy seat-
The cherubim represented those through whom God was manifested, be it Angels or His people. For this is how the cherubim are used in Ezekiel. But they are of one part with the mercy seat, which represented the Lord Jesus (Rom. 3:25). This speaks of His deep unity with us, shown in His life by His being of our nature, and now through the presence of His Spirit within those who are "in" Him.

Exo 25:20 The cherubim shall spread out their wings upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces toward one another. The faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat-
Speaking of the things of the blood of the Lord Jesus, Peter comments: "Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12), as if he saw in the cherubim some representation of the Angels looking down at the blood of atonement sprinkled upon the mercy seat. And yet Peter implies that we too "look into" those things. And thus we note that the cherubim were looking down at the blood, not at each other; as our focus should be upon the Lord's blood, and not each other.

The pagan god tabernacles all feature some kind of throne, upon which the god visibly sits. The cherubim of the Israelite tabernacle are similar to the Mesopotamian *karibu*, cherubim, upon which their gods sat. Phoenician and Egyptian art uncovered by archaeologists shows they believed in cherubim very similar in form to those described in Ezekiel's visions of Yahweh's cherubim. The throne of Yahweh was the ark, covered by the cherubim. There, above the blood spattered lid of the ark (or "mercy seat"), supported by the cherubim, the pagan mind expected to see Israel's God enthroned. The similarities to the pagan shrines were intentional- to set up this expectation. But there was nothing there. It was, to their eyes, an empty throne- just as God appears to be absent to so many people today. There was no visible image resting upon the wings of the cherubim, nothing on the throne / lid of the ark but the blood of atonement (which pointed forward to that of God's Son).

Exo 25:21 You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I will give you-
This implies that the slab of gold which was the "mercy seat" was separate from the ark, and covered it like a lid. The blood of atonement was sprinkled each year upon the top

of the ark, the place known as “the mercy seat” or ‘atonement cover’. This blood represented the blood of Christ. The Angel cherubim shadowed the blood on the cover, representing how the Angels watched over Christ in His sacrifice and especially upon the cross. Hence His temptation to call Angels to deliver Him from it (Mt. 26:53). Peter alludes to this in saying that the Angels intently look down upon the things of the blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:12). Pagan religions typically had a throne in their temples, on which their God sat. The throne of the true God was apparently empty- there was a “mercy seat”, but no god or idol sat upon it. But He was enthroned there. Faith is about believing in the God who cannot be seen (Heb. 11:1,2), and whose saving mercy to us is confirmed in the blood of His Son.

Exo 25:22 There I will meet with you, and I will tell you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the testimony, all that I command you for the children of Israel-
See on 2 Sam. 23:1-3. “In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9) would have been easily perceived as an allusion to the way that Yahweh Himself as it were dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat (2 Kings 19:15; Ps. 80:1). And yet the Lord Jesus in His death was the “[place of] propitiation” (Heb. 2:17), the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. In His Son on the cross, God met with man and communed with us (Rom. 3:25), commanding us the life we ought to lead through all the unspoken, unarticulated imperatives which there are within the blood of His Son. There in the person of Jesus nailed to the tree do we find the focus of God’s glory and self-revelation, and to this place we may come to seek redemption.

God meets with us over the blood of Christ, and from there His voice is heard. "Tell you" translates the usual Hebrew word *dabar* used for "word". Hence Heb. 12:18-29 likens the blood of Christ to a huge voice; we cannot imagine Him there on the cross and be passive, we hear, as it were, God’s voice for us. This is why we must regularly remember Christ on the cross, replaying the scene continually before our eyes. For there we hear God’s voice and we have our meeting with Him. The breaking of bread service is a practical help to this end.

God met with Israel over the ark in the most holy place (Ex. 25:22; 30:6; Num. 17:4). But they were never allowed there. And so He also "met" (s.w.) with Israel at the door of the tabernacle, and spoke with them there (Ex. 29:42,43; 30:36). As if God like a king came forth to meet with His people and speak with them. But the word for "meet" is used in Am. 3:3, where God laments that Israel had not "met" with Him and therefore they could not walk further together. The idea of the "meeting" was that God's word might be revealed, so that the people could walk with Him in His ways. It was an awesome invitation, to be able to meet with the God who only otherwise met with His people in the glory of the most holy place, over the ark. He as it were came out of that most holy

place and met with them at the door of the tabernacle. But they weren't interested. Just as so many today.

Seeing Israel generally never entered the Most Holy, this could be read as a prophecy ["I *will* meet with you"] of the day when the veil would be torn down and the way into the holiest opened to all Israel- which happened at the Lord's death.

Exo 25:23 You shall make a table of acacia wood. Two cubits shall be its length, and a cubit its breadth, and one and a half cubits its height-
The Ugaritic poems speak of the furniture in Baal's heavenly temple, and it's very similar to that in the Most Holy Place. But the poems especially focus upon Baal's bed and chests of drawers for his clothing. These are noticeably absent in Yahweh's tabernacle furniture.

The table of show bread was to be made of acacia wood, which was effectively the weak wood from a thorn bush; but David planned to make it of pure gold, and even worked out the weight of gold required for it (1 Chron. 28:16). And Solomon indeed made it of gold (1 Kings 7:48), leading to it being known as "the pure table" (2 Chron. 13:11). Religion had overtaken spirituality, form had eclipsed content. Likewise the "tables of silver" David ordered to be made (1 Chron. 28:16) do not feature in the tabernacle. He was missing the point- that God wanted His holiest symbols made of common, weak things like acacia wood. For His strength and glory is made perfect in weakness. David claims these plans were from God (1 Chron. 28:19), although as discussed on 1 Chron. 28:12, they were in fact from his own mind. The way these things were taken into captivity, with no record of this golden table ever being returned, surely reflects God's judgment upon this kind of religious show. He prefers a humble house church in an inner city room, rather than a gold plated cathedral. The way some exclusive churches speak of 'maintaining a pure table' suggests they have made the same essential mistake as David did.

Exo 25:24 You shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a gold moulding around it-
The table of shewbread looked ahead to the breaking of bread in the Christian experience. It had a crown (NEV "moulding") around it, as if it were the king's table. And indeed it is. We sit there as guests at the king's table, and it is not for us to use it as "our" table, excluding or ejecting others from it.

Exo 25:25 You shall make a rim of a handbreadth around it. You shall make a golden moulding on its rim around it-
The golden moulding or crown is twice stressed (:24), as if it really was the king's table. The purpose of the rim was for the rings for carrying it (:27).

Exo 25:26 You shall make four rings of gold for it, and put the rings in the four corners that are on its four feet-
The ark also had feet, literally "walking feet", feet bent as if walking, to symbolize how the ark was always moving on. We recall that God spoke of how He had "walked" in the tabernacle and therefore didn't want a fixed temple (2 Sam. 7:6).

Exo 25:27 The rings shall be close to the rim, for places for the poles to carry the table-
"Places" is the Hebrew word usually used for a house. A different word would have been used if the idea was merely a "place". There is a purposeful juxtaposition between the image of stability carried by the idea of a "house", and the fact that the rings and poles were in order that this furniture could be carried and moved on. God's permanent, characteristic way is the way of dynamism, moving on. That is the point; see on :12.

Exo 25:28 You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them-
The need to be mobile and always moving on is stressed throughout the record of the tabernacle. There could have been some blanket statement like "All the tabernacle equipment had rings on it so that poles could be put in the rings, and it could be carried". But the record labours this mobile nature of the whole system; see on :12.

Exo 25:29 You shall make its dishes, its spoons, its ladles, and its bowls to pour out offerings with. You shall make them of pure gold-
Yahweh had a "table". The Mesopotamian gods likewise had a table (*passuru*) upon which food was placed as a meal for the god (as in Is. 65:11). But the beakers, cups and vessels on Yahweh's table remained empty (Ex. 25:29); the wine was poured out onto the sacrifices and vaporized; the priests ate the shewbread. There was no pretence that Yahweh was a hungry god who needed to be fed by His worshippers. To the pagan mind, this would've meant that if He didn't eat, He wasn't actually around nor powerful. Again, the difference and similarities were intentional, in order to point up the need for *faith* in the power and existence of Yahweh.

Exo 25:30 You shall set bread of the presence on the table before me always-
"The bread of the presence" doesn't simply mean that it was bread which was in God's presence; for that is the meaning covered by "before Me always". Rather the idea is that God's especial presence was there in the eating of the bread. The God who dwelt the other side of the veil, over the mercy seat, as it were came out from there and was present when the bread was eaten. We may have here some hint that there is a special

presence of the Father and Son at the breaking of bread, which is the Christian equivalent of this table (Mt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 11:10).

Exo 25:31 You shall make a lampstand of pure gold. Of hammered work shall the lampstand be made, even its base, its shaft, its cups, its buds, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it-
"The candlestick" or menorah is only ever spoken of in the law of Moses in the singular, but in 1 Chron. 28:15 David decided there were to be multiple such candlesticks. By doing so, he ignored the symbolism of the one candlestick, the one people of God; such was his obsession with mere religion. See on :23.

Exo 25:32 There shall be six branches going out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of its one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side-
The lampstand represents God's people (Rev. 1:20), and it had seven lamps; the six branches and the central stem, upon which there was also a lamp. Seven is the number of wholeness and completion. Perhaps the idea is that there is to be a complete manifestation of God through the witness of His people, burning the oil of the Spirit. Each component member witnesses to Him in a slightly different way, not only in this life but throughout the generations of God's people. Likewise the body of Christ in the same way manifests Christ to the world.

Exo 25:33 three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, a bud and a flower; and three cups made like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bud and a flower, so for the six branches going out of the lampstand-
The almond is the first tree in Palestine to bud, so it means literally the watching tree, as if it were alive and eager to come to life. So it is appropriate for the candlestick, which represented God's people. Jeremiah sees the branch of an almond tree and is comforted that "I watch over My word to perform it" (Jer. 1:11,12). The word translated 'hasten' or "watch over" is very similar to the word for 'almond'. Almonds are associated with God's eyes; the bowls of the lampstands were almonds (Ex. 25:33,34). Zech. 4:2 talks about these almond bowls on the candlestick, and Zech. 4:10 interprets them as the "eyes of the LORD which run to and fro through the whole earth". 2 Chron. 16:9 talks about the Angels in the same way; "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him". Similarly in Rev. 4:5 the lamps in the bowls of almond are equated with the "seven spirits (or Angels) of God". Rev. 5:6 equates the seven eyes with the seven spirits. Thus the almond rod which Jeremiah saw represented God's eyes or Angels who would watch over the word of God which Jeremiah was to speak to perform it. And He does likewise with the witness of all those represented within the candlestick.

Exo 25:34 and in the lampstand four cups made like almond blossoms, its buds and its flowers-
The *menorah* or "candlestick" is from a root meaning to yoke. In the Christian context, the yoke, the uniting power, is the Lord Jesus (Mt. 11:30). He is the unique power which binds together His otherwise disparate people into one candlestick. Thereby Christian unity becomes a witness to the world, at least that is the intention. All disunity between believers therefore causes the candlestick not to function, and the light of witness is thereby the less.

Exo 25:35 and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of the lampstand-
The lampstand represents God's people (Rev. 1:20), but it is presented here as a tree with branches, buds and blossoms (:33). In this sense the ecclesia, the community of believers, is to be as the tree of life to others by their words (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 15:4).

Exo 25:36 Their buds and their branches shall be of one piece with it, all of it one beaten work of pure gold-
The candlestick represents the assembly of believers (Rev. 1:20). It was made of beaten work, representing how all those in the true church will be beaten into a shape through which they can be lights for God. "Hammered" suggests that through blow by blow on material heated in the furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10), God works out a place where His glory may be revealed. And that place is our lives.

Exo 25:37 You shall make its lamps seven, and they shall light its lamps to give light to the space in front of it-
The mention of seven lamps confirms that there was a central stem with a lamp, and six branches coming out of it with a total of six lamps on them- making seven lamps. The candlestick was on the south end of the holy place, shedding light "opposite" (Heb., NEV "in front of it"), i.e. towards the northern end where the veil was, and where the table of shewbread was, symbolizing fellowship with God. This is the purpose of our witness; to direct people towards fellowship with God and entry to the most holy place.

Exo 25:38 Its snuffers and its snuff dishes shall be of pure gold-
Gold wasn't the strongest or most practical material for these instruments. But it represents faith (1 Pet. 1:7). We aren't the best instruments for God to use in His house, but He prefers to use the soft and those who aren't humanly qualified for His work- because He works by faith in us, and by our faith in Him rather than our human strength.

Exo 25:39 It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these accessories-
A talent was 94 pounds or 42.6 kg. This was a huge amount of gold, but all the same, due to the dense weight of gold, the candlestick would have been quite small if it were solid. 42 kg. of solid gold is about the size of two standard size books. This fits the theme that everything in the tabernacle was small scale, not large. The ecclesia of God, represented by the candlestick (Rev. 1:20), is small but gives huge light in a dark place, pointing towards the entrance to the most holy place. It is depicted as large and a source of particular glory in the famous depiction of the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, but either the candlestick of those times was only gold plated, or the size was exaggerated.

Exo 25:40 See that you make them after their pattern, which has been shown to you on the mountain-
Paul's comment is that this "pattern" was itself a pattern of heavenly things. The tabernacle was a reflection in essence of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:23,24), with the priests doing the work of the Angels; hence both are called *elohim*.. At least that was how Israel were bidden understand it.

EXODUS CHAPTER 26

Exo 26:1 Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, with cherubim. By the work of the skilful workman you shall make them-
The ark was covered in the tabernacle by the various layers of the tent detailed in Ex. 26:1-6: sea cows' skins, red rams skins, goats hair, blue, purple, scarlet and linen. These would form a kind of rainbow over the ark, and above that there was the Angel in the pillar of cloud or fire. This "pattern of things in the Heavens" (Heb. 9:23,24) replicated the visions of a throne (the ark) over-arched by a rainbow and the glory of God.

When David says in 2 Sam. 7:2 that he doesn't want Yahweh to have to dwell in "curtains", this doesn't mean that David was concerned that God's ark was under a tent, whilst he lived in a house. Rather is the reference to the ten curtains which comprised the tabernacle. David was assuming that he could change the Mosaic commandments about the tabernacle, and move God's purpose forward to something more permanent. We see here how he didn't consider the laws of Moses [of which the commands about the tabernacle were part] to be static. He saw them as open to interpretation and development. This was not a position he came to lightly, seeing he had been terribly punished for thinking he could flout the legislation about how the ark was to be transported.

Many of the commands within the "law of Moses" were clearly only intended for the wilderness generation, indeed they could only have been obeyed by them then; and David wondered whether the entire commands about the tabernacle were in that category. Those today who claim that Mosaic legislation is eternally binding need to give this due weight. It's not just that the Mosaic law was abrogated by the Lord's death; but the whole nature of that law was that it was never intended to all be literally applied to every subsequent generation. And that meant that it was the spirit of it which was to be discerned and followed.

Exo 26:2 The length of each curtain shall be twenty-eight cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: all the curtains shall have one measure-
28 cubits is 42 feet (12.8 meters), and 4 cubits is 6 feet (1.8 meters). "Curtain" in Hebrew is literally a thing which hang and shakes, and the essential word is used for "fear". The impression is of man trembling before Yahweh's holiness.

Exo 26:3 Five curtains shall be coupled together one to another; and the other five curtains shall be coupled one to another-
"Coupled together" is s.w. "have fellowship with" (Ps. 94:20), and often of men 'joining together'. Clearly we are to sense that the curtains represented God's people. The theme of coupling and joining together occurs throughout the record of the tabernacle. Unity amongst believers is to be the outcome of the indwelling of God's glory. Disunity results from simply not having perceived His glory. For before that, all disunity disappears as we are awed by His grace and convicted of our own smallness and unworthiness.

Exo 26:4 You shall make loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain from the edge in the coupling; and likewise you shall make in the edge of the curtain that is outmost in the second coupling-
See on :3. "Blue" may refer to a mussel they had picked up on the shores of the Red Sea, which was used for dying things blue. If we wish to attach symbolic meaning to everything- and that isn't necessarily the right way to read the tabernacle account- then we could think of "blue" as representing the sky, heaven. It is of God that we are bound together, linked together by His Spirit in a unity which can only come from Him. For the human tendency is naturally to disagreement and disunity rather than to unity.

Exo 26:5 You shall make fifty loops in the one curtain, and you shall make fifty loops in the edge of the curtain that is in the second coupling. The loops shall be opposite one to another-
The record loves to stress the interlocking nature of the tabernacle. This points forward

to our unity between each other, linked together by the blue loops of Heaven; God's unity. See on :4.

Exo 26:6 You shall make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains one to another with the clasps: and the tabernacle shall be one-
There is great emphasis in Ex. 26 that the tabernacle was "one", joined together in such a way that taught the lesson of unity. The spiritual tabernacle, the believers, was "pitched" by the Lord- translating a Greek word which suggests 'crucifixion' (Heb. 8:2). Through the cross, the one, united tabernacle was pitched. To tear down that structure by disuniting the body is to undo the work of the cross.

Exo 26:7 You shall make curtains of goats' hair for a covering over the tabernacle. You shall make them eleven curtains-
"Covering" is literally 'a tent'. There was to be a tent over the tent, as if a vertical expression of the horizontal division of the tabernacle into the holy and most holy places. The external appearance of the tabernacle would therefore have been rough; and beauty was on the inside. This contrasts with the pagan way of attaching value to external beauty, whilst inside, the places of worship were not so attractive. God looks upon the internal, upon the heart; and leaves the external as unattractive to secular eyes.

Exo 26:8 The length of each curtain shall be thirty cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits: the eleven curtains shall have one measure-
Comparing this with the size of the actual tabernacle, which is far smaller, it is clear that the tent which covered it must have been sloped, and also probably extended to each side of the tabernacle. Hence the mention of an overhang in :12.

Exo 26:9 You shall couple five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves, and shall double over the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tent-
"By themselves" is s.w. "pole" or "stave", and this makes better sense. The idea is 'curtains on poles' or curtain rods.

Exo 26:10 You shall make fifty loops on the edge of the one curtain that is outmost in the coupling, and fifty loops on the edge of the curtain which is outmost in the second coupling-
The tabernacle represents God's dwelling place. He now no longer lives in any physical structure, but in the hearts of His people, who between them comprise His new dwelling place. We can however learn lessons from the principles behind the tabernacle construction. Great emphasis was placed on how the components were all

interlocking- the curtains coupled together, the boards were joined by bars etc. It is by our unity and connection with each other that God will dwell amongst us. Christianity can't be lived in isolation- we need each other.

Exo 26:11 You shall make fifty clasps of brass, and put the clasps into the loops, and couple the tent together, that it may be one-
As noted on :10, the language looks forward to the unity of the body of believers. "That it may be one" is clearly alluded to by the Lord Jesus when He prayed "that they may be one" (Jn. 17:11,21-23).

Exo 26:12 The overhanging part that remains of the curtains of the tent, the half curtain that remains, shall hang over the back of the tabernacle-
See on :8. The "part that remains" is the half-breadth by which the rough outer tent would overlap the linen covering.

Exo 26:13 The cubit on the one side, and the cubit on the other side, of that which remains in the length of the curtains of the tent, shall hang over the sides of the tabernacle on this side and on that side, to cover it-
The outer tent of goats' hair was 30 cubits broad (Ex. 26:8), whilst the internal linen 'tent' was 28 cubits. There was therefore one cubit overhang on each side. "The cubit" here therefore means "one cubit".

Exo 26:14 You shall make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sea cow hides above-
They were dyed red to represent how the blood of Christ is the covering for God's people. Presumably they had picked up the sea cow hides from the shores of the Red Sea. What we pick up along life's way is to be devoted to the things of God.

Exo 26:15 You shall make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up-
"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the

folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

"Standing up" seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable, because the outer tent would keep the wind from blowing over the structure. This detail may be significant if we follow through the idea that the boards represent God's people. They are not to sink into the dust, but to take strength and stability from connection with each other, and to trust in God's protection from the wind.

Exo 26:16 Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and one and a half cubits the breadth of each board-
Acacia bushes don't grow so long nor straight. These boards would have been very difficult to construct (see on :15), and would have involved much joining together of pieces of wood which were difficult to work with. It was an appropriate symbol for the kind of human material which goes to make up God's dwelling place. For God dwells in the community of His people, and not within wood and stone. The materials of the tabernacle therefore represent us His people. See on :17.

Exo 26:17 There shall be two tenons in each board, joined to one another: thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle-
"Tenons" is the word for "hands", again encouraging us to see the boards as God's people, joined together by as it were holding hands. See on :16.

Exo 26:18 You shall make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side southward-
Heb. "on the south side, to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. See on :20.

Exo 26:19 You shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets under another board for its two tenons-
If each socket weighed a talent (Ex. 38:27), the forty silver sockets would have been really big and solid. The connection between the boards was critical, because

according to Ex. 26:15 they were "standing up". This seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable. So the large size and weight of the sockets is appropriate. The internal cohesion and corroboration within the account of the tabernacle is such that it is a profound reflection of the Divine inspiration of the record.

Exo 26:20 For the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, twenty boards-
"The north side" is literally "the left side". As noted on Ex. 26:18, the south side was "to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. The left hand side was considered the side of lesser favour (Gen 48:13-20). This perhaps was why the candlestick was placed on the right or south side of the tent (Ex. 40:24).

Exo 26:21 and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board-
Sockets, *eden*, is related to *adon*, "Lord", in that the word carries the same idea of strength. Again, language appropriate to persons is used of the tabernacle components; for the whole thing pointed forward to the body of believers, in whom God walks and dwells.

Exo 26:22 For the far part of the tabernacle westward you shall make six boards-
"Westward" is LXX "the back". These six boards would have given a breadth of only nine cubits. We can therefore conclude that the corner post boards of :23 on each side were half a cubit broad, to account for the extra cubit.

Exo 26:23 You shall make two boards for the corners of the tabernacle in the far part-
As explained on :22, these corner posts were half a cubit broad.

Exo 26:24 They shall be double beneath, and in the same way they shall be whole to its top to one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners-
The Hebrew is unclear. GNB, which uses "frames" instead of NEV "boards", offers: "These corner frames are to be joined at the bottom and connected all the way to the top. The two frames that form the two corners are to be made in this way".

Exo 26:25 There shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board-
The LXX gives "posts" instead of "boards", suggesting there may have been other material in between those posts. "Sockets" is rendered "bases" by some. The idea was

that the boards did not sink down into the dust of the earth (see on :15), but the whole structure was kept upright by the tight connection between the boards / posts. These "eight boards" are the six and two of :22,23.

Exo 26:26 You shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle-
As noted often, acacia wood is very weak. The bars themselves would likely have been made from various parts of this weak bush wood being joined together. The boards likewise were made of this very weak material which it was difficult to join together. But the overall design enabled the whole system to stand strongly, without sinking into the earth (:15), because of the strength of the interconnections. It is a profound picture of the strength of the overall body of believers thanks to the working of God's Spirit and His design; at least potentially. And the strength is only possible if the interconnections are made and not broken by petty arguments about "fellowship".

Exo 26:27 and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the far part westward-
We are left to assume that these bars would have passed through rings made on the boards for this purpose.

Exo 26:28 The middle bar in the midst of the boards shall pass through from end to end-
This middle bar would therefore have been 30 cubits / 45 feet long. It would have had to be constructed of bits of acacia, which is no more than a common thorn bush. This singular middle bar, which held the boards in shape and close to each other, looks forward to the Lord Jesus.

Exo 26:29 You shall overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and you shall overlay the bars with gold-
The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are.

Exo 26:30 You shall set up the tabernacle according to the way that it was shown to you on the mountain-

We wonder whether Moses was given a vision of how the tabernacle would look when constructed.

Exo 26:31 You shall make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cherubim. The work of the skilful workman shall it be made-
The veil represented the flesh of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:20), and also the fact that the way into the most holy place, representing God Himself in Heaven, was somehow barred. But when the Lord died, the veil was torn from top [by God] to bottom (Mt. 27:51), and thus the way into direct personal fellowship with God was permanently opened for all- not just the high priest once a year (Heb. 9:8,24; 10:19). This understanding was so radical for Jewish minds. For the high priest could only nervously enter the most holy place briefly, once every year on the day of atonement. But now the believer in Christ can enter into full and permanent fellowship with God Himself. This was all achieved through the Lord's flesh being torn. The fine linen speaks of His righteousness (Rev. 19:8), the blue of His association with God in Heaven, the crimson of His blood, and the purple of His Kingship (Jn. 19:2). All this was worked into the veil, and the overall product of it was glory to God, represented by the image of cherubim superimposed upon all this.

The veil represents Christ in His humanity (Heb. 10:20). His character was complexly woven and beautiful, with the white linen or righteousness (Rev. 19:8) running as a thread through His entire character. Weaving complex strands and patterns therefore speaks of how God worked to develop the character of Christ, and He likewise weaves in our lives too, if we are open to His working.

Exo 26:32 You shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold; their hooks shall be of gold, on four sockets of silver-
At this point we may note that the LXX usually gives "incorruptible wood" for "acacia". Yet as noted on :15, "acacia" is s.w. "thorn". It was the common thorn bush of the desert, a result of the curse in Eden; and yet there is this sense of incorruption and eternity associated with it by the LXX. The LXX has Ex 30:1-10 coming after Ex. 26:32, and this may well be correct.

Exo 26:33 You shall hang up the veil under the clasps, and shall bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil: and the veil shall separate the holy place from the most holy for you-
The veil screened off the Most Holy Place, where the very presence of God was. When Christ died, this veil was torn down (Mt. 26:51), from top to bottom- indicating it was done by God and not men. Through His death, anyone who believes in Him can do continually what the High Priest could do only once per year- come right into the very

presence of God Himself. But the High Priest entered in order to serve God, and to attain salvation for sinners. This, then, is to be our work. We are all to function not only as priests (1 Pet. 2:5), but in a sense, as the High Priest.

Exo 26:34 You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the most holy place-
This again indicates that the mercy seat was not part of the ark, but was a detachable lid.

Exo 26:35 You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side-
The structure of the tabernacle pointed ahead to man's approach to God under the Christian dispensation. First, a man had to bow his head in order to pass through the gate. Humility is essential. Then there was acceptance of the principle of sacrifice, the large altar; followed by the laver or washing basin, speaking of baptism. Beyond that is the table of shewbread (breaking of bread), the candlestick (church life) and the incense altar (prayer). After this is the veil, through which we can pass in Christ into the most holy place, and the presence of God Himself.

Exo 26:36 You shall make a screen for the door of the Tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer-
The New Testament therefore speaks of "the second veil" (Heb. 9:3) which screened the most holy place. This was of the same material as the veil which covered the door into the holy place, but was more elaborate, including the cherubim motif whereas the first veil didn't. Perhaps the idea is that it is through the Lord Jesus, represented by the veil, that we enter into the community of believers; He is the door and by Him alone a sheep can enter the fold. But it is likewise also through Him, displaying an even greater glory and beauty, that we shall enter into the presence of God Himself.

The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen fom Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work.

Exo 26:37 You shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia, and overlay them with gold: their hooks shall be of gold; and you shall cast five sockets of brass for them-
We contrast this gold and brass with the gold and silver fittings for the veil which

screened the most holy place. It is easy to over interpret, to see significance never intended, in our European obsession with a 'this = that' schema or hermeneutic. Probably the simple idea was that there was to be an increasing sense of glory as one approached closer to the most holy place. We may note that the expense, beauty and intricacy of the tabernacle grew greater the closer one got to the most holy. There was no natural light in the tabernacle; it had no windows. And only the high priest could enter the most holy once / year. The progressive beauty of God's tabernacle was revealed to fewer and fewer people, the further one progressed. This is in total contrast to the religious ways of the surrounding religions, which made the greatest display of glory and beauty on the outside, in the eyes of as many as possible; and progressively decreased in detail and beauty within them.

EXODUS CHAPTER 27

Exo 27:1 You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and its height shall be three cubits-
In 2 Chron. 4:1, David and Solomon replaced this with "An altar of brass, twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and ten cubits in height". This was far larger than the altar of the tabernacle, which was 5 x 5 x 3. 5 cubits is 7.5 feet (225 cm.), 3 cubits is 1.5 feet (45 cm.) Clearly the idea was that far more animals were going to be offered. And yet David and Solomon were forgetting the lesson taught through the sin with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother; God doesn't want sacrifice, but rather broken, contrite hearts (Ps. 40:6-8). Just as God didn't want a physical house built to Him, but rather wanted to build a house of people with humble hearts open to the working of His Spirit. The altar was of brass, whereas that of the tabernacle was of common, weak acacia wood (Ex. 27:1,2). This taught that the basis of acceptable sacrifice and approach to God is the recognition of our common weak humanity, and sacrifice is offered to God upon that basis. But Solomon had no recognition of his own moral frailty and humanity, and was convinced that as David's son and the Messianic seed [as he imagined], he was therefore perfect. And it seems David too somehow rationalized his sin with Bathsheba by the end of his life, and lacked grace and humility.

Although the altar was very low, only three cubits (45 cm.) high (Ex. 27:1), Aaron "came down" from it (Lev. 9:22). This may be understood in the same way as people "went up" and "came down" from the temple. Sacrifice was a 'height'. However the more obvious sense is that the altar was placed upon a mound of earth or rocks.

Exo 27:2 You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it; and you shall overlay it with brass-
Whilst there are similarities with the concept of religion which Israel had been used to in Egypt, there were significant differences. The altars of Egypt tended to have the horns of

previously sacrificed animals attached to them. But the horns of Yahweh's altar were in order to bind the sacrifices (Ps. 118:27), they had practical function; and were a symbol of Yahweh's salvation (1 Kings 1:50)- not the triumph of secular man over an impressive animal.

Exo 27:3 You shall make its pots to take away its ashes, its shovels, its basins, its flesh hooks, and its fire pans: all its vessels you shall make of brass-
Jewish tradition has it that the fire which came down from Heaven in Lev. 9:24 remained burning; and this fire was preserved burning all night and day. Hence the need for "fire pans" (Ex. 27:3) to keep the fire burning whilst the altar was being cleaned or the remains of sacrifices removed from it.

Exo 27:4 You shall make a grating for it of network of brass: and on the net you shall make four bronze rings in its four corners-
This implies that the altar was a brass plated box, with a grating on the top to feed air to the fire with air. Through this the ashes would have fallen into a pan below.

Exo 27:5 You shall put it under the ledge around the altar beneath, that the net may reach halfway up the altar-
"Put it" is LXX "put them", referring to the rings. Or GNB "Put the grating under the rim of the altar, so that it reaches halfway up the altar". If the grate was only halfway up the altar, this could mean that the altar was placed over a heap of earth which was "halfway up the altar"; see on :8.

Exo 27:6 You shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with brass-
"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a

construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

Exo 27:7 Its poles shall be put into the rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar, when carrying it-
"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold. The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 27:8 You shall make it with hollow planks. They shall make it as it has been shown you on the mountain-
The earlier insistence had been that Israel only worship upon an altar or earth or unhewn stones (Ex. 20:24). It could be that the hollow nature of the altar meant that a pile of earth was made, and the altar structure placed on top of it. But this would make it hard to understand how the ashes of the sacrifices could be collected. Surely the idea of a grate would have been meaningless if effectively the altar was solid earth inside it. So we are left with the conclusion that the 'altar of earth' instruction was not to apply to the tabernacle, but to altars for sacrifice which were used more local to the tents of the people. Or perhaps it was intended to only apply in the wilderness until the tabernacle was built. For clearly later altars were accepted by God, when they were not made of earth. We see in these considerations that the law of Moses was not inflexible, and God is not a literalist. Changed circumstances for His people changed His operational style with them, and His expectations of them.

Exo 27:9 You shall make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen one hundred cubits long for one side-
The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of

many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. It perhaps appropriately designated the boundary between the believer and the world, represented by the linen fence which marked the enclosure of the tabernacle. 100 cubits is 58 yards or 53 meters.

Exo 27:10 and its pillars shall be twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver-
"Fillets" is rendered "connecting rods" by some, and "sockets" as "bases".

Exo 27:11 Likewise for the north side in length there shall be hangings one hundred cubits long, and its pillars twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver-
Nearly all the features of the tabernacle suggest parts of the body. The girl in Solomon's song portrays her lover as having "legs as pillars [s.w. "pillars" here] set upon sockets [s.w. "sockets" here, meaning "bases"] of gold" (Song 5:15). The pillars therefore correspond to legs, and the bases / "sockets" to feet. It was as if the tabernacle was surrounded by men's legs and feet, holding hands with each other.

Exo 27:12 For the breadth of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits; their pillars ten, and their sockets ten-
GNB "with ten posts and ten bases".

Exo 27:13 The breadth of the court on the east side eastward shall be fifty cubits-
LXX adds "their pillars ten, and their sockets ten".

Exo 27:14 The hangings for the one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three-
Verses 14 and 15 are summed up in GNB: "On each side of the entrance there are to be 71/2 yards of curtains, with three posts and three bases". Fifteen cubits is 6.8 meters, or 7.5 yards. But LXX gives "fifty cubits".

Exo 27:15 For the other side shall be hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three-
See on :14. But LXX gives "fifty cubits".

Exo 27:16 For the gate of the court shall be a screen of twenty cubits, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the embroiderer; their pillars four, and their sockets four-

Entrance to both the court and to the most holy place was through a veil made of the same design. The Lord Jesus alludes to this in teaching that "I am the door". The only way to get on the path to God is through Him. This rules out all non-Christian paths to God. Christ is the door of the tabernacle through which we enter at our conversion and baptism (Jn. 10:9). By doing so we also enter, in prospect, through the veil into the Most Holy of eternity and Divine nature. The veil symbolized the flesh of the Lord; and yet in it was woven scarlet, a symbol of His blood and sacrifice (Ex. 27:16), which permeated His mortal life. The lesson is that the cross is a daily way of life. The Lord taught this when He asked us to take up the cross daily: to live each day in the exercise of the same principles which He lived and died by. Let's not see spiritual life as a survival of a few crises, as and when they present themselves. It's a way of life, and the principles which lead us to the little victories (when we scald ourselves with hot water, when we dirty a newly washed shirt...) will give us the greater ones also, when (e.g.) we stand before a tribunal, or face death in whatever form.

Exo 27:17 All the pillars of the court around shall be filleted with silver; their hooks of silver, and their sockets of brass-
GNB "All the posts around the enclosure are to be connected with silver rods, and their hooks are to be made of silver and their bases of bronze". Silver rods seems another feature of the tabernacle which might appear at first blush to not at all be how man would have designed things.

Exo 27:18 The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, and the breadth fifty everywhere, and the height five cubits, of fine twined linen, and their sockets of brass-
The relatively low height meant that the tent containing the holy place and most holy place was visible to the ordinary people even from outside the tabernacle. It also meant that to enter into the tabernacle, a man would have to bow his head. Humility was to be for all time the required prerequisite for beginning any approach to God.

Exo 27:19 All the instruments of the tabernacle in all its service, and all its pins, and all the pins of the court, shall be of brass-
The "pins" are the tent pegs.

Exo 27:20 You shall command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually-
"Pure olive oil" apparently refers to olive juice which bursts naturally from the first ripe olives. But we enquire where Israel obtained olive oil from in the wilderness, especially such "pure" olive oil to such great amounts as required here? Perhaps they had been given lots of it as they left Egypt and gave it to the priests. But for 40 years? I suggest as

on :8 that this was God's ideal intention, and many of these laws were applicable only in contexts when obedience to them was possible. God's law is not therefore at all a reflection of a God who is a literalist or legalist. For by its nature, the law of Moses shows that He was not like that.

The lampstand is used as a symbol of the ecclesia in the visions of Revelation 2 and 3. The purpose of the ecclesia is to enable the oil of the Spirit to be burnt, to turn it into light. We are to keep our own personal light burning continually, day and night. Jesus had this in mind when He likened us to women waiting for the bridegroom to come at night, whose oil lamps should not be allowed to go out (Mt. 25:8).

Exo 27:21 In the Tent of Meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from evening to morning before Yahweh: it shall be a statute forever throughout their generations on the behalf of the children of Israel-
"The tent of meeting" is the tent where God met with His people over the blood of atonment upon the ark of the covenant. But that "meeting" was effectively not with the people, as only the priests entered into the holy place, and the high priest alone, only once / year, into the ultimate place where God met with His people- the Most Holy place. But the candlestick was to be kept burning in order to point the way into the Most Holy. All this suggested that there was something lacking in the entire system. God was prepared and even willing to meet with His people over the blood of atonement on the day of atonement. That meeting was therefore predicated upon their repentance and forgiveness. But it would have left the people aware that a fuller meeting with God was somehow promised. And this would come to full term when the Lord's death tore down the veil, and the way into the holiest was opened for all, not just the priests nor the High Priest.

We note that Aaron and his sons have not yet been chosen and dedicated to the priestly work. So this may have been edited in, under Divine inspiration, from Lev. 24:1-4; Num. 8:1,2.

EXODUS CHAPTER 28

Exo 28:1 Bring Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, near to you from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons-
God intended Israel to be "a Kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). "All the people of Israel" were the builders of the spiritual house of God, i.e. His people (Acts 4:10,11). It was God's intention that there should be no specialist priests. It was everyone's job, to teach

their neighbour and family God's word. But His plans were ammended as their general failure became apparent, and the Levites were chosen. But His ideal intention remained. Thus when Israel were rejected, they were told that they as a nation could no longer be God's priest (Hos. 4:6). By baptism, we become spiritual Israel; and this idea is relevant to us too. Peter picks up these words in Exodus and applies them to every one of us, for the new covenant returns to this original intention of the old covenant: "You also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5,9, quoting Ex. 19:6 LXX).

Exo 28:2 You shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty-
The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world (Dt. 26:19 s.w.). Again we see repeated the ideal intention that all Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

Exo 28:3 You shall speak to all who are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments to sanctify him, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office-
LXX "in which apparel he shall minister to me as priest". The wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1).

Exo 28:4 These are the garments which they shall make: a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash; and they shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, and his sons, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office-
Moses may well have struggled with this decision. For Aaron was consistently spiritually inferior to himself. Yet his family, and not that of Moses, was to be chosen for this special honour. It was all part of the humbling process which resulted in Moses reaching acme of humility in the declaration that he was made the meekest man on earth (Num. 12:3).

Exo 28:5 They shall take the gold, and the blue, and the purple, and the scarlet, and the fine linen-

The precious stones were donated by the princes or elders (Ex. 35:27). Yet in Ex. 25:4-7 they are listed along with common acacia wood and goats' hair. There was to be a culture of giving, from the wealthiest to the poorest, which was to characterize the community of God's people.

Exo 28:6 They shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the skilful workman-
The ephod was a kind of waistcoat, onto which the breastplate was attached. The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. We also see that the religious style which they had been used to in Egypt was being alluded to but deconstructed. They were being given a system of religion not completely foreign to them, but also radically different to all systems they had previously used or encountered. This is why the Pentateuch alludes to things like the laws of Hammurabi, or the existing creation myths- to deconstruct them.

The High Priestly clothing involved clothing woven using a specific blend of gold, dyed wool (blue, purple, and scarlet), and fine linen. This was strictly forbidden for other clothing (Lev. 19:19, Dt. 22:9-11). Perhaps the point of the prohibition was therefore not simply to teach the concept of separation, but to show that the ordinary Israelite could never be the High Priest. Or, the other way around, to perhaps suggest that there was a unique mixture of holiness and also non-Mosaic elements in the High Priest, looking forward to the Lord's unique work and relationship with sin.

Exo 28:7 It shall have two shoulder straps joined to the two ends of it, that it may be joined together-
LXX "It shall have two shoulder-pieces joined together, fastened on the two sides". "Joined / Coupled together" is s.w. "have fellowship with" (Ps. 94:20), and often of men 'joining together'. The theme of coupling and joining together occurs throughout the record of the tabernacle, and is used e.g. of the joining together of the curtains (Ex. 26:3). Unity amongst believers is to be the outcome of the indwelling of God's glory. Disunity results from simply not having perceived His glory. For before that, all disunity disappears as we are awed by His grace and convicted of our own smallness and unworthiness. See on :13.

Exo 28:8 The skilfully woven belt band which is on it, that is to be put on him, shall be like its work and of the same piece; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen-

The significance of the colours should not be over emphasized. Israel in the wilderness only had a limited range of things with them, and as with the use of the acacia wood for the tabernacle construction, God was [and is] in a sense limited by the material He choses to have available to work with.

Exo 28:9 You shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the children of Israel-
LXX "emerald". The LXX is the version quoted repeatedly in the New Testament, often preferring its renderings to that of the Masoretic text. And yet the LXX differs from the Hebrew in the description of the precious stones, and their order in the breastplate. It is unwise therefore to seek to find meaning in the actual stones. These precious stones would have been extracted from the amulets or jewellery given to Israel by the Egyptians when they left Egypt. The significant thing is that the names of God's people were engraved upon them. God's people were carried before God by the High Priest, looking forward to how we are personally represented by name before God, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus in Heaven itself. Man is not alone, none are forgotten or unknown. That is the simple take away.

Exo 28:10 six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the other stone, in the order of their birth-
The names of the tribes were to be written on the two shoulder stones of the High Priest "in the order of their birth" (Ex. 28:10). Seeing that Reuben was deposed from being the first born, we may wonder why there is this curious requirement. And the answer is perhaps just very practical. For if we take the tribes in the order of their birth, the list is: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali upon one stone, and Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin upon the other stone. There are then exactly 25 Hebrew letters on each stone. This kind of perfect symmetry would be impossible to arrange by any uninspired hand. It is this kind of internal corroboration which to me is the most powerful argument for a Divinely inspired Bible.

Jacob had tried to re-arrange the order of his sons according to his judgment of them, but his judgment was somewhat human. God takes no notice of it here. Note that we are to wear the breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14); all that is true of Christ is in some sense true of those who are in Him. We too are to seek to bear others' burdens of sin, enter the Most Holy and seek to reconcile others to God. The way into the holiest has now been opened- for us to enter, for the sake of others. The many applications of the OT High Priestly language to ordinary believers would've been so difficult for our early Christian Jewish brethren to accept. We are right now sitting in heavenly places [cp. the Most Holy] with Christ, who sits there at God's right hand (Eph. 2:6).

Exo 28:11 With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, you shall

engrave the two stones, according to the names of the children of Israel: you shall make them to be enclosed in settings of gold-
The names of God's people were engraved upon the stones which were on the High Priest's clothing. God's people were carried before God by the High Priest, looking forward to how we are personally represented by name before God, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus in Heaven itself. Man is not alone, none are forgotten or unknown. That is the simple take away. But "engraved" is the word usually translated "open", "to make appear". We are revealed before God, our life situation and personality type is openly made to appear before God, by our great High Priest.

Exo 28:12 You shall put the two stones on the shoulder straps of the ephod, to be stones of memorial for the children of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before Yahweh on his two shoulders for a memorial-
Bearing on the shoulders by the High Priest in order to gain atonement surely looks forward to the Lord bearing the cross on His shoulders. Yet He bore our sins. The cross is presented as symbolic of the weight of our sins. This is symbolic of how Christ, our High Priest, carries the names of all God's people on His shoulders and over His heart (:29) as He stands for us in God's presence. The preciousness of the stones reflects our high value in God's sight. The idea of "stones of memorial" wasn't that God might forget His people and so He needed to be reminded by the Priest wearing these stones with their names on; rather they were a reminder to Israel that they were each personally remembered by God all the time..

Exo 28:13 You shall make settings of gold-
LXX "circlets". The golden chains (:14) were to go into them. There is a constant theme of interconnection in all the commands given about the tabernacle. See on :7.

Exo 28:14 and two chains of pure gold; you shall make them like cords of braided work: and you shall put the braided chains on the settings-
LXX "and thou shalt make two fringes of pure gold, variegated with flowers wreathen work; and thou shalt put the wreathen fringes on the circlets, fastening them on their shoulder-pieces in front". Again we note the constant theme of interconnection in all the commands given about the tabernacle. See on :7.

Exo 28:15 You shall make a breastplate of judgment, the work of the skilful workman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it; of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, you shall make it-
"Breastplate" is LXX "oracle", as if the judgment flashed out from the urim and thummim associated with the breastplate (:30) was God's word or oracle to His people. For "linen" see on :6. "The skilful workman" may specifically refer to Aholiab (Ex. 38:23). Perhaps Paul saw in this man a representation of us all- for he urged us likewise to be careful

workmen when it comes to the understanding and teaching of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Exo 28:16 It shall be square and folded double; a span shall be its length of it, and a span its breadth-
GNB "9 inches long and 9 inches wide". 23 x 23 cm. Again we note the small size of the things associated with the tabernacle, compared with the grandiose surface level religion of the other peoples. David and Solomon's obsession with building a large scale temple reflects how they failed to grasp this.

Exo 28:17 You shall set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl shall be the first row-
The faithful believers are likened to a stone with a unique name written on it (Rev. 2:17). We are each called to uniquely reflect and refract the light of God's glory in a way slightly different to anyone else, just as the stones on the breastplate all glimmered with their own unique beauty. Unity isn't the same as uniformity.
LXX "a sardius, a topaz, and emerald". See on :9 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 28:18 and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald-
LXX "a carbuncle, a sapphire, and a jasper". See on :9 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 28:19 and the third row a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst-
LXX has "a ligure" for "jacinth". See on :9 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 28:20 and the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be enclosed in gold in their settings-
LXX "chrysolite, and a beryl, and an onyx stone". See on :9 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text. "Chrysolite" is Hebrew '*tarshish*', from the idea of long endurance. "Ships of tarshish" therefore refer to long distance trading vessels, not a specific location called Tarshish.

Exo 28:21 The stones shall be according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, each one according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes-
The long sentence here belabours the point several times over that the names of Israel were engraven or 'opened up' upon the stones. The idea is that the people of God were individually represented by name before God by the High Priest / the Lord Jesus.

Exo 28:22 You shall make on the breastplate chains like cords, of braided work of pure

gold-
LXX calls "the breastplate" "the oracle", see on :15. The attachment of the breastplate to the inner clothes of the High Priest is emphasized. The impression is of careful connection of the precious stones to the person of the High Priest- all looking forward to our connection with the Lord Jesus.

Exo 28:23 You shall make on the breastplate two rings of gold, and shall put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate-
As noted on :22, the impression is of careful connection of the precious stones to the person of the High Priest- all looking forward to our connection with the Lord Jesus. LXX is quite different: "And Aaron shall take the names of the children of Israel, on the oracle of judgment on his breast; a memorial before God for him as he goes into the sanctuary".

Exo 28:24 You shall put the two braided chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate-
The almost monotonous stress continues- that the chains connected the breastplate to the ephod. The lesson from all this is that God's people are indeed truly connected to their High Priest. And that connection, like they themselves, is all supremely precious- the most valuable metal and stones are used to represent it.

Exo 28:25 The other two ends of the two braided chains you shall put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in its forepart-
As noted on :23,24, the cameraman of Divine inspiration is zoomed in very close up here. The connection of God's people to their High Priest is being laboured.

Exo 28:26 You shall make two rings of gold, and you shall put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on its edge, which is toward the side of the ephod inward-
GNB "make two rings of gold and attach them to the lower corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod".

Exo 28:27 You shall make two rings of gold, and shall put them on the two shoulder straps of the ephod underneath, in its forepart, close by its coupling, above the skilfully woven band of the ephod-
GNB "attach them to the lower part of the front of the two shoulder straps of the ephod, near the seam and above the finely woven belt". There is nowhere that we have more detail about a piece of clothing in the Bible. The attachment of the symbols of God's people to the High Priest is clearly of the utmost importance to Him.

Exo 28:28 They shall bind the breastplate by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be on the skilfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastplate

may not swing out from the ephod-
GNB "so that the breastpiece rests above the belt and does not come loose". Again we note the constant emphasis upon the connection between the breastplate and the ephod, looking ahead to the unbreakable connection between God's people and the Lord Jesus in His work of mediation for us before God.

Exo 28:29 Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart, when he goes in to the holy place, for a memorial before Yahweh continually-
The names of God's people are in the heart of the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest (Ex. 28:29); just as God's words are to be upon the hearts of His people (Dt. 6:6). We are not dealt with automatically, as it were, or as part of a theological transaction. We are in His heart, He has us on His heart, deep in His feelings.

The Hebrew word for 'intercede' means also 'to meet'; every prayer is a meeting with God (Job 21:15; Is. 47:3; 64:5; Jer. 7:16; 15:11). Phinehas "executed judgment" or, as some translations, 'prayed / interceded' for Israel (Ps. 106:30). Judgment and prayer are linked. The "breastplate of judgment" enabled the High Priest to bear the names of all Israel before God in mediation- and their judgment was carried by him, as it is by Jesus, in the process of mediating for them (Ex. 28:29,30). Romans is full of legal language, of interceding, pleading, finding a favourable verdict etc., and refers this to the judgment and also to the cross. But Romans 8 uses these very ideas in relation to prayer, for in coming before the throne of grace now on account of the Lord's sacrifice, we come in essence before judgment. Coming before the throne of God in prayer (Heb. 9:24; Ps. 17:1,2) is the language of the judgment seat. If we become before His throne and are accepted, it follows that this is a foretaste of the outcome of the judgment for us, were we to be judged at that time. Our boldness before the Father in prayer will be the same attitude we have to Him at the judgment throne (1 Jn. 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14 all use the same Greek word).

Exo 28:30 You shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be on Aaron's heart, when he goes in before Yahweh; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel on his heart before Yahweh continually-
LXX "The Manifestation and the Truth". These stones appear to have flashed out binary yes / no responses or judgments in response to issues brought before God; they were the means of the manifestation of His truth. This is how they were used on the occasions we will later read of them. This is perhaps why "Breastplate" is LXX "oracle", as if the judgment flashed out from the urim and thummim associated with the breastplate was God's word or oracle to His people. The urim and thummim are where the precious stones of the breastplate were (:29)- on the heart of the high priest. The

answer of God concerning His people was on the heart of the Lord Jesus. The outcome of His judgment of us is so deeply in His heart.

Exo 28:31 You shall make the robe of the ephod all of blue-
This plain single colour [perhaps indigo] would have thrown into contrast the variegated patterns of the ephod and breastplate.

Exo 28:32 It shall have a hole for the head in its midst: it shall have a binding of woven work around its hole, as it were the hole of a coat of mail, that it not be torn-
The Lord's robe He wore to the cross was without seam and not torn (Jn. 19:23,24). There He acted as High Priest, with the names of God's people on His shoulders, upon which He carried the cross; and in His heart. "Now is the judgment of this world", He predicted of the cross; and the cross was indeed the judgment of the world. This was matched by the urim and thummim being on the breastplate, flashing out judgment.

The Lord having His own clothes put back on Him meant that He would have been dressed in blood sprinkled garments for the walk to Golgotha. Again His holy mind would have been on the Messianic prophecies of Is. 63:3 about a Messiah with blood sprinkled garments lifted up in glorious victory. Or perhaps He saw the connection to Lev. 8:30, where the priests had to have blood sprinkled garments in order to begin their priestly work. This would have sent His mind to us, for whom He was interceding. Likewise when He perceived that His garment would not be rent, He would have joyfully perceived that He was indeed as the High Priest whose garment was not to be rent (Ex. 39:23).

Christ died as the supreme High Priest, and the soldiers decided not to rend His garment but instead to throw dice to see which of them should get it (Jn. 19:24). As He hung on the cross, looking down and noticing what they were doing, He would have remembered this teaching about the High Priest’s garment, and taken encouragement that He was indeed doing the High Priestly work to its ultimate term. His blood stained, dirty outer garment- perhaps woven by his social outcast of a mother- was equivalent of the High Priest’s robe of “glory and beauty” (Ex. 28:2).

Exo 28:33 On its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, around its hem; and bells of gold between and around them-
The golden bells on the High Priest's garments were familiar in local religions as charm to ward off demons by their noise. But they are used in the Divine scheme of things to remind of God's holiness and the danger of human sin impinging upon this and thus leading to death. And thereby fear of demons was to be replaced by fear of God's holiness and human sin; see on :36.

LXX "pomegranates of a flowering pomegranate tree".

Exo 28:34 a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, around the hem of the robe-
The pomegranate was full of seeds. The suggestion was that the mediation of the High Priest was to produce a multitudinous seed, in fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. Hebrew tradition claims there were 12 pomegranates on the hem, appropriate to the 12 tribes of Israel. All this came to full term in the priestly work of the Lord Jesus. As noted on :32, the robe looked ahead to that of the Lord Jesus, and so we note how He healed those who took hold of the hem of His robe (Mt. 9:20; 14:36). Perhaps they perceived His High Priestly nature.

Exo 28:35 It shall be on Aaron to minister; and his sound shall be heard when he goes in to the holy place before Yahweh, and when he comes out, so that he will not die-
"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16) may be alluding to how the High Priest had to have bells so that "his sound may be heard... that he die not" (Ex. 28:35; this idea of the sound being heard is picked up in Ps. 19 concerning the spread of the Gospel).

Exo 28:36 You shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engravings of a signet, 'HOLY TO YAHWEH'-
Most of the surrounding tabernacles featured quite a lot of noise- especially incantations and spoken formulas regarding the holiness of the god and shrine. There were few spoken words in the Mosaic rituals; "Holy to the Lord" was written upon the forehead of the High Priest rather than stated by incantations (GNB 'Dedicated to the LORD', LXX has "holiness of the Lord"). We could maybe go so far as to say that we see here the exaltation of God's written word, with all the faith and understanding which this requires, as opposed to the incantations of other worship systems. The plate or rosette on the High Priest's turban would've recalled pagan plates which warded off supposed demons; but this one spoke of "Holiness to Yahweh", again replacing the negative with the positive; see on :33.

Exo 28:37 You shall put it on a lace of blue, and it shall be on the sash; on the front of the sash it shall be-
"Lace" is s.w. "wire", "ribband", "line"; we note it was not a golden chain but a lace.

Exo 28:38 It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall make holy in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always on his forehead, that they may be accepted before Yahweh-
"Accepted" has the idea of delighted in, great pleasure. Those whose names are carried by the High Priest thereby and therefore become God's great pleasure and delight. His

delight in us, seeing us as unblemished, is a great Bible theme. The transaction seems in a sense unfair- that because of the work of one man, many could come into that status. But this is the challenge of faith.

Exo 28:39 You shall weave the coat in chequer work of fine linen, and you shall make a turban of fine linen, and you shall make a sash, the work of the embroiderer-
That the Priest's crown was to be made of linen rather than solid gold or some other precious metal could appear some kind of anticlimax- most leaders of other religions had something solid on their heads. White linen represents righteousness (Rev. 19:8); it's as if the intention was to highlight the fact that simple righteousness is of such great value and power in God's sight rather than any visible ostentation.

Exo 28:40 You shall make coats for Aaron's sons, and you shall make sashes for them and you shall make headbands for them, for glory and for beauty-
"Sashes" is AV "girdles". The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world (Dt. 26:19 s.w.). Again we see repeated the ideal intention that all Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

Exo 28:41 You shall put them on Aaron your brother, and on his sons with him, and shall anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me in the priest's office-
The Lord died that He might "sanctify" us to God. This is the word used by the LXX to describe the consecration of the priests to service of the body of Israel (Ex. 28:41). If we reject the call to priesthood today, we reject the point of the Lord's saving suffering for us.

Exo 28:42 You shall make them linen breeches to cover the flesh of their nakedness; from the waist even to the thighs they shall reach-
The entire body of believers are described as being figuratively clothed in linen at the Lord's return, in that it represents the imputed righteousness of the saints / believers (Rev. 19:8). The allusion to the 'clothing upon' of the nakedness of flesh at the Lord's return is clear; the same figure is found in 2 Cor. 5:4. But the implication is that we shall then be as ordained priests- we shall go forth into eternity to do the work of priesthood, helping others to come to Yahweh. Our experiences now, especially our frustrations in being unable to do or achieve this work, are all in order to prepare us for such an eternity.

Exo 28:43 They shall be on Aaron, and on his sons, when they go in to the Tent of Meeting, or when they come near to the altar to minister in the holy place; that they don't bear iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute forever to him and to his descendants after him-

"Bear iniquity" is therefore an idiom for being personally guilty. Yet the idiom is used about the Lord Jesus Christ in His bearing of our iniquity on the cross (Is. 53:11). The Lord Jesus was our sin bearer and yet personally guiltless. This is the paradox which even He struggled with, leading to His feeling of having been forsaken by God (Mt. 27:46). This means that although Christ never sinned, He knows the feelings of sinners, because His identity with us was so deep and complete.

EXODUS CHAPTER 29

Exo 29:1 This is the thing that you shall do to them to make them holy, to minister to Me in the priest's office: take one young bull and two rams without blemish-

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus, on account of which we are sanctified or made holy in God's service (Jn. 17:19). His death makes us all as priests; our lives should be of work and concern for the salvation of others. The Lord's sacrifice sanctifies us to do this. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Exo 29:2 unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil: you shall make them of fine wheat flour-

This suggests that the bull and rams of :1 were associated with peace offerings. But the usual sequence is of sin offering, burnt offering [representing dedication to Yahweh's service after the experience of forgiveness] and then peace offering, celebrating peace with God. The three animals may have represented those sacrifices, indeed :14 is clear that the bull was a sin offering; and the three types of unleavened bread products were used as part of the peace offering. The experience of forgiveness, and the promise of dedication elicited from us by this, is utterly critical in order for us to do any priestly work for others.

Exo 29:3 You shall put them into one basket, and bring them in the basket, with the bull and the two rams-
LXX "offer them in the basket". The bringing in the basket looked ahead to the sons of Aaron being brought to God (:8).

Exo 29:4 You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and shall wash them with water-
This clearly looks ahead to baptism. It is one outcome of baptism that we are sanctified in order to do priestly work. Our life afterwards is therefore to be lived in the spirit of priesthood. Again we note that the Mosaic rituals allude to those of Egypt, although are different: "In Egypt, the priests were compelled to wash themselves from head to foot in cold water twice every day, and twice every night" (Herodotus). This amount of washing wasn't required. For the water of itself was insignificant; it was made powerful by the blood of the sacrifice, just as baptism is.

Exo 29:5 You shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the coat, the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and clothe him with the skilfully woven band of the ephod-
Aaron was not to clothe himself, but to be clothed by Moses. This may have been to remind Aaron that this was not of his doing, he was merely being used by God, manifest through Moses. But it would also have been to humble Moses, who might have been tempted to assume that he ought to be this new high priest figure. For Aaron had consistently been spiritually inferior to Moses. But it was part of Moses' humbling process to make him array his brother as the High Priest, and to realize that not his own sons, but those of his brother, were to be the priests. And so he ended up the humblest man (Num. 12:3).

Exo 29:6 and you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban-
The commands relating to the rebuilt temple of Ez. 40-48 are expanded upon in Zechariah 3. There we read that Joshua the high priest was to be dressed first with the headpiece and then with the rest of the priestly garments (Zech. 3:5). This is the reverse order to the Mosaic commands in Ex. 29:5-7 and Lev. 8:7-9- implying that this was to be a new kind of high priest. Likewise the two onyx stones and the twelve gemstones of the Mosaic breastplate are replaced by a singular stone for the restored high priest (Zech. 3:9). Clearly this "law of Moses" was not of itself intended to be eternal.

Exo 29:7 Then you shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head, and anoint him-
The Septuagint word used for ‘anointing’ here occurs in the New Testament only in 1 Jn.

2:20,27, where we read that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone. I'd therefore be inclined to see 1 Jn. 2:20,27 as alluding to baptism; when we become in Christ, in the anointed, then as 2 Cor. 1:21 says, we too are anointed in a sense. We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism. The words for 'anointing' are unique to 1 John but they occur in the LXX to describe the anointing / initiation of the priests, and of the tabernacle / dwelling place of God (e.g. Ex. 29:7; 35:14,28). John sees us as the dwelling place / tabernacle of the Father, and specifically as the priests.

Exo 29:8 You shall bring his sons, and put coats on them-
See on :5. The bringing of the dedicatory offerings in the basket looked ahead to the sons of Aaron being brought to God (:3).

Exo 29:9 You shall clothe them with belts, Aaron and his sons, and bind headbands on them; and they shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute; and you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons-
It was promised to the family of Aaron that the priesthood would be theirs for a perpetual statute. And yet the family of Eli, a descendant of Aaron (1 Kings 2:27; 1 Chron. 24:3), were told that they were to be cut off as they had abused the priesthood. The promise of Exodus was therefore conditional, although the conditions weren't laid down. Indeed, just because of this fact, the Levites often assumed that they were acceptable just by reason of who they were.

Exo 29:10 You shall bring the bull before the Tent of Meeting; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull-
This was a sin offering (:14*).* The priests identified with the slain animal by placing their hands upon its head; they saw it as their representative [not their substitute]. The foundation for all service of God is a recognition of sin and a belief in sin's forgiveness; and our service will then be performed in a humble spirit of gratitude.

Exo 29:11 You shall kill the bull before Yahweh, at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
"The tent of meeting" is the tent where God met with His people over the blood of atonement upon the ark of the covenant. But that "meeting" was effectively not with the people, as only the priests entered into the holy place, and the high priest alone, only once / year, into the ultimate place where God met with His people- the Most Holy

place. But the candlestick was to be kept burning in order to point the way into the Most Holy. All this suggested that there was something lacking in the entire system. God was prepared and even willing to meet with His people over the blood of atonement on the day of atonement. That meeting was therefore predicated upon their repentance and forgiveness. But it would have left the people aware that a fuller meeting with God was somehow promised. And this would come to full term when the Lord's death tore down the veil, and the way into the holiest was opened for all, not just the priests nor the High Priest.

Exo 29:12 You shall take of the blood of the bull, and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger; and you shall pour out all the blood at the base of the altar-
Because the altar represented the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10), it has been wrongly argued that these rituals speak of the cleansing of the nature of the Lord Jesus by His own death. This runs far too close to making the Lord Jesus a sinner who needed reconciliation with God; whereas His perfect character made Him for ever "one" with His Father, both before and after His death. Rather I suggest the blood of the sin offering was placed on the altar (and other items) in order to demonstrate how they achieved any forgiveness of sin. They only functioned in practice through their identification with the blood of Christ, represented by that of the bull slain as a sin offering. It as impossible that the blood of a bull could take away sin; it only functioned in this way insofar as God foresaw the blood of His Son (Heb. 10:4). The horns of the altar were perceived as the place of salvation for sinners (1 Kings 1:51; 2:28). But this was only finally to be true through the power of the blood of Christ. This idea was taught by the daubing of sin offering blood on the horns of the altar- as an act of identification of the altar with the blood, rather than to somehow make the metal of an unclean altar now clean. The whole system was dedicated to God, and accepted by Him, only through its association with the future blood of the Lord Jesus.

Exo 29:13 You shall take all the fat that covers the innards, the cover of the liver, the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, and burn them on the altar-
Pagan sacrifices included the fat, but not all the other "innards". There is huge emphasis upon the “inward parts” in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind

which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

The fat was understood as the best part of the animal, although today for health reasons we tend to consider the meat to be of more interest than the fat. They were to give to God that which they perceived to be the most valuable, within the frames of understanding and perception within which they then lived.

Exo 29:14 But the flesh of the bull, and its skin, and its dung, you shall burn with fire outside of the camp: it is a sin offering-
Heb. 13:11-13 alludes to this, making the point that not only the blood represented the blood of the Lord Jesus, but even the flesh of the bull, burnt outside the camp, looked ahead to the Lord suffering death outside the walls of Jerusalem. We are invited to see the cross therefore as the final destruction of flesh in the life of the Lord Jesus. The mention of its skin and dung shows too the total level of identification with human sin and dirt, achieved so wonderfully by the Lord in His death on the cross.

Exo 29:15 You shall also take the one ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram-
Laying the hands on the head was an act of identity, taking the animal as their representative rather than their substitute.

Exo 29:16 You shall kill the ram, and you shall take its blood, and sprinkle it around on the altar-
To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Exo 29:17 You shall cut the ram into its pieces, and wash its innards, and its legs, and put them with its pieces, and with its head-
See on :13. Sacrifice of an entire animal (:18) was not practiced in Egypt. They thought their gods were only interested in the externally attractive parts, or the fat which burned with a bright flame. But Yahweh wants every part of the animal, as He wishes every part of our lives.

Exo 29:18 You shall burn the whole ram on the altar: it is a burnt offering to Yahweh; it is a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
To offer the "whole ram" would have been unusual in the religious culture of the day. Only the best parts of animals were offered, especially those which appeared the most attractive to human eyes. But "whole burnt offerings" were very much on Yahweh's agenda- to symbolize how He wants the whole person, every innermost part of human life, even if it appears irrelevant and unclean in human eyes. For "pleasant aroma", see on :41.

Exo 29:19 You shall take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram-
This dedication ceremony was really a peace offering, as the sacrifice was also eaten by the priests; although there is the addition here of the ritual of sprinkling the blood. All who enter upon priestly service [which is all of us, under the new covenant] are to go through the process of sin offering (:14), dedication to God in response to the forgiveness received, and then the experience of peace with God, symbolized by the peace offering. It is from this basis that we can go on to serve others; and those who have not passed through this will not be effective ministers to others.

Exo 29:20 Then you shall kill the ram, and take some of its blood, and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and on the tip of the right ear of his sons, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the big toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood around on the altar-
Their hearing, walking and acting with the hand was to be influenced by their experience of association with the blood of the sin offering. And this is to be the effect of the blood of the Lord Jesus upon us. Our whole worldview, perceptions, actions and direction in life can never be the same again. He died for us, and we have been forgiven, and thereby sanctified for priestly service. His death can never be a mere doctrine, a theological teaching, resulting in a hobby level commitment to occasional religious meetings; but if really experienced, then every part of life and outlook is radically affected.

Exo 29:21 You shall take of the blood that is on the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron, and on his garments, and on his sons, and on the garments of his sons with him-

We note the mixture of the anointing oil and blood of the sacrifice. Perhaps this was to make a connection with the blood of the future anointed one, the 'Christ', the Lord Jesus.

And he shall be made holy, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him-

'To make holy' or to 'sanctify' is something the Lord Jesus often spoke in discussing the meaning of His death. He makes many allusions to the language of the High Priest in His prayer of John 17, e.g. "for their sakes I sanctify Myself so that they also may be sanctified" (Jn. 17:19). We are all called to be part of a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9); Christ's death sanctified us, prepared us for service in God's house. Spiritually serving others is therefore not something just for a specialist minority, but for *all* who are in Christ, 'the anointed one', anointed just as the priests were anointed to serve (:21). The unblemished animals which were sacrificed in order to sanctify the priests therefore represent the sacrifice of Jesus.

Exo 29:22 Also you shall take some of the ram's fat, the fat tail, the fat that covers the innards, the cover of the liver, the two kidneys, the fat that is on them, and the right thigh (for it is a ram of consecration)-

The idea is as in LXX "the fact [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9; 7:3). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Exo 29:23 and one loaf of bread, one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before Yahweh-

This confirms that this part of the dedication was a peace offering, which the offerer ate in fellowship with God. We see something of this reflected in the way the breaking of bread service is a celebration of our peace with God through the work of His Son. All who enter upon priestly service [which is all of us, under the new covenant] are to first go through the process of sin offering (:14), dedication to God in response to the forgiveness received, and then the experience of peace with God, symbolized by the peace offering.

Exo 29:24 You shall put all of this in Aaron's hands, and in his sons' hands, and shall wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh-
Preaching work isn't glamorous. It is a living out of the cross. Paul felt he had been "separated unto the [preaching of the] gospel of God" (Gal. 1:15); and he uses a word which the LXX uses for the separation of part of a sacrifice to be consumed (Ex. 29:24,26). The Greek word for "witness" is *martus*, from whence 'martyr'. To witness to Christ is to live the life of the martyr; to preach Him is to live out His cross in daily life.

Exo 29:25 You shall take them from their hands, and burn them on the altar on the burnt offering, for a pleasant aroma before Yahweh: it is an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
The bread of the peace offering was usually eaten, but this dedication ceremony was a peace offering with some modifications. There was perhaps here a reflection of how they were unworthy of fellowship with God, and wanted to devote even that to Him. This is indeed how we are to feel as we embark upon any priestly service.

Exo 29:26 You shall take the breast of Aaron's ram of consecration, and wave it for a wave offering before Yahweh; and it shall be your portion-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Exo 29:27 You shall sanctify the breast of the wave offering, and the thigh of the wave offering, which is waved, and which is heaved up, of the ram of consecration, even of that which is for Aaron, and of that which is for his sons-
"Heaved up" may suggest that the meat was literally lifted up in the hands (:25) to God, as well as "waved" (see on :26). This would have been another way of saying that the food of the priests was really God's, and they recognized that by literally lifting it up toward Him.

Exo 29:28 and it shall be for Aaron and his sons as their portion forever from the children of Israel; for it is a wave offering; and it shall be a wave offering from the children of Israel of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, even their wave offering to Yahweh-
The priests had no land inheritance, and so they were to depend upon the food from the

peace offerings made by the other Israelites. But this meant that their material survival depended upon the spiritual state of the Israelites; whether they were at peace with God. If the Levites taught them well, and they responded, then they would make these offerings. But the whole system became dysfunctional. The people weren't taught properly, they became idolaters, the priests weren't supported and gave themselves to farming and other business interests in order to support themselves. They didn't therefore study God's word and teach it as intended. And so the whole spiritual fabric of Israel broke down.

Exo 29:29 The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him, to be anointed in them, and to be consecrated in them-
Although there was a special priesthood, it was clearly God's intention that all Israel should be like priests; they were to be a "*Kingdom* of priests" (Ex. 19:6). Israel were all "saints", and yet saints and priests are paralleled in passages like Ps. 132:16. Israel in the wilderness had clothes which didn't wear out- just as the Priestly clothes didn't, and were handed down from generation to generation (so Ex. 29:29 implies). This was to encourage them to see themselves as all being priests.

Exo 29:30 Seven days shall the son who is priest in his place put them on, when he comes into the Tent of Meeting to minister in the holy place-
This seems to be saying that a new High Priest must go through this dedication ritual, which was to last seven days (:35). The implication is that the priestly clothing was to last for every generation of priesthood; see on :29.

Exo 29:31 You shall take the ram of consecration, and boil its flesh in a holy place-
The holy place in view was the court (Lev. 6:16), in front of the tent of meeting (Lev. 8:31).

Exo 29:32 Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
This was the element of the peace offering which was the final part of the dedication ritual. An individual must be at peace with God through forgiveness if he or she is going to be able to minister to others. Remember that we are all called to priestly service. Yahweh "met" with man over the ark of the covenant in the most holy place, but the entrance to the holy place was also effectively the place of meeting with God. They were to eat with Him there, although He was visibly absent. But He was there, eating with them in fellowship; just as we experience at the breaking of bread meeting.

Exo 29:33 They shall eat those things with which atonement was made, to consecrate

and sanctify them, but a stranger shall not eat of it, because they are holy-
Eating the things with which the atonement was made points forward to the breaking of bread service. We can see in this echoes of the consecration of the priests; and we should realize each time we do it that we have been sanctified in order to proactively serve in God's house.

Exo 29:34 If anything of the flesh of the consecration, or of the bread, remains to the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire: it shall not be eaten, because it is holy-
Peace offerings could be eaten on the next day (Lev. 7:16; 19:5,6). But although the dedication of the priests was a peace offering, there were differences. The similarity is with the legislation about the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:10), perhaps to direct them to understand that they were eating the symbols of their redemption, as we do at the breaking of bread. The Passover lamb represented the Lord Jesus, and His flesh didn't see corruption (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27), hence the lamb was not to be allowed any possibility of corruption.

Exo 29:35 You shall do so to Aaron, and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you. You shall consecrate them seven days-
This period was perhaps to recall creation. They were to realize they were part of a new creation, and were now to go forth as Adam to tend what God had created.

Exo 29:36 Every day you shall offer the bull of sin offering for atonement; and you shall cleanse the altar, when you make atonement for it-
"Atonement *for* it" can as well be "atonement *upon* it". The preposition *al* is of very wide meaning, but generally means "upon", "over" or "above". *Al* an altar is usually rendered "upon the altar", multiple times (e.g. :20). The idea of 'cleansing' surely requires the use of water and not blood. The same word is used of "purified / cleansed with water" (Num. 31:23). They were to offer a sin offering for Aaron and his sons, every day of the seven days. After each sacrifice, they were to clean the altar, upon which atonement had been made. There is no idea here that inanimate objects are somehow sinful. The altar itself, like the Lord Jesus, was not sinful. It was a means to the end of atonement.

And you shall anoint it, to sanctify it-
The anointing was by sprinkling oil upon it seven times (Lev. 8:11). This pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the anointed one, through whom all the sacrifices were made ultimately meaningful. Without Him in the future, the whole system wouldn't have worked.

Exo 29:37 Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and the

altar shall be most holy: whatever touches the altar shall be holy-
As noted on :36, "atonement *for* it" can as well be "atonement *upon* it". The preposition *al* is of very wide meaning, but generally means "upon", "over" or "above". *Al* an altar is usually rendered "upon the altar", multiple times (e.g. :20). The atonement required was for real and actual sinfulness, that of the priests and the people; not for the altar of itself.

Exo 29:38 Now this is that which you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day continually-
The continual sacrifice of lambs was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Exo 29:39 The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at evening-
Literally "between the two evenings", as at Passover night (Ex. 12:6); see on :38.

Exo 29:40 and with the one lamb a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour mixed with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil, and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering-
Bread and wine were effectively offered with the lamb. The Lord's choice of symbols for the breaking of bread surely had this in mind. They are but the side offerings, as it were, compared to the lamb. To take bread and wine would beg the question: 'And where is the slain lamb?'. And the answer to that at the breaking of bread is 'Here in our midst'.

The law of Moses was not an iron law which had to be obeyed in every context. Clearly this law about oil and wine being offered with the daily sacrifices would have been practically impossible to keep during the forty years wandering. Every day, half a hin (1.8 liters, 3.8 pints, around half a gallon) of olive oil and the same of wine would have been required. And this was just for the daily offerings; there were many days when more sacrifices were offered. It was by grace that God would have overlooked this. I suggest that it is to this which Am. 5:25 refers, challenging Israel to remember that God had accepted them in the wilderness by grace alone, as they were unable to keep His ideal requirements: "Did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness?".

Exo 29:41 The other lamb you shall offer at evening, and shall do to it according to the meal offering of the morning, and according to its drink offering, for a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh-

"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Exo 29:42 It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the Tent of Meeting before Yahweh, where I will meet with you, to speak there to you-

Although we are a great multitude of redeemed, yet the communication of the Father and Son to us are still amazingly unique, even though we all hear and read the same actual words, and reflect upon the same facts. Right back at the beginning of God's relationship with Israel He had made the point that "I will meet you [plural] to speak there unto thee [you singular]" (Ex. 29:42 AV). Yahweh "met" with His people over the ark in the most holy place, but He as it were stepped out from there to the door of the holy place, and met with His people there too. He spoke with them, as it were, over the sacrificed lamb; just as the cross of the Lord Jesus is likened in Heb. 12 to a voice speaking to us, insistently and constantly, louder than the voice which shook Sinai.

Exo 29:43 There I will meet with the children of Israel; and the place shall be sanctified by My glory-

God met with Israel over the ark in the most holy place (Ex. 25:22; 30:6; Num. 17:4). But they were never allowed there. And so He also "met" (s.w.) with Israel at the door of the tabernacle, and spoke with them there (Ex. 29:42,43; 30:36). But the word for "meet" is used in Am. 3:3, where God laments that Israel had not "met" with Him and therefore they could not walk further together. The idea of the "meeting" was that God's word

might be revealed, so that the people could walk with Him in His ways. It was an awesome invitation, to be able to meet with the God who only otherwise met with His people in the glory of the most holy place, over the ark. He as it were came out of that most holy place and met with them at the door of the tabernacle. But they weren't interested. Just as so many today.

We could however argue that this verse had a specific one time fulfilment in Lev. 9:4, when the fire came down and consumed the sacrifices when the tabernacle was established: “the glory of the Lord became manifest before the whole people" (Heb.).

Exo 29:44 I will sanctify the Tent of Meeting and the altar: Aaron also and his sons I will sanctify, to minister to Me in the priest’s office-
Although they were to do the rituals required to sanctify themselves, it was God who ultimately sanctified them. For man cannot cleanse himself, all he can do is allow God to do this, and recognize the principles by which God will do so- through the shedding of blood (Lev. 17:11).

Exo 29:45 I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God-
"The tabernacle of God" being God's people; He being our God; God living and walking with us (Rev. 21:3) is evidently alluding to Lev. 26:11,12 and Ex. 29:45,46 concerning the ultimate blessings of the covenant after Israel's final repentance. The shadowy fulfilment they have had in the past through God's manifestation in an Angel doesn't mean that these promises can and must only be fulfilled by some form of God manifestation. Surely Rev. 21:3 is saying that at the second coming, the principle of God manifestation will change- in that God will personally be with His people. Because we have so far lived under the paradigm of God manifestation, let's not think that it's not possible for God to personally be with us.

Rev. 21:3 understands this as coming true when Christ returns to earth, seeing that God’s intention for this to happen with Israel didn’t materialize. And yet, having prophesied that He *will be* their God, He says that He is right now their God (:46). This could mean that even if God’s people choose not to have Him as their God, yet He keeps His side of the covenant; He is their God. In this we see God’s hopefulness for us, His earnest desire to have a relationship with His people.

Exo 29:46 They shall know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them: I am Yahweh their God-
Often we read this two fold intention of God- to bring His people *out* from the world [Egypt], and then to do something positive with them. Our separation from the world isn’t therefore negative; for ‘holiness’ means both separation *from* and separation *unto*.

EXODUS CHAPTER 30

Exo 30:1 You shall make an altar to burn incense on. You shall make it of acacia wood-
For "acacia", see on :5. The LXX has Ex 30:1-10 coming after Ex. 26:32, and this may well be correct. Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place, where there was the incense altar [prayer- Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4], the table of shewbread [the breaking of bread] and candlestick [church life], shining light towards the entrance to the most holy place where God dwelt between the cherubim.

Exo 30:2 Its length shall be a cubit, and its breadth a cubit. It shall be square, and its height shall be two cubits. Its horns shall be of one piece with it-
GNB "18 inches long and 18 inches wide, and it is to be 36 inches high". Again we note the small scale of the tabernacle and its furniture. God doesn't need grandiose religious symbols.

Exo 30:3 You shall overlay it with pure gold, its top, its sides around it, and its horns; and you shall make a gold moulding around it-
The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are.

Exo 30:4 You shall make two golden rings for it under its moulding; on its two ribs, on its two sides you shall make them; and they shall be for places for poles with which to bear it-
The mention of a "crown" or "moulding of gold" is as if it represented a person, a King- the Lord Jesus. The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was

solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 30:5 You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold-
"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 30:6 You shall put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with you-
The incense, representing prayer (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4), would have come through to the most holy place, where Yahweh dwelt between the cherubim. This symbolized how prayer enters into heaven itself, into the very presence of God. Passing through the veil suggests the role of the Lord Jesus in our prayers (Heb. 10:20).

The principles God will use in the final judgment are manifested now, and have been reflected in His previous judgments of men. In our very personal lives, there are foretastes of that future judgment. When we receive forgiveness, this gives a knowledge of the future salvation (Lk. 1:77). Indeed, whenever man meets with God, whenever His ways have contact with those of men (which so often happens in the life of the believer) there is a judgment experience; His holiness, His demands, the imperatives which lay within His very being, reveal quite naturally our failures. The Hebrew word used to describe God's 'meeting' with men is also used in the senses of 'summoning' or

gathering to a trial (Ex. 30:6). And positively, the *degree to which* we have responded to Him will be revealed by our meeting with Him. Men fell down before Him when they realized who He was (Lk. 8:28,47), just as they will at judgment day (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10; Rev. 4:10).

Exo 30:7 Aaron shall burn incense of sweet spices on it every morning. When he tends the lamps, he shall burn it-
The lambs were to be offered morning and evening (Ex. 29:39), and along with them, incense was to be offered and the lamps tended. The incense spoke of prayer being offered to God, and the lamp of His Spirit still burning- all because of the offering of the Passover lamb which the daily lamb offerings alluded to (see on Ex. 29:38,39). Although our lamps need tending, the fire of the Spirit is to burn within us constantly. The Lord's parable about all the faithful 'tending their lamps' at the last day (Mt. 25:7) suggests that we are all priests, even High Priests [for the command to tend the lamps is given here to Aaron specifically].

Exo 30:8 When Aaron lights the lamps at evening, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Yahweh throughout your generations-
The continual burning of incense, night and day, was a reminder that prayer (cp. incense, Rev. 8:3,4) was a way of life, not only specific statements. David's references to making constant prayer (e.g. Ps. 88:1) may allude to the constant rising up of the incense. We cannot be literally praying all the time, but our basic spirit of life can rise up as a prayer to God constantly. Our lives are, in a sense, our prayer.

Exo 30:9 You shall offer no strange incense on it, nor burnt offering, nor meal offering; and you shall pour no drink offering on it-
The Law seems to have foreseen the difference between real and apparent prayer by warning that the true incense was to be burnt [representing prayer], but not any other kind of incense, or incense comprised of other kinds of ingredients. .

Exo 30:10 Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once in the year: with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once in the year he shall make atonement for it throughout your generations. It is most holy to Yahweh-
"Atonement *for* it" can as well be "atonement *upon* it". The preposition *al* is of very wide meaning, but generally means "upon", "over" or "above". *Al* an altar is usually rendered "upon the altar", multiple times (e.g. Ex. 29:20). The idea is not that the altar was somehow sinful. Rather was there the need to regularly demonstrate the connection between the blood and prayer; for that blood of itself was meaningful to God only because it spoke to Him of the future blood of His Son (Heb. 10:4).

Exo 30:11 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The Mosaic Law required a half shekel temple tax, but He reduced it- such was His desire to work with them and have them as His people (Ex. 30:11-16 cp. Neh. 10:32,33). But still they feared, still they didn't fully believe, still they saw the establishment of God's Kingdom as only their concern insofar as it coincided with their self-interest; and so the promised establishment of the Messianic Kingdom just didn't come. We note from Mt. 17:24 how this tax was abused into an annual tax to be paid to the temple, regardless of whether a census was taken or not.

Exo 30:12 When you take a census of the children of Israel, according to those who are numbered among them, then each man shall give a ransom for himself to Yahweh, when you number them; that there be no plague among them when you number them-
Having bowed the head in humility in order to get through the low gate into the court, sacrifice at the altar was the first thing the Israelite who approached God had to grasp. And so here too, the simple lesson is taught that to be numbered amongst God's people, one has to give. The prosperity Gospel could not be more wrong; we are here to give, not to receive. It was God who ransomed Israel from Egypt, but the people were to as it were give a ransom for themselves in response to that. Always, the grace of their salvation was to be the motivation for their generous living. Their giving was to be a remembrance of their deliverance (:16). The threat of plague was also allusive to the plagues upon Egypt; if they did not act as the ransomed redeemed, then they would be judged as Egypt.

Exo 30:13 They shall give this, everyone who passes over to those who are numbered: half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary (the shekel is twenty gerahs); half a shekel for an offering to Yahweh-
The idea of being numbered by passing over implies they were a flock of sheep (Jer. 33:13). The census of Ex. 30:16 required each man of military age to pay a half shekel of silver. It was used for the silver sockets in the boards of the tabernacle etc. There were 600,000 men of military age who left Egypt (Ex. 12:37); if they each paid a half shekel, this would have been 300,000 shekels of silver. 3000 shekels make one talent, so this would have made 1000 talents of silver. Which is exactly the amount of silver mentioned in Ex. 38:27. However, there were actually 603,550 men (Ex. 38:26). And we wonder whether each man actually paid what was asked. We see here the way in which the Biblical record often doesn't worry about literal exactitude, but presents an overall picture.

A half shekel was not a large amount of money, it was the money one might throw to a beggar (1 Sam. 2:36 s.w.). The point was that they were to accept the principle of giving

in response to God's gift of redemption to them.

Exo 30:14 Everyone who passes over to those who are numbered, from twenty years old and upward, shall give the offering to Yahweh-
The idea of passing over, from the group that had not yet been numbered to the group which had been, recalls the Passover 'passing over'; both of the Red Sea, and the Angel passing over the houses of Israel. And I explained on :12 that the motivation for this gift was that they had been redeemed from Egypt; so the allusion was appropriate.
"Offering" in Ex. 30:13-15 is s.w. "heave offering". It could be that the small coin was to be symbolically given to God and then taken back. This is why both rich and poor were to 'give' the same amount (:15). It was an acceptance that there must be giving on some level, in response to God's gift. This is why the financial ability of the donors wasn't taken into account; and the coin was in any case very small value (see on :13).

Exo 30:15 The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than the half shekel, when they give the offering of Yahweh, to make atonement for your souls-
Personal wealth was and is irrelevant when it comes to our spiritual position before God. The atonement for their souls came not from a monetary gift, but from the blood which looked ahead to that of the Lord Jesus (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 10:4). But it had to be responded to, and one way of doing so was through making this donation. See on :14.

Exo 30:16 You shall take the atonement money from the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the Tent of Meeting that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before Yahweh, to make atonement for your souls-
As explained on :12, the redemption money was in memory of their own redemption from Egypt; in this sense it was a remembrance or "memorial". The immediate usage of the silver is given in Ex. 38:27,28- it was used for the silver sockets in the boards of the tabernacle etc. There were 600,000 men of military age who left Egypt (Ex. 12:37); if they each paid a half shekel, this would have been 300,000 shekels of silver. 3000 shekels make one talent, so this would have made 1000 talents of silver. Which is exactly the amount of silver mentioned in Ex. 38:27.

Exo 30:17 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place. We see here the vital step which baptism is.

Exo 30:18 You shall also make a basin of brass, and its base of brass, in which to wash. You shall put it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it-
This may represent the need for the washing of baptism in order to come to Christ, the

altar (Heb. 13:10). This was required if they didn't want to die (:20). It is baptism which is the washing or "laver" of regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5). The fact we are to wash in this laver suggests that all baptized are all priests; we are a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). It is for us to take seriously the work of priestly service, it falls to all who are baptized; and we must therefore overcome the typical human tendency to leave such work to others.

Exo 30:19 Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in it-
The Lord alludes to this in Jn. 13:10. Again, as noted on :18, the implication is that all His people are priests, consecrated to priestly service by the act of baptism and the associated cleansing and regeneration.

Exo 30:20 When they go into the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water, that they not die; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
All God's people are priests, in a sense (1 Pet. 2:5,9); the washing of baptism is an absolute necessity before we can be God's priestly people. To pass through this 'baptism' was in order to make an offering. And that is the next step after baptism- to devote our lives as living sacrifices, as both the offering and the priest (Rom. 12:1).

Exo 30:21 So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they not die; and it shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his descendants throughout their generations-
See on :19. There are many allusions to the language of priesthood in the New Testament, both as major statements and also in passing. The idea of baptism as a washing suggests that we afterwards enter into priestly service; we're not declared by baptism to be merely members of a denomination, hobby level theologians who now agree to a set of doctrines. We instead, in a very real sense, are cleansed and consecrated into the service of God, ministering to His people, doing His work.

"He that is washed needs only to wash his feet" (Jn. 13:10) was surely suggesting that all baptized believers ("washed") were like the priests, who firstly washed their bodies and then their hands and feet, before entering on service (Ex. 30:21). Even the elderly brothers and sisters in Crete who were to be guided by specially appointed elders were to be encouraged to behave "as those who are engaged in sacred service" (Tit. 2:3, M.R. Vincent *Word Studies In The N.T.*).

Exo 30:22 Moreover Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Moses personally was to make this special oil, although in reality Bezaleel did it (Ez.

37:29).

Exo 30:23 Also take fine spices: of liquid myrrh, five hundred shekels-
Literally, "myrrh of freedom" or "freely flowing myrrh". The idea was that the myrrh was to be taken from the shrub not by extraction, but the higher quality myrrh which exuded naturally from it. We may well enquire where they would have found these kinds of shrubs in the desert. Perhaps we have here an example of where the law given was not all intended for immediate obedience there in the desert. Or perhaps they had taken some of these spices with them from Egypt; but the free flowing myrrh means it was taken directly from a living shrub in the ground, and so that explanation doesn't fully fit.

And of fragrant cinnamon half as much, even two hundred and fifty-
Cinnamon was quite rare, and unknown in Egypt. It was made from the inner bark of a tree similar to the laurel. They would have only found this in Palestine. Again, we get the impression that the full obedience to these commandments was only intended once they had entered the land.

And of fragrant cane, two hundred and fifty-
This "cane" was a specific product of Judah (Ez. 27:17), so again it seems that the Divine intention was that soon Israel would be in the land and able to make this kind of oil from the spices there.

Exo 30:24 and of cassia five hundred, after the shekel of the sanctuary; and a hin of olive oil-
Cassia was a product of the inner bark of the cinnamon tree; see on :23. A hin is just over one gallon. The amount of anointing oil produced was very small in order to anoint all the items mentioned, so the anointing was done just with a few drops; perhaps because of the difficulty in obtaining larger quantities of the spices required, or in order to focus attention on the significance of each drop of anointing. See on :31, where it could be that the oil was miraculously multiplied.

Exo 30:25 You shall make it a holy anointing oil, a perfume compounded after the art of the perfumer: it shall be a holy anointing oil-
The specific perfumer in view was Bezaleel (Ez. 37:29).

Exo 30:26 You shall use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the testimony-
We now read of the anointing of the tabernacle and all its component parts, and then the anointing of the priests. Anointing is really most appropriate to persons. "The Christ" is 'the anointed one', and so we are invited to see the entire tabernacle as pointing forward to a person, the Lord Jesus.

Exo 30:27 the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense-
There are now specific articles / utensils listed in the law as required for the table of shewbread. But clearly there were some, as they were anointed. We see again how the law of Moses was flexible and open to expansion or incomplete fulfilment. For it was not to prescribe a rigid way of life, but to inculcate a spirit of living.

Exo 30:28 the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the basin with its base-
AV correctly reads "his articles..." as in :27. The idea is that all of these components of the tabernacle system were to be seen as representing a person, the anointed ["Christ"] Lord Jesus.

Exo 30:29 You shall sanctify them, that they may be most holy. Whatever touches them shall be holy-
These inanimate items were not of themselves holy, as was thought to be the case in many pagan religions of the time. Their sanctification was granted to them by God, working through the rituals Moses was to perform. LXX "Everyone that touches them shall be hallowed" may not mean that whatever touched them was thereby made holy by touching. Rather the idea is that only sanctified priests were to touch the furniture. "Holy" is the same word as "sanctify" in :30, about the priests being made holy or sanctified Hag. 2:12 makes the point that true holiness cannot be passed on by merely touching.

Exo 30:30 You shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me in the priest's office-
Any service of God therefore required being sanctified. The Lord had this theme much on His mind in His prayer of Jn. 17. He sanctified Himself that we might be sanctified (Jn. 17:19). The idea is that all sanctified by the cross are therefore prepared for ministry. We all therefore have a ministry. We are all called to it- not just some. We are sanctified by the Lord's death so that we might minister; and we do well to ask early on after our conversion "What is my ministry?".

Exo 30:31 You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations-
The idea could be that the oil Moses made would somehow never run out, rather like the oil created by Elisha and Elijah. Just as the clothes of Aaron are assumed to last permanently. I noted on :24 that the amount of anointing oil produced was very small in order to anoint all the items mentioned, so the anointing was either done just with a few drops, or it was miraculously multiplied- and preserved throughout the generations, just

as Aaron's clothing was, and as the clothes and shoes of the wilderness generation lasted for 40 years. It is therefore not chance that later read in the Bible of oil being miraculously multiplied and extended in its function.

Exo 30:32 It shall not be poured on man's flesh, neither shall you make any like it, according to its composition: it is holy. It shall be holy to you-
"Holy to you" could mean that Moss alone was to make it and it would last for all generations; see on :31. It was to be poured upon the priests whilst they were clothed, and not come on their flesh. Or the idea may be that only the priests, the sons of Aaron, were to be sanctified with it- and not, as Jeroboam did, people from other tribes.

Exo 30:33 Whoever compounds any like it, or whoever puts any of it on a stranger, he shall be cut off from his people'-
The "it" may refer specifically to that oil made by Moses; see on :31. The idea may be that the gift of the Spirit, for we too are anointed to service if we are in Christ the anointed one (2 Cor. 1:21), will not come upon those who are not sanctified in Christ and washed in the laver of regeneration (cp. baptism). Birth of water is required for the birth of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5). For "cut off", see on :38.

Exo 30:34 Yahweh said to Moses, Take to yourself sweet spices, gum resin, and onycha, and galbanum; sweet spices with pure frankincense: there shall be an equal weight of each-
These spices would have been difficult to find in the wilderness, because they were gum from specific trees which didn't grow in the wilderness; and this would confirm the suggestion on :31 that the oil made once by Moses through Bezaleel lasted, or was intended to, throughout the generations of the tabernacle system. **Note that many of these spices and ingredients are not native to Israel. They would have been taken from Egypt. And we wonder whether it was God's long term intention that His people should make this anointing oil. This is one of many hints that the law of Moses was largely intended for Israel in the wilderness, and the details of the various rituals were widely and locally interpretted over their history. Thus the Passover was celebrated at various times in their history, but not always strictly according to the initial specifications.**

Exo 30:35 and you shall make incense of it, a perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy-
Incense is a symbol of prayer (Rev. 8:3,4). Whilst there is a place for instantaneous and emotional prayers, this doesn't mean that we should overlook the fact that another kind of prayer should be prayer that is carefully prepared, just as the incense was. Our

speech, Paul says, should be “seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6). He’s alluding here, perhaps with the idea that the way we speak generally should be in the same manner as we pray to God, like the incense.

Exo 30:36 and you shall beat some of it very small, and put some of it before the testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be to you most holy-
If incense is like prayer, this may refer to how we shouldn’t be afraid nor ashamed to pray to God about the smallest things. Nothing is outside of His control, indeed, God is so often in the details.

God met with Israel over the ark in the most holy place (Ex. 25:22; 30:6; Num. 17:4). But they were never allowed there. And so He also "met" (s.w.) with Israel at the door of the tabernacle, and spoke with them there (Ex. 29:42,43; 30:36). But the word for "meet" is used in Am. 3:3, where God laments that Israel had not "met" with Him and therefore they could not walk further together. The idea of the "meeting" was that God's word might be revealed, so that the people could walk with Him in His ways. He was like a king, who came out of His throne room to meet with His people. It was an awesome invitation, to be able to meet with the God who only otherwise met with His people in the glory of the most holy place, over the ark. He as it were came out of that most holy place and met with them at the door of the tabernacle. But they weren't interested. Just as so many today.

Exo 30:37 The incense which you shall make, according to its composition you shall not make for yourselves: it shall be to you holy for Yahweh-
There was to be a clear distinction between the spiritual and the secular. Secular life was not to be passed off as spiritual life; and that is the abiding principle. It means that being a Christian is not a case of being a secular person, acting and smelling like them, but claiming that that secular life is in fact a life devoted to God.

Exo 30:38 Whoever shall make any like that, to smell of it, he shall be cut off from his people-
Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the

'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

EXODUS CHAPTER 31

Exo 31:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Moses may well at this point have been wondering however he as an individual was going to achieve all this work. And his unspoken fear and question, as ours, was now addressed and answered.

Exo 31:2 Behold, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah-
To be called by name meant that this man had a special purpose intended for him ahead of time; "name" in Hebrew suggests a personality and character. But we too are called by name as Jeremiah was. There were good works intended for us to do, designed before the world was. But like Bezalel, we must accept the gift of God's Spirit in order to fulfil those intentions and potentials (Acts 15:18; Eph. 2:10).

Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'. Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel; and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those

considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 31:3 and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all kinds of workmanship-
As in Ex. 28:3, the wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (Ex. 28:3 AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1).

Wisdom and knowledge were what God created the world with (Prov. 3:19,20), so the idea may be that this tabernacle was a new creation.

Exo 31:4 to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass-
The Divine commands about the tabernacle likewise allude to the ideas of the surrounding nations, and yet bring out significant differences. In the same way as the Babylonians believed that the temple of Marduk in Babylon was a reflection of the Heavenly temple, so the tabernacle was also a reflection of the pattern of Yahweh's Heavenly temple. The Canaanites spoke of their god El as living in a tent- just as Yahweh dwelt in a tent. The Ugaritic epic of King Keret speaks of how "The gods proceed to their tents, the family of El to their tabernacles" (Tablet 2 D, 5, 31-33). El's tabernacle was thought to be constructed of boards- just as Yahweh's tabernacle was. Both had a veil, just as the Moslem shrine in Mecca has one. But there were significant differences. The Canaanite legends speak of the gods building their temples themselves; Cassuto points out that the very terms used about Bezaleel's skill and talent in building the tabernacle are used in Canaanite legends about the skill and talent of the gods in supposedly building their own temples. Perhaps the Exodus record so labours the point that Moses and the Israelites built Yahweh's tabernacle is in order to highlight the difference between the one true God and the pagan gods, who had to build their own tabernacles.

Exo 31:5 and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all kinds of workmanship-
The stones in the breastplate and shoulder pieces would have had to be of the same size, and yet the jewels given to Israel on leaving Egypt would have been of different sizes. They would have had to be cut, and also cut in order to reflect the light in an optimal way.

Exo 31:6 I, behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the heart of all who are wise-hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded you-
What God did at creation, He can do at any time. When Moses “finished the work” of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:33), there is clear allusion to God ‘finishing the work’ of creation (Gen. 2:2). The whole phrase “Behold I have given you…” (Gen. 1:28) occurs later when the Priests are told what God has given them (Ex. 31:6; Lev. 6:10; Num. 18:8,21; Dt. 11:14).

The wise were made more wise- an idea we often encounter in the opening chapters of Proverbs. God confirms men and women in the way they wish to go, through the work of His Spirit; if they wish to do His work and build up His dwelling place, He will confirm them in their natural talents and give them new ones.

Exo 31:7 the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the testimony, the mercy seat that is on it, all the furniture of the Tent-
We are given the distinct impression again that the "mercy seat" was a separate, detachable part distinct from the ark. "Tent of meeting" is LXX "tabernacle of witness", and the NT seems to prefer this reading (Acts 7:44). God met with man in that He spoke His word of witness, as a King coming out of His throne room in the most holy place, to meet with and speak to His people. Our hearing of God's word is to this day a meeting with God.

Exo 31:8 the table and its vessels, the pure lampstand with all its vessels, the altar of incense-
GNB reads in the possible ellipsis: "the lampstand of pure gold".

Exo 31:9 the altar of burnt offering with all its vessels, the basin and its base-
"Base" is literally "foot", again presenting the inanimate features of the tabernacle in human language; because all of them looked ahead to the Lord Jesus.

Exo 31:10 the finely worked garments-
These appear different to the priestly garments which are described afterwards, so they may refer to coverings for the tabernacle furniture whilst it was on the move in the wilderness.

The holy garments for Aaron the priest--the garments of his sons to minister in the priest’s office-
We note that these garments were specifically "for Aaron" when we might have

expected a more generic statement about clothing for the High Priest. We have the sense that so many of these commandments were specifically for that time, and were not specific about how things were to be once the people were in the land. The law of Moses was not therefore intended as a rigid system for all time; because God is open and flexible, and always has possible new directions in view for His people. I discussed elsewhere (Ex. 30:31) the possibility that the set of clothes made for Aaron were intended to be miraculously preserved for later generations.

Exo 31:11 the anointing oil, and the incense of sweet spices for the holy place, according to all that I have commanded you they shall do-
Literally, 'the oil of Messiah'. There is the constant hint that these things were all pointing forward to Messiah.

Exo 31:12 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The following command about the Sabbath was perhaps inserted at this point to remind Israel that they were not to get so caught up in the work of making all these things that they thought they could skip Sabbath observance. We too are not to become so obsessed with working to obey Divine commandments that we fail to remember that we must "rest" in order to show our faith in grace rather than works. This ceasing from trust in their own works was because they were to reflect upon how it was God's grace and not their works which sanctified them (:13).

Exo 31:13 Speak also to the children of Israel, saying, 'Most certainly you shall keep my Sabbaths: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies you-
The Sabbath was between God and Israel- not the Gentile world. It is therefore not required to be kept now that the body of God's people had been redefined under the new covenant.

Israel stood at Sinai and were told that if they were obedient, then they would be God's people. But then they were told that actually, God accepted them anyway as His people. And only *then* was the Law given to Moses- with the message that it was to be kept out of gratitude for what God had *already* done by grace in saving them just "simply so", because He loved them and had chosen their ancestors by grace (Dt. 4:34-40). Likewise it was *because* God sanctified Israel that they were to keep the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13,14; Dt. 5:15). It wasn't that any human obedience made them holy- the laws were simply an opportunity to respond to the grace shown them. For God's salvation of them from Egypt, like ours from this world, was nothing but grace.

Exo 31:14 You shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy to you. Everyone who

profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people-

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Exo 31:15 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to Yahweh. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death-

This is not necessarily parallel to being cut off from the people; see on :14. In addition to that, Israel were to put to death those who were so addicted to works that they refused to keep the Sabbath. This was how earnestly God wished to impress upon them the need for salvation by grace rather than works. It was because God's people had been sanctified or made holy (:13) that they were to sanctify or set apart / make holy the seventh day for God's service. We are to respond to God's setting of us apart- by setting apart what we have for Him. That is the essential take away from this, even though we are no longer required to keep the Sabbath.

Exo 31:16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the

Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant-
The Sabbath is described as a perpetual, eternal ordinance between God and His people (Ex. 31:16). Yet in the New Testament we read that the Old Covenant has been done away; and the Old Covenant clearly included the ten commandments (Dt. 4:13), one of which was concerning the Sabbath. For this reason the New Testament is at pains to explain that Sabbath keeping is not now required of God's people (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-3). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting covenant" evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase "everlasting covenant" is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David's throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated "eternal", "perpetual", "everlasting" in the Old Testament? James Strong defines olahm as literally meaning "the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity". It was God's purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn't grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of "practically eternity". For all of us, the spectre of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God's eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Exo 31:17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed'-
How are we to understand the 'language of limitation' which Scripture abounds with- e.g. Gen. 2:2; Ex. 31:17; Dt. 32:20,27? God is almighty and doesn't need refreshment. One explanation is that such language refers to God's manifestation through His Angels, who aren't almighty although they are sinless (Mt. 24:36). Another take on this is that as God worked creatively for six days and then 'breathed in' on the seventh, the Hebrew *naphash* being a form of *nephesh*, to breathe / receive spirit / breath- so God's people were to see their workaday lives as actually creative. The curse of working in the sweat

of their faces was thus partly ameliorated by the thought that their labour was in fact creative. And on the seventh day, they were to breathe in the things of the Spirit, in anticipation of the Kingdom which the day of rest symbolized, the end result of all truly creative labour (Heb. 4:9).

Exo 31:18 When He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave to Moses the two tablets of the testimony, stone tablets, written with God's finger-
The commands to build the tabernacle are repeated in Exodus, and there is the record of Israel's golden calf apostasy set in the middle of them. Ex. 25:1-31:18 give the tabernacle building commands, then there's the golden calf incident, and then the commands are repeated in Ex. 35-40. Surely this was edited in this manner to give encouragement to the exiles- the commands to rebuild the temple had been given in detail in Ez. 40-48, but the exiles failed- and yet, the implication runs, God was still willing to work again with His people in the building of His sanctuary despite their failure. There is good internal reason to think that the Pentateuch likewise was re-written in places to bring out the relevance of Israel's past to those in captivity.

The tables themselves were made by God, and were written on both sides (Ex. 32:15,16). As they were small enough to be carried, we assume they contained the ten commandments and not the rest of the laws given to Moses. They were the tables of the covenant, and so the letter of the law which was to give way to the spirit of the new covenant therefore includes the command about the Sabbath. For that was one of the ten commandments.

EXODUS CHAPTER 32

Exo 32:1 When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain-
"Delayed" is more commonly translated 'to be ashamed'. They may have gotten the impression that Moses was ashamed of them, and he and Yahweh were now going to make a new people. The very opposite was to be the case. This is what God proposed, and it was only the selfless pleading of Moses which changed it.

The Lord's warnings about the unfaithful believers who misbehave because their Lord delays His coming is clearly based upon this (Mt. 24:48; 25:5). Moses' return from the mountain (cp. Heaven) is therefore understood by the Lord as a type of His second coming.

The people gathered themselves together to Aaron, and said to him, Come, make us gods, which shall go before us-
God had 'gone before' Israel through the Angel which was to lead them through the desert (s.w. Ex. 23:23). But as with all religious but not spiritual people, they wanted a

visible leader. And so when Moses apparently disappeared in the mountain, they demanded that gods be made to "go before us". It was only by grace that God responded that despite their apostacy, He would still "go before you" through the Angel (Ex. 32:34; 33:14). Even the Gentile world had more faith than Israel in this; they believed that Yahweh "went before" His people in an Angel (Num. 14:14). But Israel themselves at the time of the golden calf didn't believe that. Moses in his final speech therefore urges the people to believe that indeed the Angel was going before them (Dt. 1:30,33; 31:6,8).

For as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him-

This terrible apostacy was performed with the fire of God's glory and judgment burning above them (Dt. 9:15). Clearly enough, visible manifestation of God in miracles is not enough to inculcate faith. Pentecostalism has so misunderstood this. The people likewise were getting manna daily at this time. But still they wanted to make visible "gods" to lead them back to where their hearts were, Egypt. We note they never formally abrogated their connection to Yahweh, their apparent issue was with Moses. But he was God's representative.

Stephen in Acts 7 stresses the way in which Moses was rejected by Israel as a type of Christ. At age 40, Moses was "thrust away" by one of the Hebrews; and on the wilderness journey the Jews "thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:27,35,39). This suggests that there was far more antagonism between Moses and Israel than we gather from the Old Testament record- after the pattern of Israel's treatment of Jesus. It would seem from Acts 7:39 that after the golden calf incident, the majority of Israel cold shouldered Moses. Once the point sank in that they were not going to enter the land, this feelings must have turned into bitter resentment. They were probably unaware of how Moses had been willing to offer his eternal destiny for their salvation; they would not have entered into the intensity of Moses' prayers for their salvation. The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to "the Lord spake unto Moses" (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books.

Exo 32:2 Aaron said to them, Take off the golden rings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me-
When Gideon received the golden earrings of the Ishmaelites (Jud. 8:24-27), his mind should have flown back to how golden earrings were turned into the golden calf (Ex. 32:2). He was potentially given the strength to resist the temptation to turn them into an idol. But he must have blanked out that Biblical precedent in his heart; he ignored his spiritual potential.

Exo 32:3 All the people took off the golden rings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron-
Ps. 106:20 says that they changed or altered (Heb.) their glory into a mere ox. The glory of God was visible to them on Sinai at the time. God's glory was in His invisible leading of them through the Angel (:1). But they changed that into the visible and secular. They were not totally rejecting Yahweh, but making an ox / calf similar to one facet of the cherubim. This is classic apostacy, mixing truth with error.

Exo 32:4 He received what they handed him, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it a molten calf; and they said-
The mention of the tool and fashioning it is in order to point up the lie which Aaron later tells- that he put the gold in the fire, and out popped a golden calf.

These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt-
The human desire to believe in a god rather than a man is demonstrated in Israel's attitude to Moses. They complained about "this Moses, the *man* that brought us up out of the land of Egypt"; and therefore made the golden calf. Note in passing how they created *one* calf, but worshipped it as *gods* plural. They committed the trinity fallacy of many centuries later. They couldn't handle a saviour who was human, like them, and so they decided that a god had been their saviour, who existed as a plurality, gods, within a unity, i.e. the golden calf. I will note on :18 that they were to praise the calf with "antiphonal singing", of the kind in Ex. 15:21 when they praised Yahweh for delivering them from Egypt. But it wasn't that they had totally abrogated Yahweh, just as we probably won't become atheists. But they worshipped idols, with all the associated immorality, in the name of Yahweh worship. And this is our abiding temptation, to mix the flesh and Spirit.

Exo 32:5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation, and said, Tomorrow shall be a feast to Yahweh-
As noted on :4, this was not a rejection of Yahweh in so many words, but rather a justification of idolatry in the name of Yahweh worship. We note the emphasis on what

Aaron did. No wonder God wanted to slay him at this time (Dt. 9:20), and he was only saved by grace thanks to Moses' intercession.

Exo 32:6 They rose up early on the next day, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play-
It appears that Israel identified the golden calf with the Egyptian goddess Hathor. “The Egyptian goddess Hathor came in the form of a cow, a woman with a cow’s head, or a woman with cows horns and / or cows ears. She bore several other titles including The Golden One and Mistress of Music. She was the patron of love, motherhood, drunkenness, fun, dance and music. The worship of Hathor degenerated into immorality and she is depicted in some scenes and statues as a sensual young woman. Hathor was the protector of travellers from Egypt to various areas including Sinai”. So Israel so quickly forgot the lesson so artlessly taught them – that the idols / demons of Egypt were of no power at all, seeing they had all been targetted by the plagues.

The following references to Hathor provide further insight; supporting references are to be found in my book "The Real Devil" section 4-2-3:
Hathor had several forms including, a cow, a women with a cow’s head, or a woman with cows horns and or ears.
Hathor was also known as ‘The Golden One’
Hathor was the protector of travellers from Egypt to various areas including Sinai
Patron of drunkenness
Hathor had the title ‘Mistress of Music’
The worship of Hathor included playing on all kinds of musical instruments together with dancing
The worship of Hathor was for the joy and pleasure of those who took part
Hathor is also the goddess of love
The worship of Hathor degenerated into immorality.

Exo 32:7 Yahweh spoke to Moses, Go, get down; for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves!-
"Themselves" is added to the text. They had "corrupted" not just themselves, but their understanding of Yahweh. As explained on :4-6, they were worshipping an idol in the name of Yahweh worship. They had corrupted or turned the glory of God into the form of an ox which eats grass (Ps. 106:20). And this is the abiding temptation for us all. "Corrupted" is the word used about the corruption of the people which resulted in the flood (Gen. 6:11-13,17). We are therefore to expect a "flood" of destruction. But thanks to grace and Moses' intercession, this didn't come. But it is the same word used of the threatened destruction of everyone in Sodom, which Abraham's intercession avoided (s.w. Gen. 18:28,31). That incident surely motivated Moses to rise up to the same possibility of dialogue with God in order to change His intended purpose. We too are to

be motivated by Biblical examples of intercession. There is a gap between God's statement of judgment, and His carrying it out. And in that gap, we can ask God to change His intended purpose of judgment; and He is willing to. Understanding God this way gives such intensity and significance to our prayers and intercession.

"Corrupted" is s.w. "'destroyed" or "perish". All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew word for "corruption" also means "destruction", for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves.

Exo 32:8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them-
As explained on Ex. 32:4-6, the people considered that their idolatry was a form of Yahweh worship. But Yahweh makes it clear that it was in fact a rejection of Him.

They have made themselves a molten calf-
"Molten" is literally 'covered'. They had presumably made the calf of the common acacia wood, and covered it with gold- just as the tabernacle furniture was to be constructed in a similar way. Again we see that they were mixing Yahweh worship with idolatry.

And have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt'-
The calf was likely an imitation of the Egyptian calf god Apis, despite the fact the plagues had targetted the gods of Egypt and shown them to be nothing. They mixed the worship of Yahweh with that of idols, and this is the abiding temptation for God's people.

Exo 32:9 Yahweh said to Moses, I have seen these people, and behold, they are a stiff-necked people-
Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6). Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

Exo 32:10 Now therefore leave Me alone-
This seems to suggest that God knew both Himself and Moses well enough to know that Moses could well persuade Him to change His mind, against His ideal intention. And Moses doesn't leave God alone, and does persuade Him. We marvel at the humility and humanity of God, and His extreme openness to human intercession.

Think of God's bitter disappointment with Israel when He invites Moses into the mount as their representative, in order to enter into further covenant with them. Down below, they started worshipping other gods. When God says to Moses "Leave me alone..." (Ex. 32:10), He may well refer to the desire for isolation / solitude which a person in extreme grief desires. And of course we are aware of how Moses reasons with God, and asks God to consider His own future and how it might turn out, and how that can be avoided. And God takes Moses seriously, with integrity, and appears to even acquiesce to his arguments. It's amazing. This God is our God.

That My wrath may burn hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of you a great nation-
Note how God's anger "burned hot" and so did that of Moses. But Moses asks God not to wax hot in anger (Ex. 32:10,11,19). What are we to make of this? Surely, positively, Moses was totally in tune with the feelings of God. And yet he does himself what he asks God not to do.

There is almost a pattern with God- to devise His purpose, and then in the 'gap' until its fulfillment, be open to the persuasion of His covenant people to change or ammend those plans. This could be what Am. 3:7 is speaking of: "Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets". It's as if He reveals His plans to them so that they can then comment upon them in prayer. And maybe this is why God tells Jeremiah not to pray to Him to change His stated plans against Israel (Jer. 7:16 cp. Jer. 11:14; 14:11; 15:1), and why He asks Moses to 'leave Me alone' and not try to persuade Him to change His mind (Ex. 32:10). He didn't want, in these cases, His stated plans to be interrupted by the appeals of His people to change them. Interestingly, in both these examples, Moses and Jeremiah know God well enough, the relationship is intimate enough, for them to still speak with Him- and change His mind. Those who've prayed to God in cases of terminal illness [and countless other situations] will have sensed this 'battle', this 'struggle' almost, between God and His friends, His covenant people, and the element of 'persuasion' which there is going on both ways in the dialogue between God and ourselves. The simple fact that God really can change- there are over 40 references to His 'repentance' in Scripture- is vital to understand- for this is the basis of the prayer that changes things, that as it were wrestles with God.

Exo 32:11 Moses begged Yahweh his God, and said, Yahweh, why does your wrath burn

hot against your people, that you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?-
See on Ex. 34:9; 33:1. If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for he salvation of others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10.11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again- because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

When God told Moses to leave Him alone to destroy them, and go back down to the people immediately (Dt. 9:12), Moses stayed on to plead with God not to destroy them. And God listened (Ex. 32:7-14). He repented of the evil He had thought to do. He changed His mind, because Moses stayed on. There is an element of striving with God in prayer, knowing that His mind is open to change (Rom. 15:30). This is what stimulates me to what intensity in prayer I can muster. That God is open to hearing and even changing His holy mind about something. Such is His sensitivity to us. Such is His love, that God changing His mind becomes really feasible as a concept. And such is the scary implication of the total freewill which the Father has afforded us. This is why God could reason with Moses as a man speaks to his friend and vice versa. It was a dynamic, two way relationship in thought and prayer and being. Jacob likewise changed God's intentions with him in his night of wrestling in prayer with the Angel; and Jacob is a symbol of us all. He became Israel, he who struggles with God. And this is a key feature of all those who comprise the true Israel.

The manifestation of God in a person leads to a mutuality between them. There's a nice example of the mutuality between God and Moses in Ex. 33:1, where God says that Moses brought up Israel out of Egypt; but in Ex. 32:11, Moses says [as frequently] that God brought Israel out of Egypt. And we too can experience this mutuality in relationship with the Father. Through Moses allowing himself to become part of God manifestation, he found a confidence to achieve that which felt impossible to him. He asks God: "Who am I...?" to do the great things God required... and the answer was "I will be who I will be" (Ex. 3:11-13). Moses' sense of inadequacy was met by the principle of God's manifestation in him; and so will ours be, if we participate in it.

Exo 32:12 Why should the Egyptians speak, saying-
Moses seems to have shared the primitive idea that a god rose or fell according to the fortunes of his worshippers, when he asks God to not cut off Israel in case the nations mock Yahweh. Yahweh could have responded that this was far too primitive and limited a view. But no, He apparently listens to Moses and goes along with his request!

'He brought them forth for evil, to kill them in the mountains-
The mountains around Sinai.

And to consume them from the surface of the earth?' Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Your people-
This turning of Yahweh from His wrath was inspirational even generations later, for the Ninevites repeat this phrase and cling onto it in hope (Jonah 3:9 s.w.). David and the restoration Psalmists likewise allude to it, and ask for it to be repeated in their context (s.w. Ps. 85:3,4), and so can we be likewise inspired.

Exo 32:13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your seed as the stars of the sky, and all this land that I have spoken of I will give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever'-
God could have given legitimate answers to each of Moses' objections; for there were indeed times when He did not turn from the fierceness of His wrath (:12)- such as Jer. 4:8; 2 Kings 23:26. He intended to fulfil the promises to Abraham, but through Moses. But such is His sensitivity and pure pity that He accepted Moses' pleas.

Exo 32:14 Yahweh changed His mind of the evil which He said He would do to His people-
Due to Moses' prayer, "the Lord repented of the evil which he had said he would do unto his people" (Ex. 32:14 RV). Yet these are the very words of Jer. 18:8- if a *nation* repents, then God will repent. But in this case, God accepted the singular prayer of Moses. This opens up the question of the degree to which our spiritual effort can affect the eternal outcomes for third parties (see on Mk. 2:5).

The LXX uses the word translated "propitiation" in the NT with reference to how God forgave / propitiated for Israel's sins for His Name's sake (Ex. 32:14; Ps. 79:9). That propitiation was only for the sake of the Lord's future death, which would be the propitiation God ultimately accepted. Having no past or future with Him, Yahweh could act as if His Son's death had already occurred. But that death and forgiveness for "His name's sake" were one and the same thing. The Son's death was the expression of the Father's Name.

We are told that God "hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instill a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that

personal repentance is required for forgiveness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find acceptability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel.

Exo 32:15 Moses turned, and went down from the mountain, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand; tablets that were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other they were written-
Dt. 9:15 says that Moses carried one in each hand. They were likely very small, which is why they were written on both sides. There is double emphasis upon this, perhaps because this was unheard of on Egyptian tablets.

Exo 32:16 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved on the tables-
This seems to lead up to the tragedy of Moses breaking them. They were the most exquisite artwork, God's own handwriting. This was how intimately He was engaged with the covenant He offered Israel, and the tragedy of it being broken. The Hebrew for "engraved" is *haruth*, the same consonants as *heruth*, freedom / liberty. This connection between law and freedom is played on in James 1:25; 2:12. The law, therefore, is not a leash, a chore to be performed, but as David often observes, God's law is the way to run free. Divine law is the way to help man find his true identity and spiritually blosssom. This of course is the opposite to human law, which seeks to constrain and 'keep the loonies on the path'. A comparison of God's law with other legal codes of the time, such as the laws of Hammurabi, reveals how God seeks to value the human person. His law was the same for all, unlike the contemporary human laws which excused the higher classes from obedience. Human life always trumped material issues; the death penalty was used very sparingly in God's laws. And above all, the Divine laws are always positioned in relation to the fact that "I am Yahweh your God". Obedience was part of a personal covenant relationship with God, and an act of gratitude for His personal salvation. There is constant connection between law and covenant relationship; hence Hos. 8:1 "they have broken My covenant, and rebelled against My law". Related to this is the constant repetition that the law was given by God, and "You shall be holy, for I am holy"- and not arrived at from human consultation and development of legal tradition. This is why God's law begins with the statement "I am the Yahweh your God" (Ex. 20:2). Thus the Sabbath rest was because God had rested on the seventh day; and the ten "He said..." statements of the Genesis creation can be connected with the ten commandments, which were aimed at a new spiritual creation of people.

Exo 32:17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to

Moses, There is the noise of war in the camp-
It has been noted that the people must have been camped in the plain near Sinai known as Er-Raheh, which was not visible from the peak of Sinai known as Jebel Musa. The path up the mountain to that point would have gone around the mountain, rather than straight up from the plain. This explains why they first heard rather than saw what was going on, and is another internal evidence for Biblical inspiration.

This incident could be read as an example of Joshua's genuine naivety- thinking that Israel were far stronger than they were. He mistook the sound of their idolatrous partying for the sound of a battle; and Moses almost rebukes him for his naivety. He allowed the leaders of Israel to lead him into wrong decisions about the initial attack on Ai, and also into being deceived by the Gibeonites. And yet as a younger man, he had boldly stood up to the peer pressure of the princes of Israel in faithfully declaring that Israel could and should go up into Canaan; when the other princes must have put huge pressure upon him to agree with them. He is described as maintaining "another spirit" to theirs (Num. 14:24). The resolution of youth seems to have been somewhat lost as he grew older. The character presentation of Joshua is absolutely psychologically credible.

Exo 32:18 He said, It isn't the voice of those who shout for victory, neither is it the voice of those who cry for being overcome-
The Lord alludes to this: "You shall weep and lament, but the (Jewish) world shall rejoice" (Jn. 16:20). Israel rejoiced in the works of their own hands (Acts 7:41), the golden calf, while Moses was absent- cp. Christ's absence in the grave, with the Jews rejoicing and the disciples lamenting. In another sense, the return of Moses from the mountain may look ahead to Christ's return from Heaven- to find the majority of the new Israel apostate, although thinking they are being especially obedient to Yahweh (Ex. 32:5). The peak of selfless love for Israel which Moses showed at this time therefore points forward to the zeal of Christ for our forgiveness and salvation at his return (Ex. 32:32). Moses at his finest hour of intercession and willing self sacrifice thus typifies Christ at his return. And after the golden calf incident, Israel are encouraged to enter the Kingdom (Ex. 33:1)- as at the second coming.

But the noise of those who sing that I hear-
The Hebrew implies "antiphonal singing", of the kind in Ex. 15:21, and s.w. Ps. 88:1. This is a classic case of mixing the flesh and the spirit; for they were worshipping the golden calf as a form of Yahweh worship, praising the golden calf for their deliverance from Egypt just as they had praised Yahweh for this in Ex. 15:21.

Exo 32:19 It happened, as soon as he came near to the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing; and Moses' anger grew hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mountain-
His anger growing hot was exactly the feeling of God. But unlike God, he immediately

broke the symbols of the covenant with Israel. Again, God is revealed as more gracious and patient than man. As Moses had pleaded with Yahweh not to be so angry, so Aaron was to do so with the furiously angry Moses. Aaron in all his weakness therefore becomes as Moses, who was also weak before God's presence.

Exo 32:20 He took the calf which they had made-
This is emphasized. Aaron's claim it just popped out of the fire was a lie (:24).

And burnt it with fire, ground it to powder, and scattered it on the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it-
They were forced to drink / eat dust, just as Adam had to; for he was dust and had to eat the fruit of the dust in punishment. His sin was the essence of every man's sin, including Israel's at this time. The reference to their being made naked (:25) is another allusion to Adam. Israel had been an unfaithful wife to Yahweh, and so they were punished as the woman tested for adultery was (Num. 5:24). Dt. 9:21 says that "grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust". As gold is so heavy, this would be necessary for it to float on the surface on the water.

Exo 32:21 Moses said to Aaron, What did these people do to you, that you have brought a great sin on them?-
Aaron's excuse was pathetic and untruthful, and Moses doesn't even engage with it. There are times when we too are wise not to engage with evident untruth and self justification, but to cut to the essence of the situation. It was only thanks to Moses' intercession for Aaron that Aaron's life was spared at this point (Dt. 9:20). We see here how intercession even for the impenitent can be effective (for Aaron in Ex. 32:24 was impenitent, claiming the calf had jumped out of the fire ready made). This has huge pastoral implications for our ministry and prayer life, recalling how for the sake of the faith of the friends, the Lord pronounced the paralyzed man forgiven (Mk. 2:5; also James 5:20).

"A great sin" is the phrase used of Jeroboam's golden calf, which was based upon this calf (2 Kings 17:21). Again, people can be made to sin by others- a sober reminder to watch our behaviour.

Exo 32:22 Aaron said, Don't let the anger of my lord grow hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil-
Aaron reasons with Moses, surely unconsciously, just as Moses had reasoned with God. And we have these situations in our lives too- where others beg us for mercy and understanding (even if not in so many words), just as we have asked God to show us. But the man who is so arrogant and insensitive to his own sins that he has never done

this before God... will not be inclined to be merciful and understanding to those whose situations beg him to do likewise.

Dt. *9:*20 must be given its full weight: "Yahweh was very angry with Aaron to destroy him, and I prayed for Aaron also at the same time". Aaron comes over in Ex. 32:22 as more worried about the wrath of Moses his brother than that of God: "Don't let the anger of my lord grow hot". And so it can easily be with us. We can forget God's feelings and worry only about our image with our family and brethren.

Exo 32:23 For they said to me, 'Make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what has become of him'-
Aaron quotes their words of :1 absolutely verbatim, careful to be truthful. But then in :24 he tells a pathetic lie. This is totally psychologically credible; that a man prefaces a point blank lie with a careful and strict statement of truth. The Biblical records, unlike the histories of other nations at the time, have total credibility.

Exo 32:24 I said to them, 'Whoever has any gold, let them take it off;' so they gave it to me; and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf-
The mention of the tool and fashioning of it in :4 is in order to point up the lie which Aaron later tells- that he put the gold in the fire, and out popped a golden calf.

The Jewish interpreters go to great lengths to rework the narrative here in order to justify Aaron and Israel, blaming the event on "Satan" rather than Israel. The targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel asks us to read Aaron's words as: "I cast it into the fire, and Satan entered into it, and it came out in the form of this calf!". But the Biblical record is clear that the sin was Aaron's fault, and Israel's (:21,22,31,35); he engraved the calf with a tool. There is no mention of any" Satan" figure. We see again how humans prefer to wriggle out of responsibility for sin by blaming their failure upon a cosmic "Satan" figure, of which the Bible says nothing- and indeed, deconstructs by placing the blame for sin squarely upon human beings and their hearts (:22).

Exo 32:25 When Moses saw that the people were naked, (for Aaron had made them naked, for a shame among their enemies)-
The Assyrians led Israel away into captivity [s.w. to make naked], "they discovered her nakedness" (Ez. 23:10), and yet in their sin Israel made themselves naked (2 Chron. 28:19 cp. Ex. 32:25; Gen. 3:10). The day of Yahweh's judgment upon them through their invaders was only a reflection of their own self-condemnation. Eli's sons *made themselves* accursed, and were only therefore [and thereby] judged by God (1 Sam. 3:13 AVmg.).

They were forced to drink / eat dust (:20), just as Adam had to; for he was dust and had to eat the fruit of the dust in punishment. His sin was the essence of every man's sin, including Israel's at this time. The reference to their being made naked is another allusion to Adam.

Exo 32:26 then Moses stood in the gate of the camp-
They appeared to have made a fence around themselves with gates in it (:27 "from gate to gate").

And said, Whoever is on Yahweh's side, come to me!-
Literally, "Who unto Yahweh?". The phrase is only used in Jer. 30:21, where we read that under the new covenant, this will be true of all God's people.

All the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him-
This doesn't have to mean that the Levites hadn't sinned in this, because these loyal Levites were asked to kill their own brothers and neighbours in their tribal encampment area (:27). But their motive may have been that they were loyal to Moses because he was of their tribe, and they could foresee that there was a rebellion against Moses as the people didn't want him as their leader. All human motivation is so sadly mixed.

Exo 32:27 He said to them, Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Every man put his sword on his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and every man kill his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour'-
These loyal Levites were asked to kill their own brothers and neighbours in their tribal encampment area. So we are wrong to think that all the Levites were loyal to Moses and spurned the golden calf. Indeed it could be that those slain were the unfaithful amongst the tribe of Levi.

Exo 32:28 The sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men-
I suggested on :27 that these 3000 may have been the apostate amongst the tribe of Levi (Dt. 33:9).

There is "a remarkable correlation between the signs recorded in John, and the plagues Moses brought upon Egypt. There cannot be a complete match as the numbers are unequal, but the differing types of miraculous signs all find their counterpart in the plagues". The purpose of all these allusions to the time of Moses' return from Sinai was surely to make the following point: As Moses disappeared into Sinai to attain the old covenant, so Christ died for three days to attain the new covenant. The majority of Israel, egged on by their high priest, turned to apostacy. On Moses' return, only some of the Levites were faithful; they sacrificed all their natural relationships in order to defend

the Faith (Dt. 33:9). Likewise, the majority of Israel turned to apostacy in the first century, mixing the desires of the flesh with their keeping of the Law of Moses, just as they did with the golden calf. The 'little of both' syndrome is one of our most common enemies. Moses' return was like Christ's resurrection. The Levites represent the disciples who went on to become the teachers of Israel, a new priesthood. Those Levites represent us (1 Pet. 2:5), a minority who stand alone, both in the world and perhaps also among the covenant people, motivated by the word, yet like the disciples at the time of Christ's resurrection- rather unsure, struggling within their own faith, yet going on to be the teachers of the world.

Exo 32:29 Moses said, Consecrate yourselves today to Yahweh, yes, every man against his son, and against his brother; that He may bestow on you a blessing this day-
This could as well be: "You have consecrated yourselves today". They had slain their own Levitical relatives, even their own sons and brothers; encouraging us to see the 3000 they slew as actually a purge of the tribe of Levi. By this they had demonstrated their loyalty to Yahweh as being greater than what they felt towards their own families. And this was highly significant, in an age when family meant absolutely everything. And so having purged their tribe, they had consecrated themselves to Yahweh, and He therefore consecrated them to Himself as His special servants. Previously, the intention had been that all Israel would be a nation of priests. But now that had been adjusted, so that only a self-cleansed tribe would do that work.

Exo 32:30 It happened on the next day, that Moses said to the people, You have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to Yahweh. Perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin-
See on Rom. 9:3; Dt. 1:37. Moses is called up into Sinai and speaks with God. While there, Israel turn away from God, and God wants to make Moses' family His people and reject Israel. But Moses argues with God against this, again showing his humility and his appreciation of God manifestation in Israel, and his earnest desire that God would save Israel. "He said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath". This was only months after his weak faith and reluctance to lead Israel out of Egypt. He says that he will "go up (and) make an atonement" (Ex. 32:30). And yet he knew the principle that atonement was impossible without shedding blood. Yet he goes further than that: "Blot me, I *pray thee* (he really wanted to do this) out of thy book" (Ex. 32:32) AV- i.e. the book of salvation (Ez. 13:9; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 10:20; Rev. 20:12). Moses is willing to give his physical life and also his eternal salvation so that Israel can enter the land. Surely he reached matchless heights of selflessness. And he begged Yahweh to accept this for 40 days and nights, fasting without food or water (Dt. 9:17; 10:10). It wasn't just a once off, emotional outburst of a moment.

To be blotted out of the book God had written may have been understood by Moses as asking for him to be excluded from an inheritance in the promised land; for later, a 'book' was written describing the various portions (Josh. 18:9). The connection is made explicit in Ez. 13:9: "...neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel". To be blotted out of the book meant to not enter the land (surely Ezekiel is alluding to Moses' experience). If Israel were to be blotted out there and then in the wilderness, then Moses wanted to share this experience. God had just spoken of 'blotting out' Israel from before Him (Dt. 9:14), and making a nation of Moses; but now Moses is asking to share in their condemnation rather than experience salvation without them. This was the extent of his devotion. On the last day of his life, Moses reeled off the great speech of Deuteronomy, knowing full well that he was to die without entering the land. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 *was heard*- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded; Moses didn't enter the land. And yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter the land. Moses' fleeting requests to enter the land must be read as a flagging from the height of devotion he reached, rather like the Lord's request to escape the cross in Gethsemane. But ultimately he did what he intended- he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stresses on the last day of his life that he wouldn't enter the land *for Israel's sake* (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went ill with him *for their sakes*" (Ps. 106:32). In all this, Moses was typifying the death of the Lord. Is. 53:8 describes His cross as being "cut off [Strong: 'excluded'] from the land of the living" (s.w. 'the congregation'- of Israel), for the transgression of His people. This is undoubtedly reference to the self-sacrificial exclusion of Moses from the land, that Israel might enter. The Lord died the death of a sinner, He chose like Moses to suffer affliction with us, that we might be saved. The intense prayer of Moses for Israel's salvation inspired David in prayer (Ps. 25:11 = Ex. 32:30,31).

Paul in 2 Tim. 2:24,25 makes a series of allusions to Moses, which climax in an invitation to pray like Moses for the salvation of others:
"The servant of the Lord [A very common title of Moses] must not strive [As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)] but be gentle unto all [The spirit of Moses] apt to teach [As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12; Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)], patient [As was Moses], in meekness [Moses was the meekest man (Num. 12:3)] instructing those that oppose themselves [at the time of Aaron and Miriam's self-opposing rebellion] if God peradventure will give

them repentance [i.e. forgiveness] ["Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30)]"- and he prayed 40 days and nights for it. And note too: 2 Tim. 2:19 = Num. 16:5,26; 2 Tim. 2:20 = Num. 12:7; 2:21 = Num. 16:37; 2 Tim. 2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3; 2 Tim. 2:26 = Num. 16:33. This is quite something. The height of Moses' devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn't just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half-heartedly ask our God to 'be with' brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others. For the Judaists, an appeal to be like Moses, to emulate him in teaching, was blasphemous; for they considered Moses at such a level that he could never be imitated. Yet Paul urges timid Timothy and all teachers to realistically be Moses to our audience.

"Perhaps I shall make atonement..." reflects how God's forgiveness and salvation can never be presumed upon; even if we are genuinely repentant. For the wages of sin has always been death (Rom. 6:23); we as sinners have no right to life. This is a theme stamped right across the Old Testament. Consider: "You have sinned a great sin. Now I will go up to Yahweh. Perhaps I shall make atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30). "Hate evil, love good, and establish justice in the courts. It may be that Yahweh, the God of Armies, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph" (Am. 5:15). "Rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious... Who knows whether He will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him?" (Joel 2:13,14). "Let them turn each one from his evil way... Who knows whether God will not turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we might not perish?" (Jonah 3:8,9). Possibly we could add Esther 4:14 to this list: "Who knows if you haven't come to the kingdom for such a time as this?". This is why Daniel's friends can reason: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods" (Dan. 3:17,18). They believed in Yahweh's salvation, but were quite prepared not to receive it. They knew that His ability to dramatically save them at that moment was not at all certain of fulfilment for them. The same words "is able" and "save" are used by Darius in Dan. 6:21 when he again expresses a doubt as to whether God is able to save in this case: "Was the God whom you served so regularly able to deliver you from the lions?". Against all this we must balance the fact that those in Christ have been given the "right" to be God's children (Jn. 1:12). But the bold confidence we have in the Lord Jesus must somehow never fail to be nuanced by an awareness of our total unworthiness and inability to presume upon God's forgiveness.

Exo 32:31 Moses returned to Yahweh, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made themselves gods of gold-
Moses was willing to give his physical life and also his eternal salvation so that Israel

can enter the land. Surely he reached matchless heights of selflessness. And he begged Yahweh to accept this for 40 days and nights, fasting without food or water (Dt. 9:17; 10:10). It wasn't just a once off, emotional outburst of a moment.

Exo 32:32 Yet now, if You will, forgive their sin- and if not, please blot me out of Your book which You have written-
It is simply fantastic that Moses could love those people so intensely, despite their aggression and indifference towards him. He was prepared to give his place in the Kingdom so that they might enter; he *prayed* God to accept his offer. He knew that atonement could only be by sacrifice of blood (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22; and see the similarity with Phinehas making an atonement for Israel's forgiveness through the slaying of Zimri and Cozbi in Num. 25:8,13); and yet he climbed the Mount with the intent of making atonement himself for Israel's sin (Ex. 32:30); he intended to give his life for them. And he didn't make such a promise in hot blood, as some men might. He made the statement, and then made the long climb to the top of the mount. He climbed that mountain (nearly a day's work), and at the top he made an even finer and altogether higher offer to the Angel: "If thou wilt forgive their sin... blot me, I pray thee (notice the earnestness of his desire) out of thy book" (Ex. 32:32 AV). And he begged Yahweh to accept this for 40 days and nights, fasting without food or water (Dt. 9:17; 10:10). It wasn't just a once off, emotional outburst of a moment. And during that climb, it seems he came to an even higher spiritual level; he was prepared not only to offer his physical life, but also his place in the Kingdom (Ex. 32:32 cp. Ez. 13:9; Dan. 12:2; Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 20:12).

Now although hopefully we are not rejecting Christ as they did, the fact still stands that the love of Moses for Israel typifies the love of Christ towards us. The degree, the extent of Moses' love, is but a dim foretaste of the *degree* of the love of Christ for us. Now in this is something wonderful, something we really need to go away and meditate about. And the wonder of it all is that Israel did not realize the extent of Moses love at the time. At the end of his life he recounts how God has threatened to destroy the people, and then "I turned and came down from the mount" (Dt. 9:15). He doesn't record his 40 days of pleading with the Father, and how he turned down the offer of having himself made into a great nation. In this we see tremendous spiritual culture, pointing forward to the Lord's own self-perception of His sacrifice.

We'll all be like Moses was at the end, in essence; we'll share his finest hours. Our names will not be blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5), as Moses' wasn't (Ex. 32:32).

Moses was willing to sacrifice his place in the Kingdom for the sake of Israel, and this impressed Paul deeply. For he alludes to it often. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself" (Acts 20:24). "I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:3). Paul is here rising up to imitate

Moses at perhaps his finest hour- willing, at least in principle, to give up his eternal life for the sake of Israel's salvation. The extent of Paul's love for natural Israel does not come out that strongly in the Acts and epistles; but this allusion to Moses says it all. The RVmg. renders Rom. 9:3: “I could pray…”, more clearly alluding to Moses’ prayer that the people might enter and he be rejected. Yet Paul perceived that God would not accept a substitute offering like that; and hence he says he *could* pray like this. In essence, he had risen to the same level. Likewise he wrote in 1 Thess. 2:8 RV that he was “well pleased [i.e. theoretically willing] to impart unto, you not the gospel of God only, but our own souls, because ye were dear unto us”. He perceived the difference between mere imparting of the Gospel in preaching, and being willing to give ones’ soul, ones salvation, because of a heart that bleeds for others. No wonder Paul was such a convincing preacher, with such love behind his words.

Exo 32:33 Yahweh said to Moses, Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book-
All substitutionary models of the atonement are here declared null and void. Moses saved the people by being their representative, and offering to not enter the land for their sakes, so that they might enter. And in a way this was accepted by God. God didn’t accept Moses’ offer to die as a *substitute* for Israel, for each must be judged for their own sins. But He did accept Moses as a *representative* of Israel and accepted his mediation for their salvation on this basis; just as He accepted the work of Christ on the same basis. Paul learnt the lesson when he says that he *could wish* himself condemned and Israel saved (Rom. 9:1-3); but he recognized God didn’t accept Moses’ offer of dying for them as a substitute.

Exo 32:34 Now go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My angel shall go before you-
As explained on :1, they had disbelieved this. They wanted visible gods to "go before" them. They are again being bidden accept invisible Divine leadership rather than visible secular leadership. It is the struggle between religion and spirituality.

Ex. 33:11,12 show Moses talking to the LORD "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend"- i.e. in a relaxed, friendly way. Thus the identity of the 'LORD' is clearly an Angel. This Angel says in Ex. 33:20 that His face cannot be seen by any man, but His back parts may be seen by Moses. The fact He could be seen at all shows He was not God Himself. Perhaps we are hearing another Angel speak, more mighty than the one with whom Moses spoke face to face. Or the Angel with whom Moses spoke started to manifest God to a different degree. The 'LORD'- the Angel- then says, Ex. 33:14, "My

presence shall go with you". This "presence" was another Angel, as Ex. 32:34 makes clear. This would suggest there were two Angels involved.

Nevertheless in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin-
That God 'visits' or punishes sin is a fundamental part of God's Name (Ex. 34:7 s.w.). The question is when and how. Israel's sin of rejecting Yahweh for an idol (Ex. 32:34 s.w.) need not have been 'visited' or 'punished'- had they repented. But there is no evidence that they did, neither in that immediate generation nor in subsequent ones. And so finally, God 'visited' His people's sins in the destructions at the hands of the Babylonians and Assyrians (s.w. Jer. 14:10; Hos. 8:13; 9:9).

Exo 32:35 Yahweh struck the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made-
The Biblical record highlights the sin of Aaron and the people; the Jewish literature excuses it by blaming it on Satan / "mastema". Time and again, the Jewish apocryphal literature wrongly sought to distance God from doing anything negative in human life. Gen. 22:1 clearly states that it was *God* who put Abraham to the test by asking him to kill his son Isaac; Jubilees retells the story with "Prince Mastema", the Satan figure, telling Abraham to do this (Jub. 17:15-18). Likewise Ex. 4:24 recounts how "the Lord", presumably as an Angel, met Moses and tried to kill him for not circumcising his son; but Jubilees again claims that Mastema / Satan did this (Jub. 48:1-3). Indeed, several times the Hebrew word *mastema* ['hostility, enmity'] occurs, it is in the context of urging Israel to see that *they* and their internal desires to sin are the true *mastema*. Hos. 9:7 is an example: "Because your sins are so many and your hostility [*mastema*] so great".

EXODUS CHAPTER 33

Exo 33:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, Depart, go up from here, you and the people that you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your seed'-
"Go up... but I will not go up in the midst of you" (:3) was what triggered Moses' desire for God to change and instead come with him personally. He hankers for some physical manifestation of God to himself, in order to assure him that God indeed was going to empower him for the work as promised. God promised to send an Angel before them to lead them (:2), but Moses feels this isn't enough- he wants Yahweh to go "*with* me". He starts to feel the need to even see Yahweh's face and to at least have some amazing revelation of Divine glory. He will be shown that this is unnecessary, as the abiding presence and glory of God isn't so much anything physical, but the experience of God's grace and salvation inherent in His very Name. That's a brief outline of what's going on here in Ex. 33,34.

This is God showing sensitivity and recognition of Moses' prayer in Ex. 32:13 "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them...". God could have given legitimate answers to each of Moses' objections; for He intended to fulfil the promises to Abraham, but through Moses. But such is His sensitivity and pure pity that He accepted Moses' pleas.

The manifestation of God in a person leads to a mutuality between them. There's a nice example of the mutuality between God and Moses here, where God says that *Moses* brought up Israel out of Egypt; but in Ex. 32:11, Moses says [as frequently] that *God* brought Israel out of Egypt. And we too can experience this mutuality in relationship with the Father.

Exo 33:2 I will send an angel before you; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite-
LXX "I will send at the same time my angel before thy face" implies that as Moses led the people onward from Sinai, so the Angel would move in to Canaan to drive out the tribes. But this potential didn't happen. The people were to wander 40 years, and the tribes weren't driven out before their arrival. God instead ammended His purpose to drive them out slowly, to allow the people battle experience. We see how God is constantly amending His purpose as He ever seeks to take into account human responses.

There are different levels of fellowship between men and God. Thus God's original intention was that His presence in the Angel should go up to Canaan in the midst of Israel; but because of their weakness, He went in front of them, somewhat separate from them. Likewise the glory of God progressively distanced itself from the temple and people of God in Ezekiel's time.

God's argument is that "I will send My Angel to go with you as (:3) I Myself will not go with you". His intention had been to personally go with them but they clearly didn't want that intimacy. Moses' later request to himself see God's face (:20) was not therefore out of mere curiosity. He figured that if he at least could see God Himself, then this would be a kind of compromise position between God Himself going with them [the initial intended position] and 'just' His Angel going with them. He felt that his intimacy with God would lead to the peoples' salvation; just as is the case with the Lord.

Exo 33:3 to a land flowing with milk and honey-
The promised land was to flow with milk and honey to those who kept covenant. And yet Saul later precluded the people from experiencing the blessings of the covenant by petty legalism and a desire for personal control. The people were obedient to his word,

but then totally disobeyed Yahweh's command about not eating blood as a result of it (1 Sam. 14:25,33).

For I will not go up in the midst of you, for you are a stiff-necked people, lest I consume you in the way-
Moses seems to have pleaded with the Angel to change His stated purpose of not going up with the children of Israel through reminding the Angel of the mockery this would bring Him into among the nations around. Thus Ex. 34:9 shows Moses pleading for this "O LORD, let my Lord (the Angel) I pray thee, go amongst us" after the clear statement in Ex. 33:3 "I will not go up in the midst of thee". So let us not be afraid to ask God to change what seems like His purpose in our lives, no matter how hard it seems, if we truly feel that another way would give Him more glory. Moses would not have tried if he did not think success in that prayer was possible. But he not only tried, he succeeded.

It was because of the physical presence of the Angel in the tabernacle that when the Angel located Himself outside the camp, the tabernacle was set up again in that same location outside the camp- "I will not go up in the midst of thee (said the angel). . . and Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp. . as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended (the Angel). . . and the Lord spake unto Moses face to face" (Ex. 33:3,7,9,11). In passing, note that it was because Joshua lived in this tent (he "departed not out of the tabernacle") that he is said in Ps. 91 to have made his habitation with the Angel, who therefore protected him in the subsequent wanderings. The Septuagint tells us that Moses "pitched his own tent" and called it the tabernacle (Ex. 33:7 LXX); similarly, "the tent" may be a synonym for Moses' own tent (see Ex. 18:7). Does this mean that the mighty Angel of Israel was Moses' personal guardian, seeing that "the Angel of the Lord encampeth (tent language again) around about them that fear Him" (Ps. 34:7)? See on Ps. 78:60

Exo 33:4 When the people heard this evil news, they mourned; and no one put on his jewellery-
LXX "mourned in mourning apparel". They clearly had plenty of jewellery, taken from Egypt; they had given some of it to make the golden calf, and would respond generously to the appeal for precious metals and stones in order to build the tabernacle. They clearly liked wearing their expensive Egyptian jewellery, and much of it would have had pagan associations.

This removal of jewellery is because of the command to do so in :5. For a husband to ask his wife to remove her jewellery was at best a demotion of her marital status, if not a threat of divorce, as in Hos. 2:5. Ezekiel and Jeremiah record how God had placed jewellery upon the otherwise naked and forlorn Israel at Sinai. Now He asks them to remove it (:5). We think of the woman with the ten dowry coins in the Lord's

parable- the sign of her marriage. It could be the people did this themselves even before God asked them to. They realised they had acted unworthy of His wife and it was an admission of unfaithfulness.

Another option to bear in mind is that "Rather than reading "none put on his finery" we should read instead "none took off his finery". The introduction of the single letter mem before the final word in v. 4 reverses the entire meaning of the clause". This would then present Israel as impenitent and they are asked to be more penitent by removing their jewellery.

Exo 33:5 Yahweh said to Moses, Tell the children of Israel, 'You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go up into your midst for one moment, I would consume you. Therefore now take off your jewellery from you, that I may know what to do to you'-
God told Moses that because Israel were stiffnecked, therefore He could not go up with them (Ex. 33:5). Moses agrees the people are stiffnecked, but he knows God well enough to ask Him to still go up in the midst of them (Ex. 34:9 *"If now I have found favour in Your sight, Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us; although this is a stiff-necked people"*). And God did! He acted according to how broad was Moses' conception of God's grace. If Abraham's conception of grace had been even broader, perhaps Sodom would've been saved... Moses' achievement is all the more remarkable because he himself struggled with grace.

Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

It is possible that Israel only temporarily removed their jewellery in :4, but God is telling them to permanently remove it. Because temporal, external, ritualistic motions of repentance are not enough, including muttering a kind of automated prayer when we sin and then playing on like nothing happened.

"That I may know what to do to you" is a phrase pregnant with possible meaning. Later in the chapter, Moses persuades Yahweh to at least on one level "go with them". We are invited to see God's internal struggle, His "repentings kindled together" as Hosea later records, not knowing what to do, considering them without their jewellery, considering Moses' intercession... We note the difference with the more decisive spirit of Ex. 2:24,25: "God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant... God saw the children of Israel, and God was

concerned about them", "concerned" is s.w. "know" as here "That I may know what to do with you". God is presented as having varying feelings and struggling towards a conclusion as to how to act.

Exo 33:6 The children of Israel stripped themselves of their jewellery from Mount Horeb onward-
See on 1 Sam. 18:4. The idea may be that the jewellery taken from Egypt had pagan associations, and from then on they didn't wear it. At least, that was the idea. But they carried their idols with them through the wilderness, the star of Remphan and the tabernacle of Moloch, as well as other Egyptian idols they took with them through the Red Sea, cp. baptism (Ez. 20:7,8). The total weight of all the gold, silver and brass donated to the tabernacle comes to 10.4 tones or 10,400 kg. (Ex. 38:24). In addition to this there was the gold used and destroyed in the destruction of the golden calf. They did indeed spoil the Egyptians, but we can assume that they gave nearly all their wealth to the tabernacle project; perhaps that is the intention of the note here that they stopped wearing jewellery from then onwards.

But the idea may be that they *had stripped* themselves of their jewellery there (for Hebrew tenses aren't precise), in order to make the golden calf. As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6). Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). **Israel stripped or spoiled themselves of their jewellery just as they had spoiled [s.w.] the Egyptians of that jewellery. All material acquisition ultimately ends up being given to the Lord. It could be speculated that soon they were required to give that jewellery for the construction of the tabernacle. And the tabernacle itself was a kind of concession to their weakness. God was not going to go up in their midst personally and visibly, but He therefore allowed them the tabernacle to meet their need for religion. Thus the commands about altars being made of earth and without steps, or the ban on any graven image [cp. the cherubim], were somewhat ameliorated in the tabernacle construction. The temple was a further concession to their religious weakness and need for the visible rather than the spiritual.**

Exo 33:7 Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it outside the camp, far away from the camp, and he called it The Tent of Meeting. It happened that everyone who sought Yahweh went out to the Tent of Meeting, which was outside the camp-
This was before the tabernacle was built. Presumably this was Moses' personal tent, or

a tent personally associated with him, where the people went to meet with God. Yahweh promised He would meet His people over the ark, and then come forward from the most holy place to meet with His people in the courts of the tabernacle. But before then, He met with His people through meetings with Moses, and they met with God through meeting with Moses. See on :8.

God had initially refused to personally go with Israel "in their midst", and the material in :7-11 perhaps shows how God intended to appear to them- at a tent of meeting outside the camp. The grammar here could suggest that this was a one-off command to Moses at this time to remove the tent of meeting outside the camp, to represent God's withdrawal and distancing from Israel. Moses begs God to go in their midst, and then follows the subsequent encounter with the back parts of God Himself, and God's explanation and correction about the significance of His physical presence. The summary is that God explains that He does forgive Israel and will continue in covenant relationship with them. But that His physical glory and presence are somewhat misunderstood by Moses, and His real glory and presence are in forgiveness and grace, which is what His Name and personality are all about. His request for someone to go with him and show Israel the way (:12-14) is met by God's declaration of His forgiveness, grace and mercy. This is the essence of things, rather than the more literal, physical assurances Moses was seeking for. And this really is God's answer to our own concerns for material, visible guidance through life. His face / presence, the equivalent of the communion of the Holy Spirit, would go with Israel and give them "rest" in the promised land. But this would not involve literally seeing God. Is. 63:9,10 alludes to all this: "the angel of His presence [s.w. "face"] saved them: in His love and in His pity he redeemed them; and He bore them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His holy spirit ['spirit' and 'angel' are the same word]". This in turn is quoted of our experience with the Holy Spirit.

As God manifested Himself through the Angel who lived in the tent of meeting, so God did supremely through His Son. This is not to say that the Angel was Jesus- for the Lord Jesus was and is not an Angel nor did He exist at that time: "And the Word was made flesh and tented among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). The glory which John and all Christians behold is not so much a physical bright light, as Moses wished to see; but the Name and character of God, His saving grace, revealed to us in the face of the Lord Jesus with whom we are in relationship (2 Cor. 3). To see that glory is not a matter of seeing anything physical, rather do we see the glory of His saving nature and grace through our faith in it: "If you believe, you will see [as Moses did] the glory of God" (Jn. 11:40). And that glory was supremely manifest in the blood, spittle and gross darkness of the Lord's death: "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will

glorify him at once" (Jn. 13:31,32). "For this very purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name" (Jn. 12:27,28).

Exo 33:8 It happened that when Moses went out to the Tent, that all the people rose up, and stood, each one at their tent door, and watched Moses, until he had gone into the Tent-

This tent pitched outside the camp, where Yahweh met with His people, is to be associated with how the Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Exo 33:9 It happened, when Moses entered into the Tent, that the pillar of cloud descended, stood at the door of the Tent, and spoke with Moses-

The pillar of cloud is put by metonym for the Angel within it. The Angel was so closely identified with the pillar of cloud. It was as if a smaller version of the same awesome cloud of Sinai was now to be seen right outside the camp. God's fellowship was not therefore with Israel as a whole, but with those who sought Him and went outside the camp to meet Him there (:7).

Exo 33:10 All the people saw the pillar of cloud stand at the door of the Tent, and all the people rose up and worshiped, everyone at their tent door-

We see a difference between these people, and those who went outside the camp to meet with Yahweh there (:7). It is one thing to acknowledge God, and stand up in acceptance of Him. It is another to go forth without the camp and seek Him. The scene is similar to how it was God's initial intention that Israel would ascend Sinai and meet with Him in the cloud. But they stood and worshipped afar off, and wanted Moses alone to go to Him (Ex. 20:18,21). Intimacy with God may sound a great idea, but sinful man shies away from it when it is offered as a reality.

Exo 33:11 Yahweh spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. He turned again into the camp, but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, didn't depart out of the Tent-

We are told in Ex. 33:20 that no man can see the face of God and live; but in Ex. 33:11 we read that "The LORD (Yahweh) spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend" - i.e. directly. It could not have been the LORD, Yahweh, Himself in person, who spoke to Moses face to face, because no man can see God Himself. It was the angel who carried God's name who is in view; and so we read of the LORD speaking face to face with Moses when it was actually an angel who did so (Acts 7:30-33).

God spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. God knew Moses by name (Ex. 33:12,17) and so He shows Moses *His* Name (Ex. 33:17,19)- there developed a mutuality between the two. See on Ps. 90:8; Ps. 90:1. God spoke to Moses "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Yahweh shall he behold" (Num. 12:8) is the basis of 1 Cor. 13:12: "Now (in the period of the Spirit gifts) we see through a glass darkly; but then (in the dispensation of the completed word) face to face: now I know in part (from the ministry of the gifts); but then shall I know, even as also I am known". The point of this connection is simply this: The close relationship between God and Moses is now available to us through the word. But do we feel God speaking to us face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Ex. 33:11)? For this is how close God and Moses came through the word. Yet it is possible.

The idea of "face to face" is explained in Prov. 27:19, where we learn that as face to face is reflected in water, so a man's heart is reflected in the heart of his friend by the telepathy and mutuality that exists between friends. This was how close God was with Moses, albeit through the Angel. This is the work of the Spirit, to produce such mutuality with God. As only a man knows his own spirit, so we know the mind of the Lord Jesus, 1 Cor. 2:11: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. After the Lord Jesus, Moses got to an intimacy with God unequalled by any man: "My servant Moses – he is the faithful one in all My house. With him I talk face to face, directly and in all reality, not in riddles, and he sees God's face" (Num. 12:7,8). But he arrived at this intimacy through interceding for Israel, from a heart that bled for others. We too are led to intimacy with God through our struggles with Him on behalf of others, rather than our pestering Him for our personal salvation.

Joshua is consciously set up as our example. When Paul says that we *each* with unveiled face have beheld the glory that shines from the face of the Lord Jesus, just as the glory to a lesser extent shone from the face of Moses (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). Yet the only

person to behold Moses' unveiled glory was Joshua, who alone lived in the tabernacle where Moses received the glory (Ex. 33:11). And it was he who alone accompanied Moses up the mount to meet with God (Ex. 24:13). When Moses left Joshua and went out to the people, he veiled his face. But Joshua would have seen the glory shining off Moses' unveiled face.

Joshua needed to be constantly told "fear not". His fear is all the more reprehensible when we consider the testimony of Ps. 91. Here Moses speaks about Joshua, the one who dwelt in the secret place or tabernacle of God (Ps. 91:1 = Ex. 33:11), and who therefore was miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness wanderings. Thousands of Joshua's generation died at his side from the various plagues which wasted out his generation during those wanderings; but they never came near him (Ps. 91:5-8). As a result of this, he was commanded by Moses to "not be afraid" (Ps. 91:5), perhaps Moses was thinking specifically about peer pressure, with the assurance that truly God would hear Joshua's prayers (Ps. 91:14,15). His amazing preservation during the wilderness years ought to have instilled a faith and lack of fearfulness within him; and yet the implication is that he did very often fall prey to fearfulness in later life. Just as with us, the circumstances of earlier life are controlled by the Father to give us faith with which to cope with later crises; but we don't always learn the lessons we are intended to.

The Soncino Commentary on Ex. 33:11 suggests that Joshua being described as a "young man" devoted to the service of the tabernacle implies in Hebrew that he was an unmarried man, devoted to the things of the Kingdom. For Joshua was not literally a young man at this time. **Joshua was 56 years old at this point.**

Exo 33:12 Moses said to Yahweh, Behold, You tell me, 'Bring up this people' and yet You haven't let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight'-

"Yet You have said" begs the question, Where and when? We assume it was when Yahweh told Moses that He would destroy Israel and make of Moses a great nation (Ex. 32:10). And Moses is apparently sceptical of this.

God assures Moses that he has found grace in His eyes [i.e. before the Angel with whom Moses met?]. And yet Moses says: "If I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way that I may know thee, to the end that I may find grace in thy sight" (Ex. 33:12,13 RV). Despite having been told that he had found grace, Moses still wanted confirmation... as if the voice of God wasn't enough! And maybe there is even the implication that he mistakenly thought that he needed more *knowledge* of God before he could find that grace... as if it depended upon his own mental faculties. And yet God patiently assures

Moses yet again: "Thou *hast* found grace in my sight", and goes on to proclaim His Name to Moses. "I *will be gracious* to whom I will be gracious" (Ex. 33:19) was surely said specifically to Moses, given the context of Moses' doubts about his receipt of God's grace. "Kill me, I pray, if I have [indeed] found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:15) would therefore appear to be a very inappropriate sarcasm by Moses- against the God of all grace. The coming down of Yahweh to pronounce His Name was, in the context, to show how far God would go to assure Moses that yes, His grace towards Moses was real. We too struggle with grace, and are given, also by grace, this undeserved assurance upon assurance. **He was to be shown that even the back of God was full of saving grace.**

Moses had been promised that the Angel would go with him (:2; Ex. 32:34: 23:20) but despite conversing with the Angel, he now asks God to explain more about the Angel. But this request, along with the request to see God's face, was not mere curiosity. I suggest it is all part of the intercession for Israel's forgiveness which he had made in Ex. 32. Moses above all wanted Israel to be saved and to be right with God. So I suggest his motives in asking for this greater personal intimacy with God were not mere curiosity. He wanted to be assured that God's grace and acceptance of Israel was for real, and so He as it were tested God by asking for greater personal intimacy towards himself personally- because he clearly perceived that for his sake, for the sake of *his* intimacy with God, Israel would be saved. However, Moses takes Yahweh's statement that Moses has found grace in His eyes as meaning he can ask God to see His face. That request is refused; but rather he is shown that standing before God's eyes accepted by grace is actually far more meaningful, and more awesome, than any physical sighting of God's face. Perhaps the idea of seeing God's back parts was that even this amazing grace is only His back parts. His face itself is gracious to an extent none can fathom in this nature.

Exo 33:13 Now therefore, if I have found grace in Your sight, please show me now Your ways, that I may know You, so that I may find grace in Your sight; and consider that this nation is Your people-

Moses states that "I have *not* found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:11) when God had specifically said that Moses had (Ex. 33:12). At that time too, Moses had questioned this Divine assurance (Ex. 33:13); he had the same struggle to believe God's grace as we have. He wanted more assurance that Yahweh really did consider Israel His people; for their apostacy with the golden calf had elicited His condemnation of them. Moses had interceded successfully for them, but now he wonders whether that prayer had really been answered. God had repeatedly assured Moses that "you *have* found grace in My eyes" (Ex. 33:17; 34:9); but still Moses doubts it. "Kill me, I pray, if I have [indeed] found grace in Your eyes" (Num. 11:15) would therefore appear to be a very inappropriate sarcasm by Moses- against the God of all grace. And we too are given, also by grace, this undeserved assurance upon assurance.

Moses understood that if he personally found grace in Yahweh's eyes, then Yahweh would consider Israel as His people. I suggest that he wanted to see Yahweh's face as a guarantee of his own relationship with Yahweh, which would thereby guarantee Israel being accepted as God's people despite the apostasy of the golden calf. Moses was seeking to again persuade God against His plan of Ex. 32:10, to not consider Israel His people but rather Moses' descendants. His request therefore was not from mere curiosity. We see how the Lord's intimacy with the Father is a guarantee of our collective salvation, as He reasons in John 17. In :15 Moses says that if Yahweh is not personally with him, then He will be with Israel. Heb. 11 understood this too in commenting that it was by Moses' personal faith that Israel were brought out of Egypt and to Canaan. See on :16.

Exo 33:14 He said, My presence will go with you-
God had 'gone before' Israel through the Angel which was to lead them through the desert (s.w. Ex. 23:23). But as with all religious but not spiritual people, they wanted a visible leader. And so when Moses apparently disappeared in the mountain, they demanded that gods be made to "go before us". It was only by grace that God responded that despite their apostacy, He would still "go before you" through the Angel (Ex. 32:34; 33:14). Even the Gentile world had more faith than Israel in this; they believed that Yahweh "went before" His people in an Angel (Num. 14:14). But Israel themselves at the time of the golden calf didn't believe that. Moses in his final speech therefore urges the people to believe that indeed the Angel was going before them (Dt. 1:30,33; 31:6,8).

This is the same construction as in Hushai's advice to Absalom in 2 Sam. 17:11, "You yourself shall go to battle in your own person". It means that Yahweh Himself would go with Moses. But in :15 Moses still appears to doubt God's promise. God's very presence / face did go with them, but His face / presence was redefined here away from the literal to the experience of grace and forgiveness.

And I will give you rest-
See on Is. 63:9. But they did not enter that rest (Heb. 4:8,10). The Kingdom was given them, but they didn't enter it. "Rest" was defined as the land being subdued before God with all the tribes driven out (Josh. 1:13,15; Num. 32:21,22; 1 Chron. 22:18). This being conditional on Israel's faithfulness, we conclude that when the Angel said "I will give you rest" He was speaking of what was possible in prospect; or perhaps He over-estimated Israel's obedience, or was unaware of the degree to which their entering the rest was conditional on their obedience.

When Yahweh met Moses, it was as if He met with Israel (Ex. 3:18). God promised to go with Moses, but Moses re-quotes this as God going with “us” (Ex. 33:14-16). This is how

inextricably linked were Moses and his people, even in their condemnation. And so it is, thankfully, with us and the Lord.

Exo 33:15 He said to Him, If Your presence doesn't go with me, don't carry us up from here-

The idea is that if God's presence didn't go with Moses, then Moses asked God not to lead Israel further. For Moses knew they would sin again and God would destroy them. He sees his personal intimacy with God as the only way they could be saved and have fellowship with God. In this he so pointed forward to the Lord.

Moses later is depressed by Israel complaining at how boring the manna was. He doubts God's earlier promises to him: " Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight (God said he had, in Ex. 33:17)... have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto them, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers (not "our" - notice the uncharacteristic separation between Moses and Israel). Whence should I give flesh unto all this people... if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in the sight (as God had earlier promised him that he had)" (Num. 11:12). God was the father and conceiver of Israel, the one who would carry them to the land (Ex. 19:4; 33:15; Dt. 32:11,12; Hos. 11:1); it is as if Moses is saying: They're your children, you look after them, don't dump them on me. Although compare this with his earlier love for them, willing to sacrifice himself for them. God then says that He will provide more food for Israel. But Moses almost mocks God: "Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them?". And the Angel angrily replied: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not". If he had faith, Moses surely would have realized that if God could provide manna, he could provide any food. Moses seems to have suffered from fits of depression and also high spirituality.

Exo 33:16 For how would people know that I have found favour in Your sight, I and Your people? Isn't it in that You go with us, so that we are separated, I and Your people, from all the people who are on the surface of the earth?-

"And how will it be truly known that I have found grace with you, both I and your people, other than if you go along with us? And we shall be glorified, both I and your people, above all the nations that are on the earth". God's grace was His glory, and this was revealed to Moses not so much as a bright light nor a physical sighting of God's face, but in the characteristics of God experienced by Israel. Contrary to what Moses initially wanted, there was to be no physical sign of God's unique involvement with Israel, but rather he was to perceive that it was the experience of

amazing grace and forgiveness that was unique to Israel. Mic. 7:18 marvels that there is no God like Yahweh who forgives and passes over sin. His grace to His people is unheard of (Jonah reflects the same). These were the wonders no other nation had ever seen from their god (Ex. 34:10). And we see this glory in the face of Jesus Christ; therefore to see / experience Him is to see the Father (Jn. 14:9).

Twice Moses speaks of "I and Your people". He was seeking to still dissuade God of the distinction between Moses and His people which He had earlier posited, in saying He would destroy His people and make of Moses a new people. Hence His desire for ultimate personal intimacy with God was because he so wanted to save the people. See on :13. Our salvation by the Lord Jesus is likewise because of His connection with us who are "in Him", and His refusal in the wilderness temptations to merely seek His own eternity without ours.

Moses here continues to doubt whether really his intercession for Israel had 'worked' as God had said it would. Moses felt that God's unwillingness to go directly in Israel's midst implied that in fact God hadn't really heard his pleas. But God said that He had, and He was not going up in their midst for the sakes, lest He destroy them for their continued stiff-necked attitude to Him. We see Moses, like us, struggling to believe in the extent of grace shown and promised. This is why Moses is making such an issue about Yahweh not going up in their midst.

The 'setting apart' of Israel from Egypt is a major theme (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7 "put a difference"). It was part of a 'sanctifying' of Israel for priestly service to Yahweh as a nation, as well as a lesson for Egypt that the only way to salvation was through separation from their own people and culture, and joining the people of God. We marvel at the multi functional way in which God works. The same word is used to describe how God "has set apart him that is Godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3); even though Israel were far from being Godly. And it is used of God's special grace, 'set apart', a grace known by no other people (Ps. 17:7). The word is used in this sense in Ex. 33:16, where Moses reasons that it is God's grace and the visible presence of that grace which is what sets apart Israel from all other peoples. And that is true to this day. God's grace is what is the lead and distinguishing characteristic of His way from all other religions. It is the experience of that grace which makes us distinct from all others who have not claimed it for themselves. And it all began with God 'setting apart' a sinful, idolatrous Israel from the Egyptians around them, all by grace, seeing they were largely no better than Egypt.

Exo 33:17 Yahweh said to Moses, I will do this thing also that you have spoken; for you have found favour in My sight, and I know you by name-
God could have given legitimate answers to each of Moses' objections and fears about whether God really loved them as much as He said. He could have repeated that He

was not going up in their midst lest He destroy them. But such is His sensitivity and pure pity that He accepted Moses' pleas. We are told that God "hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instill a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that personal repentance is required for forgiveness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find acceptability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel.

Exo 33:18 He said, Please show me Your glory-
See on Jn. 14:1. Moses asked to see the face of the Angel (Ex. 33:18 cp. :20); presumably it was a different Angel to whom he spoke face to face (Ex. 33:11), or perhaps the same Angel but manifesting God to a different degree or alternatively a different, more powerful Angel. The fact Moses saw the back parts of this 'LORD' **might show** that the 'LORD' was not God Himself in person- no man has ever seen Him, or even started to approach the light in which He dwells (1 Tim. 6:16); this must include Moses. This conclusion chimes in with the type of statements about 'the LORD' which we read in these chapters, which suggest reference to the Angel rather than to God Himself:
33:1 "The LORD said. . the land which I sware unto Abraham. . ". We have seen that it was the Angel which made these promises.
33:2 "I will drive out the Canaanite. . "; this was done by the Angel of the LORD sent before to do this.
33:3 "I will not go up in the midst of thee (i. e. the Angel was saying He would no longer dwell in the Holiest): lest I consume thee"- the consuming of Israel for their sins on the journey was done by the 'destroyer' Angel. We can therefore suggest that the Angel was manifest in some way, perhaps through two separate Angels, both in the pillar of fire going before them, and also in the Holy of Holies. See on Ez. 20:17.

Moses knew his closeness to God through manifestation, and yet he yearned to see God physically, he struggled with his distance from God (Ex. 33:18,20).

There are many references in the Upper Room discourse to Moses- without doubt, Moses was very much in the Lord's mind as He faced His end. Consider at your leisure how Jn. 14:1 = Ex. 14:31; Jn. 14:11 = Ex. 14:8. When the Lord speaks in the Upper Room of manifesting the Father and Himself unto the disciples (Jn. 14:21,22), he is alluding to the way that Moses asked God to "manifest thyself unto me" (Ex. 33:18 LXX). The Lord's allusion makes Himself out to be God's representatives, and all those who believe in

Him to be as Moses, receiving the vision of God's glory. Note that it was that very experience above all others which marks off Moses in Rabbinic writings as supreme and beyond all human equal. And yet the Lord is teaching that that very experience of Moses is to be shared to an even higher degree by all His followers. It would've taken real faith and spiritual ambition for those immature men who listened to the Lord that evening to really believe it... And the same difficult call comes to us too.

Moses' request to see God's glory was met by God's promise to proclaim His Name, His characteristics. And God goes on to warn Moses that he cannot see His face. I suggest that Moses had an overly physical view of God; He wanted to see "glory", and God's literal face. But he was shown that God's basic characteristics, of loving grace and mercy towards His people, are actually more important than any physical sighting of God or His glory. The response to Moses' request to see God's face was to be told in Ex. 34:5-7 that it was part of God's most essential nature and character to forgive sin and love His people. Experiencing that is to see God's face, it is as good as and even better than any physical experience of bright light glory or literal encounter with God. It is His glory to forgive and overlook sin... that is His glory, rather than any bright light or blinding vision. It is this glory that we have seen and experienced in the face of the Lord Jesus. For Moses at this point is every man in Christ, according to 2 Cor. 3:18. And clearly Moses' experience is also in view when we read that "we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only son" (Jn. 1.14). We too cannot see God, but in place of seeing Him, He has been made known to us through His Son: "no one has ever seen God, it is the only son who has made him known" (Jn. 1.18).

Exo 33:19 He said, I will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of Yahweh before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy-

"To whom I will be gracious" doesn't mean that God in a random sense decides to be gracious to some but not others. He will be gracious to whom He has said He will be gracious- and that, clearly, referred at this time to Israel. He had earlier proclaimed His Name to them as the guarantee that He desired to save them. This statement was therefore a hint that He was going to save Israel after all, despite having told them in :5,6 to remove their jewellery, the sign of covenant with Him, and to let Him make His mind up about what He would do to them. And He comes down on the side of continued grace.

It has been argued that the very name of God, YHWH, is related to the Hebrew root *hwy*, passionate love. He is the one who was and is and will be the passionate one. See S.D.

Goitein, *Vetus Testamentum* Vol. 6 pp. 1-9. Whether or not this is the case linguistically, the declaration of God's Name in Ex. 33:19 defines the Name as primarily concerning God's grace and mercy. "I *will*" is in answer to Moses' doubts as to whether his intercession for the people has really worked. He is a man struggling with accepting a level of grace which seemed too huge, although God's direct word to him had assured him that it was indeed so. We are in that same position.

John's Gospel contains several references to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ 'shows' the Father to those who believe in him, and that it is possible to "see the Father" and his glory through seeing or accurately believing in him as the Son of the Father (Jn. 11:40; 12:45; 14:9; 16:25). Moses earnestly wished to see the Father fully, but was unable to do so. The height which Moses reached as he cowered in that rock cleft and heard God's Name declared is hard to plumb. But we have been enabled to *see* the Father, through our appreciation of the Lord Jesus. But does an appropriate sense of *wonder* fill us? Do we really make time to *know* the Son of God? Or do we see words like "glory" as just cold theology?

Moses was not only a type of Christ, but representative of us all: "If you would believe, you would see (like Moses) the glory of God" (Jn. 11:40). "The word was made flesh... we beheld his (Christ's) glory... full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). Philip asks Jesus to "show us the Father" (Jn. 14:8), and Jesus replies that He is the manifestation of the Father. Israel had asked that "the word" be not spoken to them any more; only Moses saw God's glory. But we are being invited to be equal to Moses, seeing from the cleft in the rock the awesome majesty of the perfection of Christ's character; the full glory of God. Paul likewise invites us to behold with unveiled face, as Moses did (2 Cor. 3:18 RV), and thereby, just from appreciating the glory of Christ's character, be changed into the same glory. Note too how in Rom. 11 we are each bidden "behold the goodness and severity of God"- a reference to Moses beholding all the goodness of Yahweh. We are in essence in his position right now (Ex. 33:19). Moses likewise asks God "show yourself to me" (Ex. 33:18 LXX). The answer was in the theophany on Sinai, with the Name of Yahweh declared, as full of grace and truth. This, according to Philip's allusion to it, is what we see in Jesus. And this is why Jn. 1 speaks of Jesus in terms of the theophany of Exodus, that in His personality the full glory of the Father dwelt.

Moses is an example of the mutuality between God and man. God said that because He knew Moses by name, He would show Moses *His* Name (Ex. 33:12,17,19). Daniel is another example. He heard the voice of God's words, and then the Angel comes and tells him that God has heard the voice of his (Daniel's) words (Dan. 10:9,12). "Proclaim the Name" (Ex. 33:19; 34:5) is the same phrase used about 'calling upon the Name' (e.g. Dt. 28:10). The calling out / proclamation of Yahweh's Name, in the Gospel and ultimately in the declaration of the Name on the cross (Jn. 17:26), elicits a desire to call

that Name upon us, which we initially do through baptism into that Name. And like Moses, we in turn proclaim the Name to others (Dt. 32:3 s.w.).

Exo 33:20 He said, You cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live-
"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (Jn. 1:18). John here makes clear allusion to Moses. This alludes to Moses being unable to see God, whereas Christ now is cuddled in the bosom of the Father- such closeness, such a soft image, even now in his heavenly glory! Christ declared God's character (alluding to the Angel declaring God's Name at the same time as Moses was unable to see God) in his perfect life and above all on the cross (Jn. 17:26).

Moses' request to see God's glory (:18) could be understood therefore as a request to see God's face. God saw that this was what Moses was secretly wanting and was the request underlying Moses' words. To have the same face to face relationship with Yahweh Himself, as Moses had with His representative, the Angel. We note Moses' maturity and growth, since earlier covering his face so that he might not look upon God in the Angel at the burning bush (Ex. 3:6). When God created man, He breathed into His nostrils the breath of life and Adam's dead body became a living soul or body at that moment, implying the first thing he saw on opening his eyes was the face of God over his face (Gen. 2:7). How much he lost through sin... And that is why Revelation concludes with so many allusions to Eden restored, not least that we shall see God's face as Adam did in Eden.

Later Scripture reflects this more mature understanding that Moses is now being taught. To see God's face is to experience His grace, acceptance and relationship with Him. Psalm 27 records David responding to God's invitation to "Seek My face". "Your face, Lord, I will seek" was his response. Israel fled from God's face / presence [the same word in Hebrew], just as at the last day, some will not want to seek His face, saying "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Rev. 6:16,17 NIV). The basic question, therefore, is whether or not we actually want intimacy with God, whether we want to see His face, or whether we shy away from this and want a Moses to do our religion for us and leave us free to worship our idols. "As a deer yearns for running streams, so I yearn for you, my God. I thirst for God, the living God; when shall I go to see the face of God? (Ps. 42:1,2 NJB). The point was, that seeing God's literal face was not of the essence; rather His abiding blessing, acceptance and grace, which is the lead characteristic of His declared attributes in response to Moses' request to see His glory, was all that man needs. God's comment that "You can't see My face" is perhaps because He

understood that Moses had a desire for the physical vision of it, just as Moses had been seeing the face of the Angel. Although we can't see God's face now, that face is towards us: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Num. 6:24–26). "Let your face smile on us, LORD" (Ps. 4:6 NLT). And we think of the many Biblical statements about God hiding His face from sinners. To be acceptably in God's presence is therefore to see His face. In this same context, Ex. 34:20 speaks of how "No one is to appear before Me [Heb. 'see My face'] empty handed". Prayer is a coming before God's face: "Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year. And David sought the face of the LORD" (2 Sam. 21:1 ESV). To see God's face therefore doesn't have to mean to literally see His face; God's answer to Moses is therefore picking up on his over literalism at this point. In Dt. 5, he appears to have grasped this. For Moses reflects that when God appeared to Israel on Mount Sinai, they did not see God or even His form, but only heard His voice (Dt 3:12;
5:22–26). But he describes this as Israel seeing God "face to face" (Dt. 5:4). And even now, we can do likewise: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18 ESV). In allusion to Moses' experience, we read that The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is in Jesus' face. "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6 NIV).

Exo 33:21 Yahweh also said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock-
God through the Angel had earlier stood upon a rock in Sinai with Moses next to Him (Ex. 17:6). Later, Yahweh asks Moses to stand upon a rock in Sinai next to Him (Ex. 33:21 s.w.). We see how God gently and progressively leads His people closer to Him, using every experience He gives us to prepare for the next one, on an ever more intimate level with Him.

Exo 33:22 It will happen, while My glory passes by-
Moses had earlier experienced the Angel passing by on Passover night (s.w. Ex. 12:12,23). He was to realize that he was only being spared from death by grace, as happened at Passover. He had been so confident that he could see God's glory, but now he is being shown that he needed to appreciate more his own sinfulness.

Prov. 19:11 says that it is glory to pass over transgression. God passed over Moses in the cleft of the rock and revealed His glory. Even His back side, shown because

the sin of the golden calf had not really been repented of, revealed His glory in passing over their sin.

That I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand until I have passed by-
There is a connection between Moses hiding in the "cleft of the rock" and Elijah hiding in a similar place to witness a theophany whose aim was to *humble* him. Is. 2:10-12 makes a similar connection. At the day of judgment, we will all go through the Moses experience; hiding in the rock in the presence of God's glory (Is. 2:10 cp. Ex. 33:22). And our vision of that glory in the face of the Lord Jesus *even now* should have the same humbling effect.

Even a righteous man must realize his sinfulness if he is to truly comprehend the essential perfection of God. Moses was brought to cower in the rocks, just as the unworthy will do (Ex. 33:22 = Is. 2:21); and he only saw the back, not the face of God, which is the attitude God adopts to those He rejects (Jer. 18:17). And only in this position could Moses see the vision of God's moral glory.

Exo 33:23 then I will take away My hand, and you will see-
The same phrase for turning aside [s.w. "take away"] to "see" was used earlier when Moses turned aside ["take away" s.w.] to 'see' God at the burning bush (Ex. 3:3,4). Now God does this to Moses. Here again we see the mutuality between God and Moses.

My back; but My face shall not be seen.

Moses had asked to see God's glory, but God senses that he wants to see His face. Moses had spoken face to face with the Angel as a man speaks to his friend, and we showed above that this refers to intuitively knowing what the other is thinking. God is showing that He knows Moses in this way.

At the time when Moses doubts whether he and Israel really have found grace, the God who speaks to Moses face to face then turns and shows Moses only His back parts (Ex. 33:11,20,22). I suggest this is to be read negatively. This is alluded to in Jer. 18:17 and there interpreted as being a sign of God's anger- to turn away His face and show His back parts**, in response to how Israel had shown God their back and not their face (Jer. 2:27; 32:33)**. God was so angry with Moses' disbelief in His grace. **Or we can read this as God saying that He would not look upon Israel's sin, He turned His back upon it. His "passing by" would then refer to His characteristic of passing over human sin, overlooking it (Is. 31:5 "defending also He will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it"; God "*passed over* former sins" (Rom. 3:25); Acts 17:30, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent"). And the huge grace they were experiencing was only His back parts. His face was far more glorious. The connection with the Jeremiah**

passages, it is inevitable really that the turning of God's back was a sign of His displeasure; for the sin with the golden calf had not really been dealt with, and the people had still not quit the idols of Egypt which they carried with them throughout the wilderness journey. But even at the place of God's back parts there was amazing grace and acceptance.

Moses never comments on seeing God's back parts, it had no abiding value to him. The idea was that intimacy with God and the experience of forgiveness is so much more than that. A man praying at a bus stop and knowing forgiveness and restored communion with God has more than seen God. Likewise, the transfiguration was clearly allusive to the theophany to Moses on Sinai, "we beheld His glory" (Jn. 1:14) is surely John's version of the synoptics' account of the transfiguration. But the disciples who witnessed it are presented as confused, dazed, and responding inappropriately. The experience had no lasting moral effect upon them- but salvation by grace did.

"The Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape (Gk. form, view). And ye have not his word abiding in you... I am come in my Father's Name, and ye receive me not... there is one that accuseth you, even Moses... for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me" (Jn. 5:37-46) Nearly all these statements were true of Moses, but untrue of the Jews. Yet there was one glaring contrast: Moses earnestly desired to see God's shape, to view Him, to completely understand Him. This was denied him- but not Jesus. The similarity and yet difference between Moses and Jesus is really brought out here. And again, Moses is shown to be representative of sinful Israel; as he lifted up the serpent, so they would lift up Christ; as he failed to see the Father's "shape", so they did too.

EXODUS CHAPTER 34

Exo 34:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Chisel two stone tablets like the first: and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets-

The tables were the "tables of the covenant", which had been broken by the apostacy with the golden calf. God now assures Moses that the covenant relationship has been restored. This must be read in the context of the previous verses, where Moses has doubted whether his intercession for Israel has in fact "worked". He struggles to believe that God can be that gracious as His word had stated. Just like ourselves. And so just as Aaron had used a chisel to fashion the golden calf, Moses is asked to chisel out two stone tablets, upon which the covenant will be reaffirmed by God. Dt. 10:1,3 adds that at this time, God asked Moses to also make the ark, into which the tables were to be put. This was to be the sign that His presence was really to abide with His people as promised.

Which you broke-
"Which you broke" is emphasized by God. Moses in Ex. 33 had been doubting whether his intercession for Israel had really "worked", even though God assured him that it had. Moses is being reminded that his anger had burned hot just as God's anger had; but it was he and not God who had smashed the symbols of the covenant in that wrath. The idea is that God is kinder and more patient than man- even than a man as patient and loving as Moses.

"Broke" is s.w. in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 12:3 used of breaking covenant relationship with idols. By doing so, Moses had purposefully sought to break Israel's relationship with Yahweh, despite having earlier prayed for it to be restored. When he saw the apostacy with his own eyes, he wanted God to revert to His 'plan A', to destroy Israel. He realizes in Ex. 33 that he was wrong in this and therefore probes God as to whether indeed His relationship with Israel is indeed intact, despite his having broken the symbols of covenant. And God is assuring him that indeed it is.

Exo 34:2 Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain-
"Present" is the word for "stand" in Ex. 33:21. The idea is that Moses had too confidently asked to see Yahweh's glory, so he was asked to stand on the rock, knowing that he would humble himself and hide in a cleft of the rock when the glory passed by (:8). For no man can stand before the devouring fire which was "on the top of the mountain" (Ex. 19:20; 24:17 cp. Nah. 1:6).

Exo 34:3 No one shall come up with you; neither let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mountain-
The contrast with the earlier, similar commands seem to be that even Joshua wasn't allowed to come even part way up the mountain. Just as the Lord Jesus was absolutely alone in obtaining and restoring covenant relationship for His sinful people, so was Moses to be. **The renewing of the covenant slightly differs from the giving of the first covenant. Moses alone was there, nobody else could come up the mountain; and Moses himself had to chisel the tables of stone (:4) whereas God carved the first tables. The impression is that the covenant was being restored solely for the sake of one man, Moses. And how much more was achieved for sinners by one man, the Lord Jesus.**

Exo 34:4 He chiselled two tablets of stone like the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up to Mount Sinai, as Yahweh had commanded him, and took in his hand two stone tablets-
There is a difference between the first tables, which were "tables of [a singular] stone",

carved by God from the same stone (Ex. 24:12; 31:18); whereas the second were "tables of stones" (Heb.), made from two different stones. The idea was perhaps that God was indeed inviting Moses and Israel into a mutual, two sided covenant relationship with Him.

There is a much repeated characteristic of God's servants: that they 'rose up early in the morning' and did God's work. In each of the following passages, this phrase is clearly not an idiom; rather does it have an evidently literal meaning: Abraham (Gen. 19:27; 21:14; 22:3); Jacob (Gen. 28:18); Job (1:5); Moses (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4); Joshua (Josh. 3:1; 6:12; 7:16; 8:10); Gideon (Jud. 6:38; 7:1). This is quite an impressive list, numerically. This can be a figure for being zealous (Ps. 127:2; Pr. 27:14; Song 7:12; Is. 5:11; Zeph. 3:7). God Himself rises up early in His zeal to save and bring back His wayward people (Jer. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14,15; 44:4). Yet the above examples all show that men literally rose up early in their service to God; this was an expression of their zeal for God, in response to His zeal for us. I'm not suggesting that zeal for God is reflected by rising early rather than staying up late; but it wouldn't be too much to suggest that if we are men of mission, we won't waste our hours in bed. Get up when you wake up.

Exo 34:5 Yahweh descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Yahweh-

The ultimate pattern for mission is in God Himself. His Name, YHWH, means 'I will be who I will be / am who I am'. And the declaration of His Name is followed by statements of how He 'will be' grace, love, justice, judgment etc. (Ex. 34:5-7). He will work out His purpose of glorifying the characteristics of His Name. If we align ourselves with this aim of glorifying God's Name, then our lives become focused, our aims and goals are clearer. Our baptism into the Name means that His mission, His restless, 24/7 working towards the goal of His glory filling the earth, becomes ours.

"Proclaim the Name" (Ex. 33:19; 34:5) is the same phrase used about 'calling upon the Name' (e.g. Dt. 28:10). The calling out / proclamation of Yahweh's Name, in the Gospel and ultimately in the declaration of the Name on the cross (Jn. 17:26), elicits a desire to call that Name upon us, which we initially do through baptism into that Name. And like Moses, we in turn proclaim the Name to others (Dt. 32:3 s.w.).

The overriding desire of the Lord Jesus was for the glorification of Yahweh's Name, not proving others wrong. God's Name is His characteristics (Ex. 34:5-7). We glorify that Name when due to us, those characteristics are manifested somehow- maybe through others, or through ourselves. The fruits of the Spirit glorify those characteristics / the Name of Yahweh. When the Lord saw faith, or joy, or repentance, or even the possibility of these things in men, He worked to develop them. He didn't give up because they were also selfish or unloving or not joyful... And so with us, as the petty selfishness and

weaknesses so evident in the flesh of our fellows presses upon our consciousness, focus instead on what is good, on what potential is there, and work on that. Abound in the life of grace, of outgiving when there is no response and no appreciation; and rejoice to live it, and see the honour of being called to live the life of the Saviour in *your* little life. John Thomas rightly observed that God manifestation rather than individual human salvation is the essential aim of the preaching of God's word. The Lord Jesus struggled in Gethsemane between "save *me*..." and "Father, glorify Your Name". The glorifying of the Father's Name meant more to Him than His personal salvation. Likewise Moses and Paul [in spirit] were prepared to sacrifice their personal salvation for the sake of Yahweh's Name being glorified in the saving of His people (Ex. 32:30-34 cp. Rom. 9:1-3).

Exo 34:6 Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, Yahweh! Yahweh! A merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth-
The Angelic 'passing by' recalled Passover (s.w.), where the mercy and saving grace of God was revealed to His people. There is a clear connection between the idea of the fullness of God, and Ex. 34:6, where God proclaims His Name to be "Yahweh, a God full of ["abundant in"] compassion", grace and His other characteristics (see R.V.). So by bearing God's Name, we have His fullness counted to us. As Christ had the fullness of God dwelling in Him in a bodily form (Col. 2:9), so the church, as the body of Christ, "is (Christ's) body, the fullness of him (God) that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23).

We read of God being slow to anger (Ex. 34:6), at others, of Him not restraining His anger, or restraining it (Ps. 78:38; Is. 48:9; Lam. 2:8; Ez. 20:22), and holding His peace (Is. 57:11; Ps. 50:21), and being provoked to anger by the bad behaviour of His covenant people (Dt. 32:21; Ps. 78:58; Is. 65:3; Jer. 8:19). God clearly has emotions of a kind which are not unrelated to the emotions we experience, as beings made in His image. But those emotions involve a time factor in order to be emotions. We read of the anger of God "for a moment" (Ps. 30:5; Is. 54:7,8), and of His wrath coming and going, leaving Him "calm" and no longer angry (Ez. 16:42). When we sin, we provoke God to anger- i.e. at a point in time, God sees our sin, and becomes angry. This is attested many times in Scripture. But it's meaningless if God is somehow outside of our time and emotions. **God has just become angry with Israel (Ex. 32:10), and that is the immediate context. Again we see that the revelation of the Name had an immediate local context. Israel had provoked God to anger although He is slow to anger. But grace and mercy, His number one characteristics, even then still trump that anger.**

The transfiguration is full of allusion to Yahweh's coming down on Sinai. The equivalent of declaring the characteristics of the Name is "This is My Son, hear him". The Son of God reveals all God's characteristics, He came in His Father's Name, declared it in His perfect life, and then supremely on the cross. "In the past God spoke... but in these last days He has spoken to us in His Son" (Heb. 1:1,2).

Philip like Moses asked to be shown the Father, thinking this would "suffice". The answer was in essence what Moses was told- to see the Son, the perfect, living embodiment of the Father's character, was to see the Father. And the Lord had in view that He was about to die on the cross, and that would be the supreme showing of the Father.

The Name was declared on the cross, as the Lord had foreseen (Jn. 17:26). It was as if the Lord suffered as He did with a placard above Him which effectively said: 'This is Yahweh'. The declaration of Yahweh's Name to Moses in Ex. 34:6 thus becomes a foretaste of the Lord's crucifixion. Some texts render Ex. 34:6 as 'Yahweh, Yahweh, a man full of mercy....'. In the crucifixion of the man Christ Jesus, the essence of Yahweh was declared. And we, John says with reference to the cross, saw that glory, as it were cowering in the rock like Moses, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14 cp. Ex. 34:6 RV).

God's Name is essentially His characteristics and personality; this declaration of the Name is in response to the request to reveal His glory (Ex. 33:18). How we pronounce or transliterate God's Name isn't so important; the essence of God's Name is who He is and what He does by grace in the lives of people. Jesus alludes here when He predicted that His death would be a declaration of God's Name; in the cross we see the quintessence of God's mercy, grace, judgment etc. (Jn. 17:26). We are baptized into the Name, whereby all God's perfect character is counted to us.

The declaration of the Name had been summarized in Ex. 33:19,20: "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious [i.e. Israel], and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy". The characteristics here are summarized then in grace and mercy. But that is not all; there is also the dimension of judgment. But curses for sin extend to three or four generations, whilst blessings for righteousness to a thousand. Clearly God's grace is a larger part of His total character than judgment, but the wonder of His grace is only perceived once we recognize His judgment of sin. The context of all this is His response to the sin of the golden calf; He had spread His cloud over them in love and marriage, and yet Israel had committed adultery on their wedding night. This pronunication of the Yahweh Name is His response to that great sin, and He demonstrates it in practice by restoring covenant relationship with Israel, after having told her to strip herself of her jewels and await His judgment. That was clearly a sign of His suspension of the marriage covenant. But because of His Name, He restores it. Even without their very credible repentance. And without their quitting the idols of Egypt which they carried with them.

All this reveals God as extraordinarily gracious to sinners; and this colossally impacts our worldview and attitude to others. This is how God is, all the time. It is Him. His Name Yahweh is not so much a noun as a verb [and a verb in the hiphil, the

causative form, and not in the qal, the simple tense form], He is / was / will be and *will cause to be* all this grace and forgiveness, triumphing over judgment in His desire to save. For Jonah it was too much. This list of wonderful attributes was not all good news to him because it required him to accept that his enemies and those he disliked would also be saved. These were the very words which led him to run away from God rather than to Him. Clearly alluding to Ex. 34, he says: "That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live".

Exo 34:7 keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the children's children, on the third and on the fourth generation-

The Hebrew for "forgiving" signifies a lifting it up, and taking it away. This looks forward to the way God ultimately did this through the Lord's death / lifting up on the cross. The NT repeatedly states that sin was taken away by the Lord's body, lifted up on the cross as was the serpent, the symbol of sin. The declaration of the Yahweh Name spoke of God's absolute grace in saving His sinful people; but it would be declared in its fullness through the Lord's death on the cross.

That God 'visits' or punishes sin is a fundamental part of God's Name. The question is when and how. Israel's sin of rejecting Yahweh for an idol (Ex. 32:34 s.w.) need not have been 'visited' or 'punished'- had they repented. But there is no evidence that they did, neither in that immediate generation nor in subsequent ones. And so finally, God 'visited' His people's sins in the destructions at the hands of the Babylonians and Assyrians (s.w. Jer. 14:10; Hos. 8:13; 9:9).

The fact punishment was not always given until the third or fourth generation may simply reflect God's characteristic grace in relenting upon His threatened judgments. But it may also be because the judgment is carried out by the Angels, who changed their decreed intentions with Israel, Moses and others.

We note that Ex. 34 doesn't describe the actual passing by of God and Moses' seeing God's back, as promised in Ex. 33. The record reflects the focus God wanted Moses and all of us to have- that getting a physical peek at God is neither here nor there. And as explained on Ex. 33, these wonders are all just the back side of God, and He shows His back rather than His face because of displeasure with human sin, as Jeremiah makes clear.

Psalm 145 is David's reflection upon Yahweh's declaration of His Name here. And it inspires him to praise, and to share with others the news of the God who so glories in forgiving and saving the weak. David's reflctions on the implications of Ex. 34 are worth thinking through:

"Every day I will praise You, I will extol Your name forever and ever.
Psa 145:3 Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised! His greatness is unsearchable [the grace shown here is indeed unsearchable especially given the context, of God's grace to an Israel who had as it were committed adultery on their wedding night]
Psa 145:4 One generation will commend Your works to another, and will declare Your mighty acts [this refers to how Yahweh had said that His grace continues to 1000 generations of those who fear Him]
Psa 145:5 Of the glorious majesty of Your honour, of Your wondrous works, I will meditate [the wondrous worksand awesome acts (:6) were in His grace to Israel and all men, rather than miracles]
Psa 145:6 Men will speak of the might of Your awesome acts; I will declare Your greatness.
Psa 145:7 They will utter the memory of Your great goodness and will sing of Your righteousness [Yahweh had said that instead of Moses seeing His face, He would make His "goodness" pass before Moses].
Psa 145:8 Yahweh is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great grace [an exact quotation from Ex. 34].
Psa 145:9 Yahweh is good to all, His tender mercies are over all His works ["All" implies that the declaration of who God essentially is therefore applies to all men, not just Israel at the point of their shameful adultery against their God. Jonah got this when he quoted Ex. 34 as applying to the Ninevites, and said he felt repulsed by it- whereas David marvels at the global scale of God's grace. Hence the Psalm concludes with an appeal for "all flesh" to praise Yahweh for His Name].
... make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, the glory of the majesty of His kingdom [knowing Yahweh is like this motivates us to share the news with all men]
Psa 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, Your dominion endures throughout all generations. Yahweh is faithful in all His words, and loving in all His deeds. [This alludes to His mercy lasting to 1000 generations, and may hint that the eternity of God's Kingdom is implied in His being so saving, gracious and forgiving]
Psa 145:14 Yahweh upholds all who fall, and raises up all those who are bowed down [Those bowed down by sin, the spiritually fallen, are those who will be comforted by this declaration of how God's grace triumphs over the side of His necessary judgment].
.... Psa 145:17 Yahweh is righteous in *all His ways*, and gracious in all His works [the declaration of the Name was in response to Moses' request to know *Yahweh's*

***ways*, Ex. 33:13, in response to how at the golden calf sin, Israel had turned out of *His way* "They have turned aside quickly *out of the way* that I commanded them" (Ex. 32:8 ESV)]**

Psa 145:18 Yahweh is near to all those who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.
Psa 145:19 He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him, He will also hear their cry and save them". [This again is comfort for all who seek God but feel their sin and weakness is a barrier].

Exo 34:8 Moses hurried and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped-
Moses had specifically been asked to "stand" there (Ex. 33:21; 34:2), because it was God's intention that he be humbled, and perceive that his insistent, bold requests to see the glory of God were not completely appropriate for sinful man. **This worship is in gratitude. The statement of God's Name meant that Israel were accepted back into covenant with God. He had asked them to remove their jewellery as a man asked his wife to remove the jewellery he had given her at their wedding, as a sign of their divorce. And this restoration of relationship was thanks to Moses' intercession. This is the language of gratitude for a granted request. Uppermost in Moses' mind was Israel's salvation and the forgiveness of the golden calf. And the statement and assurance of God's grace was enough for him. He was deeply grateful.**

Exo 34:9 He said, If now I have found favour in Your sight, Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us; although this is a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Your inheritance-
See on Ps. 90:8. God had already given Moses this assurance, but as discussed on Ex. 33, Moses was slow to grasp the reality of grace. The declaration of the Yahweh Name had assured him that indeed God "will" pardon sin. And yet he still feels the need to plead for it. We note that God had assured Moses of personally giving him an inheritance, but here he begs Go to "take *us* for Your inheritance", as for him, personal salvation was bound up with that of God's sinful people. This is a strong challenge to those who think they can walk to God's Kingdom with no care for their brethren and wider community of believers.

Moses asks for their forgiveness and for God to still go up in their midst because he personally had found favour in Yahweh's eyes. "Pardon" is LXX "take away", and John makes another allusion to these events when he records that the Lord Jesus "takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29 s.w.). The grace and acceptance Moses craved for on Israel's behalf was granted by God in terms of His essential character, but that Name and character came to full term in the person and work of the Lord Jesus.

Moses was motivated to ask this, knowing God had previously said He would not go in their midst without punishing them, because of his belief in the Name just declared. This is what it is, to know the Name of Yahweh. It's nothing to do with pronunciation.

God told Moses that because Israel were stiffnecked, therefore He could not go up with them (Ex. 33:5). Moses agrees the people are stiffnecked, but he knows God well enough to ask Him to still go up in the midst of them (Ex. 34:9 *"If now I have found favour in Your sight, Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us; although this is a stiff-necked people"*).

We note Moses speaks of pardoning "us" and taking "us" as God's people. He is again showing his non acceptance of God's desire to destroy the people and make a nation out of Moses. He considers himself inseparable from Israel and bears their sin, just as the Lord does. It was on this basis that he believed God could go up in their midst and save them.

"And take us for Your inheritance" may be another appeal for God to not disinherit His people as He had threatened, and instead to chose Moses' descendants as His people. He recalled how God had earlier threatened in Num 14:12 "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they". Although God has restored covenant with Israel, Moses clearly has a niggling doubt that God may at some future point disinherit Israel. His passion for Israel's acceptance with God is amazing, and looks forward to the Lord's passion and work for us.

Moses seems to have pleaded with the Angel to change His stated purpose of not going up with the children of Israel through reminding the Angel of the mockery this would bring Him into among the nations around. Thus Ex. 34:9 shows Moses pleading for this "please let the Lord go in the midst of us"- after the clear statement in Ex. 33:3 "I will not go up in the midst of you". So let us not be afraid to ask God to change what seems like His purpose in our lives, no matter how hard it seems, if we truly feel that another way would give Him more glory. Moses would not have tried if he did not think success in that prayer was possible. But he not only tried, he succeeded. Also consider Ex. 32:11: "Moses besought the face of the LORD (A.V.mg- i.e. the Angel) and said, LORD, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt (the Angel did this)... turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people". Thus Ez. 20:17 says that God's eye (the Angel) "spared them... in the wilderness" when they provoked Him. Psalm 90 is Moses meditations on the fact that

his generation were slowly dying in the wilderness, and on the vapidity of life at that stage. And yet he is bold enough to plead with God to change His purpose- "Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants. O satisfy us early with Thy mercy (i.e. don't leave it till some distant point in the future when Messiah is here to show me Thy mercy- do it early, do it now)... make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us... " (:13-15). So from his previous experience of changing God's purpose , Moses was not afraid to try and do so again. This possibility of God changing His mind about this is shown by the Hebrew of Ps. 95:11: "That they should not (Heb. 'If they enter', as AVmg.) enter My rest". The ambiguity here nicely shows the possibility of them entering.

The Angel's eagerness to repent and willingness to accept even the slightest sign of repentance in His charges, explains why Moses was so willing to strive to make the Angel repent by his prayers. Thus in Ex. 34:9 Moses asks the Angel to forgive the peoples' sin, although it was one of the Angel's stated principles not to do so (Ex. 23:21). Moses had had personal experience of such repenting; the Angel "sought" to kill him, but God changed his mind due to Moses' repentance (Ex. 4:24).

Despite God's evident pleasure with Moses personally, manifest in the revelation He gave him, Moses still fumbled around in his recognition of his own humanity: "If now I have found grace in Your sight... pardon *our* iniquity and *our* sin" (Ex. 34:9). Moses was always so aware of his connection with God's people, and was not at all interested in personal glory and even salvation, compared to the overall purpose of God's saving of His people.

Although he spoke to God as a friend, with an open-faced relationship, he still took upon himself the sin of Israel, he felt as condemned as they felt (Ex. 34:9 cp. 33:11); when he pleaded for God's sentence on him to be lifted , he pleaded for the same sentence on Israel to be lifted too (Ps. 90:8). When Yahweh met Moses, it was as if He met with Israel (Ex. 3:18). God promised to go with Moses, but Moses re-quotes this as God going with “us” (Ex. 33:14-16). This is how inextricably linked were Moses and his people, even in their condemnation. And so it is, thankfully, with us and the Lord. Moses manifested / represented both God and Israel, superbly prefiguring the nature of the Lord's work and mission far later.

Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

Exo 34:10 He said, Behold, I make a covenant-
This is presented as a one sided covenant of grace, as was that of Gen. 15. There are no immediate demands made upon Israel regarding their side of it; just the request that having such a covenant relationship, they should therefore not seek to enter any other covenant (:12).

Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been worked in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which you are shall see the work of Yahweh; for it is an awesome thing that I do with you-
Israel refused to be obedient, were stiffnecked, because they were "not mindful of your wonders" (Neh. 9:17). Ps. 78:32 likewise: "For all this they sinned still, and believed not in his wondrous works". Our perception of God's wonder is intended to inspire us not to sin, to be obedient to Him at whom we marvel / wonder (:11). The marvel of what God was to do was that He would grant His Kingdom to a thoroughly underserving people, by grace alone.

As discussed on Ex. 33:16, contrary to what Moses initially wanted, there was to be no physical sign of God's unique involvement with Israel, but rather he was to perceive that it was the experience of amazing grace and forgiveness that was unique to Israel. These were the wonders no other nation had ever seen from their god. No other god would have forgiven and shown such grace to a disobedient people.

The wonders were greater works than what God had already performed for Israel. And the allusion is naturally to the plagues. But on the level of miracle, God didn't do greater than these. So the wonders and great things refer in the context to His ongoing forgiveness of them.

Exo 34:11 Observe that which I command you this day. Behold, I drive out before you the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite-
Already the process had started. But these fine words of assurance were forgotten by Israel when they heard the reports of the unfaithful spies. They were assured that in fact these nations were far stronger than them, and all God's assurances about having already begun to drive them out were therefore fake. They believed the word of men rather than that of God. **The tribes were specifically driven out by the Angel sent before them (Ex. 33:2), "the hornet" sent before them (Ex. 23:28). Our Angels may likewise have opened roads of conquest ahead of us, but we fail to make good on the huge potential opened up.**

The subsequent appeals to not form any covenant with anyone else are based on the fact God had by grace renewed the covenant with them. The wonder of the grace of covenant relationship with Him means we will not seek covenant with

others. We won't ever want to go near the idea of idols after perceiving how awful had been the sin with the golden calf.

Exo 34:12 Be careful, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be for a snare in the midst of you-
Yahweh's covenant in :10 is presented as a one sided covenant of grace, as was that of Gen. 15. There are no immediate demands made upon Israel regarding their side of it; just the request that having such a covenant relationship, they should therefore not seek to enter any other covenant (:12).

The prohibition of marriage with unbelievers in Ex. 34:12 was made straight after the awesome declaration of God's holiness on Sinai. It was as if God was telling Moses: 'See, this is your God, so wondrous in grace and determination to save you. So please, be mine, don't unite yourselves in marriage to this world that doesn't know Me. If I, in all My moral and physical glory, am your God, how can you intermarry?'. There is a kind of juxtaposition between the heights of God's moral revelation in Ex. 34:1-8, and then the 'down to earth' prohibition against marriage out of the Faith

Exo 34:13 but you shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and you shall cut down their Asherim-
Israel were told to "throw down", "break in pieces" and "utterly destroy" the idols and altars of Canaan. There were times during their history when they obeyed this command by purging themselves from their apostasy in this. The Hebrew words used scarcely occur elsewhere, except very frequently in the context of how God "broke down", "threw down" and "destroyed" Israel at the hands of their Babylonian and Assyrian invaders as a result of their not 'breaking down' (etc.) the idols. "Throw down" in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 is the same word in 2 Chron. 36:19; Jer. 4:26; 31:28; 33:4; 39:8; 52:14; Ez. 16:39; Nah. 1:6. "Cut down" in Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 later occurs in Is. 10:33; Jer. 48;25; Lam. 2:3. So Israel faced the choice: either cut down your idols, or you will be cut down in the day of God's judgment. Those who worshipped idols were like unto them. The stone will either fall on us and destroy us, or we must fall on it and become broken men and women (Mt. 21:44). For the man untouched by the concept of living for God's glory, it's a hard choice. God will conquer sin, ultimately. When a man dies, it isn't just a biological, clockwork process. It is God's victory over sin in that individual. Either we must be slain by God; or with His gracious help, we must put sin to death in our members through association with the only One who really did this- and thereby rise to life eternal.

Exo 34:14 for you shall worship no other god; for Yahweh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God-

Jealousy is a lead feature within Yahweh's personality (Ex. 20:5; 34:14). It speaks specifically of the jealousy of a man concerning the faithfulness of his wife (Num. 5:14). God was the passionate lover and husband of His people, and it is inevitable therefore that the extent of that love would produce jealousy when they spurned Him and went after other men, the idols.

Exo 34:15 Don't make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, lest they play the prostitute after their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and one call you and you eat of his sacrifice-
Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

"Call you", literally 'call out to you', is s.w. "proclaim" in :5. The calling out to us of the idols of this world is eclipsed by the calling out to us of Yahweh's grace and truth in His Name.

Exo 34:16 and you take of their daughters to your sons, and their daughters play the prostitute after their gods, and make your sons prostitute themselves to their gods-
The logic is powerful. To marry their women would be as foolish as a man marrying a prostitute. Yet this is what God did with Israel, as exemplified in the tragic marriage between Hosea and Gomer.

Exo 34:17 You shall make no cast idols for yourselves-
This clearly alludes to the golden calf which they had made. They were not to ever do this again. And yet we know from Ez. 20:7,8 that they took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea, and carried the tabernacle and star of their idols throughout the wilderness journey. Even by Joshua's time, he had to urge them to cast away the idols of Egypt. Perhaps they justified them by arguing that they had not cast them themselves. Our flesh is so able to justify sin. And we must beware of that.

Exo 34:18 You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib; for in

the month Abib you came out from Egypt-
The law was based around regular rituals. God knew that this was what His people needed, and although under the new covenant we don't have such structure, the true Christian life is really one of having the right habits.

These commands are given at this point because they have just been warned in :17 not to repeat the sin of the golden calf. They had claimed that this had brought them up out of Egypt. They are now told to keep the feasts, reminding them that it was Yahweh and not any molten god that had brought then out of Egypt. And obedience to Yahweh would bring about blessing and not molten gods.

Exo 34:19 All that opens the womb is Mine; and all your livestock that is male, the firstborn of cow and sheep-
I suggested on Ex. 13:2 that it was God's initial intention that all the firstborn males should be sanctified to His service, from whatever tribe. And the sacrificial animals would be provided by the firstborn of every animal. But this plan didn't work, and so He called one tribe to be His sanctified priests, and all Israel were to provide animals for sacrifice. And they also didn't really do their ministry, and so under the new covenant, all are priests. We marvel at how God continually seeks to forge ahead with His plans for relationship with man.

Exo 34:20 The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb: and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem-
The redemption of unclean devoted animals was to be at the basis of the animals value plus one fifth (Lev. 27:27). But the firstborn of donkeys were to be redeemed with a lamb, and a lamb would have been of less value than a newborn donkey. The firstborn of the donkey was to be redeemed by a lamb (Ex. 13:13) as a ritual reminder of the power of the Passover lamb's redemption. The value of its blood was far greater than its commercial value. And this was to point forward to the value of the blood of the Lord Jesus, far more precious than of any gold or silver (1 Pet. 1:18). The donkey was the most common domestic animal, and it was an unclean animal. It was therefore representative of common people, in their unclean state. Firstborn donkeys were to be redeemed because they were to be understood as representative of God's people, redeemed by the Passover lamb.

No one shall appear before Me empty-
"Empty" may mean that they were to not attend without bringing a sacrifice, with empty hands. But "empty" is s.w. "without cause", "in vain". Following this commandment was not be an appearing before Yahweh for no purpose. The meaning of the ritual was to be

allowed to have the spiritual results intended. And this is a challenge to all whose Christian lives involve regular attendance at meetings. We can so easily slip into a rut of ritual observance, just going through motions "without cause". **It is the same concern as not taking on Yahweh's Name "in vain", without cause.**

Exo 34:21 Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest: in ploughing time and in harvest you shall rest-
We are to understand not working when it was most critically needed as a resignation of human works, in order to trust in God's gracious provision; the Sabbath year sought to teach the same. Living in the spirit of this meant that daily work was no longer simply the result of the curse in Eden; the work was done "as unto the Lord", and for Him rather than as merely for self preservation.

Exo 34:22 You shall observe the feast of weeks with the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of harvest at the year's end-
The feast of weeks is here defined as the first fruits of wheat harvest, the two loaves of Lev. 23:17. The "weeks" were the seven weeks of harvest (Dt. 16:9,10,16).

Exo 34:23 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord Yahweh, the God of Israel-
The Pentateuch uses the term "before Yahweh" or 'to see the face of God', usually translated as 'to come into God's presence'; this was a pagan term used at the time to describe seeing an image of a god (R.E. Clements, Exodus (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 152). But Israel were being taught that their God had no image, but all the same, they could come into His presence.

Exo 34:24 For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither shall any man desire your land when you go up to appear before Yahweh your God three times in the year-
The Mosaic Law required that Israel leave their homes undefended in order to go to the sanctuary to "appear before Yahweh". This was intended to be feasible because the Lord would drive out all the nations in the land. Yet Israel failed to drive out the nations; and thus made it far harder for themselves to obey the command to leave their homes and go to the sanctuary. Failure to obey one command made obedience to others far harder; and the same principle operates today.

The command to come three times a year to see God's face must be understood in the context of all the dialogue about God's face in the preceding chapter. Moses had been taught that the experience of grace was the essence of seeing God's face.

But God here concedes to the human desire for religion and to feel they have in a ritual sense come into God's presence. The pagan religions required worshippers to daily come into the presence of the god, hence the presence of idols in homes. But Yahweh minimises this because the essence of His presence is the experience of forgiveness and grace.

Exo 34:25 You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left to the morning-
The parallel Ex. 23:18 has: "neither shall the fat of My feast remain all night until the morning". Perhaps this was to remove the temptation to go back and take part of the sizzling fat for themselves; for this was seen as the most tasty and desirable part of the animal. We are not to place fences around the law in the legalistic way Judaism has done, but we are to be aware of our own liability to spiritual failure, our weakness in the face of temptation; and to arrange our lives appropriately.

Exo 34:26 You shall bring the first of the first fruits of your ground to the house of Yahweh your God-
God was to be honoured with "the first of the first". Yahweh was "one", or "the first [and only]", and so all was to be devoted to Him.

You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk-
The laws in the "Book of the Covenant" abruptly end with this, as if it summed up the spirit of all the others (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Dt. 14:21). Kid goats were thought to be most tasty when boiled in their mother's milk. It seems that God considered this narcissistic and absolutely over indulgent, and without thought to the feelings of the mother goat; even though goats (rather than sheep) are at times a symbol of sinners and the unclean. The Mosaic law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness and extreme sensitivity to all, even animals. Read like this, it is similar to the prohibitions of killing on the same a cow and a calf, or a ewe and her lamb (Lev. 22:28). It is likely that this was also related to a paganic fertility ritual, performed at harvest time (which is the immediate context of the prohibition); and God didn't want His people to even remotely be associated with that. For He alone was the source of all fertility.

Exo 34:27 Yahweh said to Moses, Write you these words; for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel-
The commands which constituted the covenant were given to Moses personally (Neh. 1:7,8), insofar as he represented Israel. Thus there is a parallel drawn in Ps. 103:7: He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel". In the context of describing Israel's deliverance from Egypt, they are said to have been delivered from "the basket" (Ps. 81:6 RV)- clearly associating them with Moses' deliverance. Is. 63:11

(Heb.) is even more explicit: " He remembered... *Moses his people*". Moses seems to have appreciated fully his representative role on that last glorious day of life when he addressed Israel: "The Lord said unto *me*... I will deliver [Og] into *thy* hand... so the Lord our God delivered into *our* hands Og" (Dt. 3:2,3). David recognized this unity between Moses and Israel; David describes both Israel and Moses as God's chosen (Ps. 16:5,23). Moses is described as encamping in the wilderness, when the reference clearly is to all Israel (Ex. 18:5). Moses recalled how "the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have delivered up Sihon and his land before thee [you singular- i.e. Moses]; begin to possess it, that thou [you singular again!] mayest inherit his land". Yet Moses then comments that therefore God "delivered" Sihon "before *us*" (Dt. 31,33 RV). The land and victory that Moses personally could have had- for it was God's wish to destroy Israel and make of him a new nation- he shared with Israel. Ex. 7:16 brings out the unity between them by a play on words: "The LORD God of the Hebrews hath *sent me* [lit. 'let me go'] unto thee, saying, *Let* my people *go*". "Let go" translates the same Hebrew word as "sent me". Just as Moses had been let go by Yahweh, so Israel were to be.

"With you and with Israel" reflects how God saw Israel as Moses. Because he would keep the covenant, they would be counted as keeping it. For Moses had reasoned in Ex. 33 that because of his personal relationship with God, Israel could be saved and have God amongst them. And God accepted that, as He does with His Son.

Exo 34:28 He was there with Yahweh forty days and forty nights-
Ex. 24:16 says that Moses was six and a half days on the mountain waiting for the call to meet God, so he was with God for 33 and a half days. This perhaps looks forward to the 33 and a half years ministry of the Lord Jesus.

This verse is a summary statement. Moses was there 40 days throwing himself down before God (Dt. 9:25), begging for forgiveness for the golden calf. And now we read his work is successful, in that God writes the covenant tables again.

He neither ate bread, nor drank water-
It could be argued that this is not speaking of absolutely not eating nor drinking (it would be hard not to drink for 40 days), but rather that He didn't eat bread nor drink water. The implication is that He had food to eat from God, associated with the word given him, which others weren't aware of. The Lord may allude to this in Jn. 4:32. This is the third period of 40 days which Moses was there, and the Rabbis calculate that he would have therefore returned from the mountain (cp. the Lord's second coming from Heaven) on the Day of Atonement.

He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments-
The Old Covenant is defined here and elsewhere as the ten commandments, which include the Sabbath. The New Testament teaches that the Old Covenant has been

replaced by the New Covenant in Christ- and He never commanded us to keep the Sabbath.

Exo 34:29 It happened, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mountain, that Moses didn't know that the skin of his face shone by reason of His speaking with him-
The Lord's transfiguration on the mountain, with Moses present and the disciples 'coming up' to view, is clearly allusive to the theophany to Moses on Sinai. Mt. 17:1 speaks of a six day period beforehand, alluding to the six days when the cloud covered Sinai (Ex. 24:16). The focus of both Matthew and Luke is that the Lord's *face* shone. We are being shown that the real seeing of Yahweh's face is in the face of Jesus Christ. Luke stresses that His clothes were whiter than any launderer on earth could whiten. This may refer to the same truth taught to Moses- that God's forgiveness of His people is unparalleled. The disciples' fumbled offer to make tabernacles [s.w.] reflects how they saw the similarities, and recalled that after the theophany, a tabernacle was made. Instead of the voice proclaiming the Yahweh Name, there is the voice of God directing attention to His beloved Son, and the command to "hear Him". Not, therefore, so much 'be obedient to Him', but rather to perceive in Him and His words the essence of the Yahweh Name, full of grace and salvation for the undeserving- just as Yahweh's Name had been proclaimed in the same context. Moses and Elijah spoke with the Lord about the 'exodus' He was to perform in His death- that was the basis upon which God's people would be brought out from sin [Egypt] to salvation. And He there crucified is the essence of the Yahweh Name as declared in Ex. 34. This is all saying in a more oblique way what John says, that Yahweh's Name was declared in the cross.

We are described in 2 Cor. 3:18 as also like Moses beholding the glory of God, in terms of His moral perfection as it is in the face of Jesus (see on :6), and as the physical glory reflected off Moses' face, so the more we are in the presence of Jesus, meditating upon His character, the more that glory in a moral sense will increasingly shine off our faces. Paul uses the metaphor of looking in a mirror, until we find that the image in the mirror is no longer our face but the face of Jesus.

I explained earlier that Moses' speech impediment may well have been from a cleft palate. And yet from this deformity there shone the glory of Yahweh, and we are invited to see ourselves as Moses in this regard.

Exo 34:30 When Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come near him-

The eyes of Israel had seen Yahweh's glory in Ex. 24:17, and it seems the first time they did in fact come up the first part of the mountain even when told not to. But the effect of sin, in this case with the golden calf, is to make man shy of God's glory. But that was only because they had not deeply enough believed in their forgiveness. Perhaps Moses' face only shone now, and not after the previous ascents of the mount, because he needed this extra authority added to him. And yet despite this, Israel still despised and disobeyed him. Clearly enough, visible evidence for God such as this, the manna, the Angel in the pillar of cloud and fire, didn't deeply persuade Israel.

Exo 34:31 Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them-
This calling was surely in the form of words assuring them of God's acceptance of them, and that they need not fear Yahweh and His glory, despite His holiness and their sinfulness. For He wanted to meet with them in fellowship and acceptance. It was the essence of the Gospel.

Exo 34:32 Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them all of the commandments that Yahweh had spoken with him on Mount Sinai-
We think of Joseph urging his sinful brothers to "come near" to him, to believe in his grace to them, even though they were far from fully penitent (Gen. 45:4 s.w.). It was the same here. It was the priests who "came near" (Ex. 19:22), but we see here how all Israel were bidden "come near". God wanted the all to have intimacy with Him, and not leave it to the religious leaders. And it is the same with us in church life today.

Exo 34:33 When Moses was done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face-
See on 2 Cor. 3:15-18. This was apparently the regular experience of Israel with Moses. Throughout 2 Cor. 3:15-4:6, Paul comments on how Moses' face shone with God's glory, and yet he spoke to Israel through a veil, with the result that Israel did not appreciate God's glory. He speaks of him and all preachers of the true Christian Gospel as "able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6)- clear allusion to Moses as the minister of the old, inferior covenant. Paul uses this to explain why Israel did not respond to his preaching; "if our preaching be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. 4:3). Paul therefore saw himself and his fellow preachers as like Moses, radiating forth the glory of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to an Israel which had the veil upon their heart. This allusion must have so angered the Jews- to suggest that Christian preachers were like Moses!

Moses face didn't shine with glory before, despite his meetings with God. I suggest this was to reflect the fact that God had indeed accepted Moses, and according to his wish, would accept Israel for his sake. All looking forward to the Lord's work.

When a [Jewish] man turns to the Lord Jesus, the veil of obedience to the Law is taken away (2 Cor. 3:16 RVmg.). Yet the Law also led men to Christ; and yet it also veils Him from them- depending whether they read it as God intended. But the "it" which turns to the Lord could refer to the hearts of Jewish people. The veil is the Law; the veil is not taken away by intellectual purity of understanding. It is taken away when the heart turns to the Lord Jesus, and this is the realm of the spirit or heart. *Epistrepho*, "turn to", is a form of *strepho* which is the usual word for conversion. But it is often used of what is done to a person by the Lord- we are converted by Him. 'To be converted' suggests the conversion is done to us. The Lord's wish is to heal and convert human hearts (Mt. 13:15); that they might be healed and converted. John the Baptist's mission was to convert hearts to Jesus as Christ, to turn or convert Israel to the Lord (Lk. 1:16,17). When a heart is turned to the Lord by the Lord, then the veil is taken away. But the person must allow the process to happen, and not harden their hearts against it. If they do, then they shall be confirmed in that by being hardened the more- as 2 Cor. 3:14 has just stated. It is an openness to the leading of the Lord in the spirit which is so important. It is response to that leading which brings about conversion, rather than decades of poring over ancient Hebrew and Greek words. 2 Cor. 3:17 will go on to speak explicitly about the work of the Lord Jesus as the work of the Spirit.

Exo 34:34 But when Moses went in before Yahweh to speak with Him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spoke to the children of Israel that which he was commanded-

We *each*, with unveiled face, have like Moses seen the glory of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). When Moses saw the glory, he was immediately given a ministry to preach to Israel, to share that glory with them (Ex. 34:34). And Paul drives home the similarity; we *each* have had the experience of Moses, and so “therefore seeing *we* (too, like Moses) have this ministry”, “we each” are to exercise it to Israel. Moses was and is seen in the Jewish world as a larger than life figure. Theologically, Judaism has placed Moses greater even than Messiah. It was the purpose of John's Gospel to correct this. The idea that ordinary believers can in any sense be equal to or even greater than Moses was (and is) absolute anathema to the Jewish mind. And yet through allusion and almost explicit statement, the Lord Jesus and the New Testament writers invite us to see ourselves as equal to or greater than Moses, on account of the spiritual riches made available to us in Christ, with the light of a greater glory shining from our faces too. How radical this was to the first century mind is extremely hard for us to enter into. The point is, God intellectually stretches us to an extent which may be almost unacceptable to us; as with our first century brethren, we too are challenged to radically turn against many of the concepts and attitudes which are fundamental to our upbringing.

Paul's point is that the "the sons of Israel could not stare intently into the face of Moses"(2 Cor. 3:7), implying that the Christian, by contrast, does stare intently into

the face of the Lord Jesus. This is what it is to be a Christian. And to be transformed into His image and reflect His glory.

Exo 34:35 The children of Israel saw Moses' face, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him-
In the same way as Moses spoke to the Angel without a veil on his face, and thereby came to reflect the glory which shone from the Angel's face (Ex. 34:33-35), so we are bidden look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to consider his character, and be changed into that same glory by reflecting his character in our lives. By simply beholding the glory of Christ's righteousness, truly appreciating it, we will be changed (2 Cor. 3:15-18 RV). Paul seems to be arguing that whenever a Jew turns to the Lord Jesus and fellowships with Him, then he is living out the pattern of Moses. And further, 2 Cor. 4:3 speaks of our Gospel being 'veiled' to those who are lost- as if *we* are as Moses, the Gospel we preach being as the glory of God which shone from Moses' face. Let's keep remembering how huge and radical was the challenge of this to a first century Jewish readership for whom Moses was an almost untouchable hero.

Moses couldn't see the direct glory / face of God, he was covered by God's hand and only saw God's back. Perhaps this in turn is reflected by how God hid His glory from Israel through the veil on Moses' face. But thereby they were encouraged to aspire to the place of Moses on the mountain, hidden from God's full glory but nonetheless seeing some of it. It cannot be that the High Priestly blessing lacks reference to Moses' shining face: "May Yahweh make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you" (Num. 6:25). The shining of His face spoke of the experience of grace, just as the revelation of God's Name and physical glory to Moses had spoken of His grace to Israel, forgiving the impenitent, those who had committed adultery on their wedding night to Yahweh. And He thereby gave them peace, the peace from knowing His grace and forgiveness. Ps. 80:4 connects the shining of God's face with restoration and salvation- which is the exact context here, where the covenant has been restored by grace and Israel saved from destruction as God's people: "O God, restore us! And make your face shine that we might be saved!". But the vision of that face, that grace, was veiled to them. The High Priestly blessing was therefore a wish that they would see beyond the veil to Yahweh's actual glory, and not be scared by grace. This wish and intention comes to full term in our beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord Jesus, far greater than the glory Moses saw.

In Psalm 90 Moses pleads for his rejection and that of his people to be reversed. He says that the reason for their rejection was God setting their "secret sins" in the light of His countenance (Ps. 90:8). He felt his rejection was due to his secret sins- not the one painfully public failure. The Hebrew for "secret" means 'that behind the veil'; it is from

the same root as the Hebrew for 'young girl', i.e. a veiled one. He felt the sins he had committed behind the veil had been exposed in the light of the Angel's face. Remember that Moses always appeared to Israel with a veil (Ex. 34:33-35; 2 Cor. 3:16-18 RV), only removing it when he spoke face to face with the Angel, radiating the light of God's glory to him. It seems Moses is alluding to this in Ps. 90:8; he felt that he had many secret sins, hidden to Israel, but completely open to the Angel when he met with him. Likewise Israel were rejected because of the sins of their heart rather than their grosser failures (Acts 7:39; and see the reason for their condemnation given in many other passages). “You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your face" (Ps. 90:8) is not Moses reproaching God; rather is it him soberly recognizing why they were barred from the land. Notice "our iniquities... our sins"- Moses was completely at one with condemned Israel, he knew exactly how they felt- just as the Lord Jesus with us.

"But we, with an unveiled face and reflecting the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). "Beholding as in a mirror" (RV). In the same way as Moses spoke to the Angel without a veil on his face, and thereby came to reflect the glory which shone from the Angel's face (Ex. 34:33-35), so we are bidden look at the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to consider his character, and be changed into that same glory by reflecting his character in our lives. By simply beholding the glory of Christ's righteousness, truly appreciating it, we will be changed (2 Cor. 3:15-18 RV). Christ-centeredness, regularly thinking of Him, grabbing a few verses from the Gospel records in the course of the day- this is the essence of the Christian life, of beholding Him with unveiled face. Paul seems to be arguing that whenever a Jew turns to the Lord Jesus and fellowships with Him, then he is living out the pattern of Moses. And further, 2 Cor. 4:3 speaks of our Gospel being 'veiled' to those who are lost- as if we are as Moses, the Gospel we preach being as the glory of God which shone from Moses' face. Let's keep remembering how huge and radical was the challenge of this to a first century Jewish readership for whom Moses was an almost untouchable hero.

2 Cor. 3 speaks of our beholding the glory of the Lord Jesus in a mirror; and this process slowly transforms us into that same image of Him which we see. The “glory” of God was revealed to Moses at Sinai in Ex. 34 as the declaration of His character. In this sense, the Lord Jesus could speak of having in His mortal life “that glory which was with [the Father]” when the [Jewish] world came into existence at Sinai (Jn. 17:5 Ethiopic and Western Text). It was that same glory which, like Moses, He reflected to men. But according to 2 Cor. 3:18, the very experience of gazing upon the glory of His character will change us into a reflection of it. There is something transforming about the very personality of Jesus. And perhaps this is why we have such a psychological barrier to thinking about Him deeply. We know that it has the power to transform and intrude into our innermost darkness. I have given reason elsewhere for believing that the Gospel records are in fact transcripts of the Gospel message preached by the four evangelists.

The 'Gospel according to Matthew' is therefore the Gospel message which he usually preached. And it's significant that at least three of them start and end where many of us would- starting with the promises to the Jewish fathers, and concluding with an appeal for baptism. Actually John's Gospel does this too, if you decode the language he uses. This is surely the explanation of the Lord's otherwise strange remark that wherever the Gospel is preached, the anointing of His feet by Mary would be part of that message. And this is one of the few incidents that all four Gospel writers each mention. What this shows is that the Gospel message is in its quintessence, the account of the man Christ Jesus- with all that involves. It has truly been commented that "the central message of the gospels is not the teaching of Jesus but Jesus himself". This is true insofar as Jesus is the word made flesh.

A mirror by its very nature, because of what it is, reflects the light which falls upon it to others. If we have really seen the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will inevitably reflect it to others. Jesus didn't say 'Do good works so that men may see the light'. He said “let your light shine" - and then men will see your good works and glorify the Father. Paul puts the same principle another way when he says that we're all mirrors (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). We naturally reflect to others what has been reflected into us by the Lord Jesus. A mirror by its very nature, because of what it is, reflects the light which falls upon it to others. If we have really seen the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will inevitably reflect it to others. Many of the Lord’s parables portray the [preaching of] the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as a kind of secret force: treasure hidden in a field, the tiniest seed in the garden, wheat growing among weeds, a pinch of yeast worked into dough, salt on meat... these are all images of something which works from within, changing other people in an ongoing, regular manner.

EXODUS CHAPTER 35

Exo 35:1 Moses assembled all the congregation of the children of Israel, and said to them, These are the words which Yahweh has commanded, that you should do them- The commands to build the tabernacle are repeated twice in Exodus, and there is the record of Israel's golden calf apostasy set in the middle of them. Ex. 25:1-31:18 give the tabernacle building commands, then there's the golden calf incident, and then the commands are repeated in Ex. 35-40. Surely this was edited in this manner to give encouragement to the exiles- the commands to rebuild the temple had been given in detail in Ez. 40-48, but the exiles failed- and yet, the implication runs, God was still willing to work again with His people in the building of His sanctuary despite their failure. There is good internal reason to think that the Pentateuch likewise was re-written in places to bring out the relevance of Israel's past to those in captivity.

Exo 35:2 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of solemn rest to Yahweh: whoever does any work in it shall be put to death-
Israel were to put to death those who were so addicted to works that they refused to keep the Sabbath. This was how earnestly God wished to impress upon them the need for salvation by grace rather than works. It was because God's people had been sanctified or made holy (Ex. 31:13) that they were to sanctify or set apart / make holy the seventh day for God's service. We are to respond to God's setting of us apart- by setting apart what we have for Him. That is the essential take away from this, even though we are no longer required to keep the Sabbath.

Exo 35:3 You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath day'.-
It has been widely noted that many elements of the ten commandments are to be found in the legislation of Mesopotamia. Thus there are references to the Sabbath being kept as a monthly festival; and later "the name Shabattu was applied by the Babylonians and Assyrians to the day of the full moon, the fifteenth of the month, which was especially dedicated to the worship of the moon-god... the days of the full moon were considered days of ill luck... the Israelite Sabbath was instituted, it seems, in antithesis to the Mesopotamian system" (Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary On The Book Of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997) p. 244). Thus most pagan festivals of the time were begun by the lighting of a candle in the home; but a candle was not to be kindled on the Sabbath (Ex. 35:3). Yahweh *blessed* the Sabbath (Ex. 20:11). Work was not to be done so as to rest and remember God's creative grace; whereas in pagan thought, work wasn't done because 'Sabbath' was an unlucky day on which it was best to do as little as possible in case some 'Satan' figure struck. Such belief was being deconstructed in the Sabbath law.

Exo 35:4 Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which Yahweh commanded, saying-
"All the congregation" rather than "the princes" is stressed because the entire people were invited to donate.

Exo 35:5 'Take from among you an offering to Yahweh. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, Yahweh's offering: gold, silver, brass-
Willing hearted giving to God is important- the giving must never be from a sense of unavoidable obligation. In appealing for generosity to our poorer brethren, Paul uses this idea- speaking of how a willing heart in a cheerful giver is so loved by God (2 Cor. 8:19; 9:7).

Paul pleads with Corinth to see the similarities between them and the ecclesia in the wilderness; he wants them to personalize it all. He sees their gathering and redistribution of wealth as exactly analogous to Israel's gathering of manna (2 Cor. 8:15)- and he so wishes his Corinthians to think themselves into Israel's shoes. For then they would realize that as Israel had to have a willing heart to give back to God the wealth of Egypt which He had given them, so they were to have a willing heart in being generous to their poorer brethren (Ex. 35:5 = 2 Cor. 8:12). And they would have realized that as "last year" they had made this offer (2 Cor. 8:10 Gk.), so the year before, Israel had received Egypt's wealth with a similar undertaking to use it for the Lord's cause. As Moses had to remind them a second time of their obligations in Ex. 35, so Paul had to bring it again before Corinth. And if they had seen these similarities, they would have got the sense of Paul's lament that there was not one wise hearted man amongst them- for the "wise hearted" were to convert Israel's gold and silver into tools for Yahweh's service (Ex. 35:10 = 1 Cor. 6:5; 2 Cor. 10:12).

Exo 35:6 blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair-
These were the things which Israel had taken with them from Egypt (Ex. 12:36); we likewise should use whatever resources we have taken from this world [cp. Egypt] in order to do God's work and build and enhance His dwelling place amongst His people. There is an apparent juxtaposition between the scarlet, the clothing of kings and rulers, and goats' hair. They had taken the scarlet clothing from Egypt when they left, but the goats' hair was what they had shorn from their own animals which they had with them. So God was asking them to bring their own small offerings along with the more valuable things they had taken from Egypt / the world. This all speaks of our attitude to giving and wealth on our wilderness journey.

Exo 35:7 rams' skins dyed red, sea cow hides-
The sea cow hides were what they had picked up whilst camped on the shores of the Red Sea. Likewise what we pick up along the way in our wilderness journey is to be given to God.

Acacia wood-
Acacia was plentiful in the wilderness, but it is little more than brushwood; a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and broken in order to do His work (as also in Ez. 15:2-5).

Exo 35:8 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense-

Ex. 27:20 had commanded "that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light". But here we read that they only brought "oil". "Pure olive oil" apparently refers to olive juice which bursts naturally from the first ripe olives. But we enquire where Israel obtained olive oil from in the wilderness, especially such "pure" olive oil to such great amounts as required here? Perhaps they had been given lots of it as they left Egypt and gave it to the priests. But that would not have been this fresh, "pure" oil. So I think they simply brought ordinary olive oil, as stated here. And they did this for 40 years? I suggest as on Ex. 27:8 that this was God's ideal intention, and many of these laws were applicable only in contexts when obedience to them was possible. God's law is not therefore at all a reflection of a God who is a literalist or legalist. For by its nature, the law of Moses shows that He was not like that.

Exo 35:9 onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod and for the breastplate-
The precious stones were donated by the princes or elders (Ex. 35:27). Yet they are listed along with common acacia wood and goats' hair. There was to be a culture of giving, from the wealthiest to the poorest, which was to characterize the community of God's people.

Exo 35:10 Let every wise-hearted man among you come, and make all that Yahweh has commanded-
As in Ex. 28:3, the wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (Ex. 28:3 AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1). Perhaps only Bezaleel and Aholiab were wise hearted, although it was God's intention that there should be many such- which would mean Paul may be alluding here in lamenting that there was not a wise hearted man in Corinth (1 Cor. 6:5).

Exo 35:11 the tabernacle, its outer covering, its roof, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, and its sockets-
The ark was covered in the tabernacle by the various layers of the tent detailed in Ex. 26:1-6: sea cows' skins, red rams skins, goats hair, blue, purple, scarlet and linen. These would form a kind of rainbow over the ark, and above that there was the Angel in the pillar of cloud or fire. This "pattern of things in the Heavens" (Heb. 9:23,24) replicated the visions of a throne (the ark) over-arched by a rainbow and the glory of God.

When David says in 2 Sam. 7:2 that he doesn't want Yahweh to have to dwell in "curtains", this doesn't mean that David was concerned that God's ark was under a tent,

whilst he lived in a house. Rather is the reference to the ten curtains which comprised the tabernacle. David was assuming that he could change the Mosaic commandments about the tabernacle, and move God's purpose forward to something more permanent. We see here how he didn't consider the laws of Moses [of which the commands about the tabernacle were part] to be static. He saw them as open to interpretation and development. This was not a position he came to lightly, seeing he had been terribly punished for thinking he could flout the legislation about how the ark was to be transported.

Exo 35:12 the ark, and its poles, the mercy seat, the veil of the screen-
"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 35:13 the table with its poles and all its vessels, and the show bread-
The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 35:14 the lampstand also for the light, with its vessels, its lamps, and the oil for the light;-
We read in 1 Jn. 2:20,27 that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone. I'd therefore be inclined to see 1 Jn. 2:20,27 as alluding to baptism; when we become in Christ, in the anointed, then as 2 Cor. 1:21 says, we too are anointed in a sense. We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism. The words for 'anointing' are unique to 1 John but they occur in the LXX to describe the anointing / initiation of the priests, and of the tabernacle / dwelling

place of God (e.g. Ex. 29:7; 35:14,28). John sees us as the dwelling place / tabernacle of the Father.

Exo 35:15 and the altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil, the sweet incense, the screen for the door, at the door of the tabernacle-
The structure of the tabernacle pointed ahead to man's approach to God under the Christian dispensation. First, a man had to bow his head in order to pass through the gate. Humility is essential. Then there was acceptance of the principle of sacrifice, the large altar; followed by the laver or washing basin, speaking of baptism. Beyond that is the table of shewbread (breaking of bread), the candlestick (church life) and the incense altar (prayer). After this is the veil, through which we can pass in Christ into the most holy place, and the presence of God Himself.

Exo 35:16 the altar of burnt offering, with its grating of brass, its poles, and all its vessels, the basin and its base-
For "poles" see on :13. For the basin / laver and altar, see on :15.

Exo 35:17 the hangings of the court, its pillars, their sockets, and the screen for the gate of the court-
As discussed on :15, the entrance to the court was of such a height that a man would need to bow his head to enter- a sign that humility was and remains the initial and crucial requirement for a person who wishes to come to God, and begin the journey which ends in fellowship with God Himself, His very presence [cp. the ark in the most holy].

Exo 35:18 the pins of the tabernacle, the pins of the court, and their cords-
The "pins" are the tent pegs.

Exo 35:19 the finely worked garments, for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office'-
The first group of garments were not the same as the "holy garments", and likely refer to aprons, towels and the coverings for the tabernacle items whilst they were transported.

Exo 35:20 All the congregation of the children of Israel departed from the presence of Moses-
The departing and coming back with the gifts (:22) applies to both men and women (:22). So "all the congregation" included women- in a society where religion was largely a male preserve, Yahweh's call involved both men and women.

Exo 35:21 They came, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his spirit made willing, and brought Yahweh's offering, for the work of the Tent of Meeting, and for all of its service, and for the holy garments-
The "everyone" who had material gave it for the construction of the tabernacle, according to Ex. 35:23; although this "every man" is elsewhere defined as "every one whom his spirit made willing" to donate (Ex. 35:21). "Every knee shall bow to me... every tongue shall confess... so then every one *of us* shall give account" (Rom. 14:11,12) is another example- 'all men', 'every man' means 'every one of God's people'.

Exo 35:22 They came, both men and women-
The rabbis claim that this means that the men followed the women, as if the women were more enthusiastic. LXX "And the men, even every one to whom it seemed good in his heart, brought from the women...". It is observable that Aaron asked the women to bring their earrings and jewellery to make the golden calf, but it is only recorded that the men responded. Which is why the women now provided their jewellery for the tabernacle. There might possibly be a hint that the women were generally more spiritually committed than the men at this point. it could be that the items now listed are more appropriate to female jewellery. And in this context, :25,26 stress the work of the women in making the tabernacle materials.

As many as were willing-hearted, and brought brooches, earrings, signet rings, and armlets, all jewels of gold; even every man who offered an offering of gold to Yahweh-
2 Cor. 8:12 alludes here: "If there be first (i.e. most importantly) a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" . Every man was to contribute to the building of the tabernacle (cp. the ecclesia) with a willing heart (Paul surely alludes here). They weren't told: 'Whoever is willing and able to contribute, please do so'. And yet the majority of us have at least something materially; and as we have been blessed, so let us give.

Willing hearted giving to God is important- the giving must never be from a sense of unavoidable obligation. In appealing for generosity to our poorer brethren, Paul uses this idea- speaking of how a willing heart in a cheerful giver is so loved by God (2 Cor. 8:19; 9:7).

Exo 35:23 Everyone, with whom was found blue, purple, scarlet, fine linen, goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red-
We wonder whether literally "everyone" made these offerings. Because it was a vast congregation, and the tabernacle items were all very small scale. This may be an example of the generally positive language used by God at this time- for He did not

behold iniquity in Israel at this time because he was as it were in love with them.

And sea cow hides, brought them-
The sea cow hides were what they had picked up whilst camped on the shores of the Red Sea. Likewise what we pick up along the way in our wilderness journey is to be given to God.

Exo 35:24 Everyone who offered an offering of silver and brass brought Yahweh's offering; and everyone, with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it-
The acacia wood was just the common bush wood found in the desert. It is juxtaposed against offering of silver. See on :23. The generous response of the Israelites in giving towards the tabernacle was surely because it was not demanded of them but merely their assistance was invited (Ex. 35:24).

Exo 35:25 All the women who were wise-hearted spun with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, the blue, the purple, the scarlet, and the fine linen-
This and :26 stresses the work of the women in making the tabernacle materials. I discussed on :22 how there might possibly be a hint in the record that the women were generally more spiritually committed than the men at this point.

Exo 35:26 All the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats' hair-
See on :25. The wise hearted were given the Spirit of God's wisdom in confirmation of this (Ex. 36:2). We read here of a mental, psychological stirring up; the Spirit of God thus works in harmony with the human spirit. And this is how God works in willing human hearts to this day. It is part of the gift of the Spirit involved in the new covenant (Ez. 20; Jer. 31,32) that God can directly revive or stir up human hearts (Is. 57:15). He works directly upon human minds and psychologies.

Exo 35:27 The rulers brought the onyx stones, and the stones to be set, for the ephod and for the breastplate-
The precious stones were donated by the princes or elders. Yet in Ex. 25:4-7 they are listed along with common acacia wood and goats' hair. There was to be a culture of giving, from the wealthiest to the poorest, which was to characterize the community of God's people.

Exo 35:28 and the spice, and the oil for the light, for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense-

The incense was "sweet" in that it smelled sweet to God. But that depended upon the components being brought to Him. “A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Exo 35:29 The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to Yahweh; every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all the work, which Yahweh had commanded to be made by Moses-
The Hebrew word here and in Ex. 36:3 for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Exo 35:30 Moses said to the children of Israel, Behold, Yahweh has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah-
To be called by name meant that this man had a special purpose intended for him ahead of time; "name" in Hebrew suggests a personality and character. But we too are called by name as Jeremiah was. There were good works intended for us to do, designed before the world was. But like Bezalel, we must accept the gift of God's Spirit in order to fulfil those intentions and potentials (Acts 15:18; Eph. 2:10).

Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'. Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel; and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 35:31 He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of workmanship-
As in Ex. 28:3, the wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (Ex. 28:3 AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1).

Wisdom and knowledge were what God created the world with (Prov. 3:19,20), so the idea may be that this tabernacle was a new creation. These men could have refused to do what God asked them. This passage appears to be the basis upon which Paul tells us that each of us have "good works" which God has in mind for us to do, and we must exercise our freewill to perceive them and go do them (Eph. 2:10).

Exo 35:32 and to make skilful works, to work in gold, in silver, in brass-
The Divine commands about the tabernacle likewise allude to the ideas of the surrounding nations, and yet bring out significant differences. In the same way as the Babylonians believed that the temple of Marduk in Babylon was a reflection of the Heavenly temple, so the tabernacle was also a reflection of the pattern of Yahweh's Heavenly temple. The Canaanites spoke of their god El as living in a tent- just as Yahweh dwelt in a tent. The Ugaritic epic of King Keret speaks of how "The gods proceed to their tents, the family of El to their tabernacles" (Tablet 2 D, 5, 31-33). El's tabernacle was thought to be constructed of boards- just as Yahweh's tabernacle was. Both had a veil, just as the Moslem shrine in Mecca has one. But there were significant differences. The

Canaanite legends speak of the gods building their temples themselves; Cassuto points out that the very terms used about Bezaleel's skill and talent in building the tabernacle are used in Canaanite legends about the skill and talent of the gods in supposedly building their own temples. Perhaps the Exodus record so labours the point that Moses and the Israelites built Yahweh's tabernacle is in order to highlight the difference between the one true God and the pagan gods, who had to build their own tabernacles.

Exo 35:33 in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all kinds of skilful workmanship-
The stones in the breastplate and shoulder pieces would have had to be of the same size, and yet the jewels given to Israel on leaving Egypt would have been of different sizes. They would have had to be cut, and also cut in order to reflect the light in an optimal way.

Exo 35:34 He has put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan-
The whole phrase “Behold I have given you…” (Gen. 1:28) occurs later when the Priests are told what God has given them (Ex. 31:6; Lev. 6:10; Num. 18:8,21; Dt. 11:14). What God did at creation, He can do at any time. When Moses “finished the work” of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:33), there is clear allusion to God ‘finishing the work’ of creation (Gen. 2:2).

The wise were made more wise- an idea we often encounter in the opening chapters of Proverbs. God confirms men and women in the way they wish to go, through the work of His Spirit; if they wish to do His work and build up His dwelling place, He will confirm them in their natural talents and give them new ones.

Exo 35:35 He has filled them with wisdom of heart, to work all kinds of workmanship, of the engraver, of the skilful workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of those who do any workmanship, and of those who make skilful works-
"The skilful workman" [singular] of Ex. 28:15 and elsewhere may specifically refer to Aholiab (Ex. 35:35; 38:23). Perhaps Paul saw in this man a representation of us all- for he urged us likewise to be careful workmen when it comes to the understanding and teaching of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

EXODUS CHAPTER 36

Exo 36:1 Bezalel and Oholiab shall work with every wise-hearted man, in whom Yahweh has put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all the work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that Yahweh has commanded-

As in Ex. 28:3, the wise were given wisdom, in keeping with God's principle of confirming people in the way in which they themselves choose to go. This is how God's Spirit also works today on human hearts. "That they *may* make..." (Ex. 28:3 AV) hints at the way in which God's Spirit is given, but people must still respond to it. Thus the Corinthians were given the Spirit (1 Cor. 1), but didn't use it; and so Paul couldn't speak to them as spiritual people (1 Cor. 3:1).

Exo 36:2 Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab, and every wise-hearted man, in whose heart Yahweh had put wisdom, even everyone whose heart stirred him up to come to the work to do it-

There is a careful parallel between Yahweh's action upon the human heart by His Spirit, and the freewill stirrings of the human heart. And yet the work of the Holy Spirit is not simply to confirm the state of the human spirit; it also places ideas within the human heart, according to a schema and equilibrium currently unknowable by us. But we can be assured that grace, and the Divine initiative, is uppermost in that final equation.

Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'. Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel; and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 36:3 and they received from Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, with which to make it. They brought yet to him freewill offerings every morning-

The Hebrew word here and in Ex. 35:29 for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos.

14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Exo 36:4 All the wise men, who performed all the work of the sanctuary, each came from his work which they did-
These "wise" were from all tribes of Israel. The phrase "performed all the work of the sanctuary" appears to consciously reflect the language of the Levites and priests. Repeatedly we find the hint that it was God's wish that all His people would do the work He had given to the Levites.

Exo 36:5 and they spoke to Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which Yahweh commanded to make-
The size of the tabernacle and the items within it was very small. There was no need for a huge volume of donations; what was required was wise hearted workers, filled with the Spirit. And as ever, these were in deficit; it's far easier to donate material things than to be a worker with a Spirit filled heart.

Exo 36:6 Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make anything else for the offering for the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing-
Israel were extremely generous to God’s work, whilst at the same time carrying with them the idols of Egypt and in their hearts wanting to return there (Ez. 20:7,8; Acts 7:42,43). We too can be externally supportive of God’s work whilst in our hearts being far from Him; this is the nature of our human condition which we must battle against. God above all seeks our hearts and not our external works.

Exo 36:7 For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.
"Stuff" translates the same Hebrew translated "work" later in the sentence. There may be the hint that the donors saw their generosity as an opportunity for justification by works; hence their great enthusiasm to 'do' it.

Exo 36:8 All the wise-hearted men among those who did the work made the tabernacle with ten curtains; of fine twined linen, blue, purple, and scarlet, with cherubim, the work of the skilful workman, they made them-

The ark was covered in the tabernacle by the various layers of the tent detailed in Ex. 26:1-6: sea cows' skins, red rams skins, goats hair, blue, purple, scarlet and linen. These would form a kind of rainbow over the ark, and above that there was the Angel in the pillar of cloud or fire. This "pattern of things in the Heavens" (Heb. 9:23,24) replicated the visions of a throne (the ark) over-arched by a rainbow and the glory of God.

When David says in 2 Sam. 7:2 that he doesn't want Yahweh to have to dwell in "curtains", this doesn't mean that David was concerned that God's ark was under a tent, whilst he lived in a house. Rather is the reference to the ten curtains which comprised the tabernacle. David was assuming that he could change the Mosaic commandments about the tabernacle, and move God's purpose forward to something more permanent. We see here how he didn't consider the laws of Moses [of which the commands about the tabernacle were part] to be static. He saw them as open to interpretation and development. This was not a position he came to lightly, seeing he had been terribly punished for thinking he could flout the legislation about how the ark was to be transported.

Many of the commands within the "law of Moses" were clearly only intended for the wilderness generation, indeed they could only have been obeyed by them then; and David wondered whether the entire commands about the tabernacle were in that category. Those today who claim that Mosaic legislation is eternally binding need to give this due weight. It's not just that the Mosaic law was abrogated by the Lord's death; but the whole nature of that law was that it was never intended to all be literally applied to every subsequent generation. And that meant that it was the spirit of it which was to be discerned and followed.

Exo 36:9 The length of each curtain was twenty-eight cubits, and the breadth of each curtain four cubits. All the curtains had one measure-
28 cubits is 42 feet (12.8 meters), and 4 cubits is 6 feet (1.8 meters). "Curtain" in Hebrew is literally a thing which hang and shakes, and the essential word is used for "fear". The impression is of man trembling before Yahweh's holiness.

Exo 36:10 He coupled five curtains to one another, and the other five curtains he coupled one to another-
"Coupled together" is s.w. "have fellowship with" (Ps. 94:20), and often of men 'joining together'. Clearly we are to sense that the curtains represented God's people. The theme of coupling and joining together occurs throughout the record of the tabernacle. Unity amongst believers is to be the outcome of the indwelling of God's glory. Disunity results from simply not having perceived His glory. For before that, all disunity disappears as we are awed by His grace and convicted of our own smallness and unworthiness.

Exo 36:11 He made loops of blue on the edge of the one curtain from the edge in the coupling. Likewise he made in the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the second coupling-
See on :9. "Blue" may refer to a mussel they had picked up on the shores of the Red Sea, which was used for dying things blue. If we wish to attach symbolic meaning to everything- and that isn't necessarily the right way to read the tabernacle account- then we could think of "blue" as representing the sky, heaven. It is of God that we are bound together, linked together by His Spirit in a unity which can only come from Him. For the human tendency is naturally to disagreement and disunity rather than to unity.

Exo 36:12 He made fifty loops in the one curtain, and he made fifty loops in the edge of the curtain that was in the second coupling. The loops were opposite one to another-
The record loves to stress the interlocking nature of the tabernacle. This points forward to our unity between each other, linked together by the blue loops of Heaven; God's unity. See on :11.

Exo 36:13 He made fifty clasps of gold, and coupled the curtains one to another with the clasps: so the tabernacle was a unit-
There is great emphasis that the tabernacle was "one", joined together in such a way that taught the lesson of unity. The spiritual tabernacle, the believers, was "pitched" by the Lord- translating a Greek word which suggests 'crucifixion' (Heb. 8:2). Through the cross, the one, united tabernacle was pitched. To tear down that structure by disuniting the body is to undo the work of the cross.

Exo 36:14 He made curtains of goats' hair for a covering over the tabernacle. He made them eleven curtains-
"Covering" is literally 'a tent'. There was to be a tent over the tent, as if a vertical expression of the horizontal division of the tabernacle into the holy and most holy places. The external appearance of the tabernacle would therefore have been rough; and beauty was on the inside. This contrasts with the pagan way of attaching value to external beauty, whilst inside, the places of worship were not so attractive. God looks upon the internal, upon the heart; and leaves the external as unattractive to secular eyes.

Exo 36:15 The length of each curtain was thirty cubits, and four cubits the breadth of each curtain. The eleven curtains had one measure-
Comparing this with the size of the actual tabernacle, which is far smaller, it is clear that

the tent which covered it must have been sloped, and also probably extended to each side of the tabernacle. Hence the mention of an overhang in Ex. 26:12.

Exo 36:16 He coupled five curtains by themselves, and six curtains by themselves-
"By themselves" is s.w. "pole" or "stave", and this makes better sense. The idea is 'curtains on poles' or curtain rods.

Exo 36:17 He made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain that was outmost in the coupling, and he made fifty loops on the edge of the curtain which was outmost in the second coupling-
The tabernacle represents God's dwelling place. He now no longer lives in any physical structure, but in the hearts of His people, who between them comprise His new dwelling place. We can however learn lessons from the principles behind the tabernacle construction. Great emphasis was placed on how the components were all interlocking- the curtains coupled together, the boards were joined by bars etc. It is by our unity and connection with each other that God will dwell amongst us. Christianity can't be lived in isolation- we need each other.

Exo 36:18 He made fifty clasps of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be a unit-
The account of the tabernacle labours the point that the whole house of God, this huge but delicate structure, was held together by "clasps of brass to couple the tent together, that it might be one" (Ex. 36:18 and often). "That it might be one" is alluded to by the Lord when He prayed for His people, "that they might be one" (Jn. 17:11,21-23). The tabernacle system was based around a mass of boards, tenons, curtain couplings etc. God's dwelling place, His house, hangs together by millions of inter-personal connections. "Out of church Christians", in the sense of those who think they can go it alone in splendid isolation, are totally missing the point- just as much as those churches who refuse to meaningfully accept others as being in the body of Christ despite acknowledging that they have been baptized into the body.

Exo 36:19 He made a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sea cow hides above-
See on :15. The "part that remains" is the half-breadth by which the rough outer tent would overlap the linen covering.

Exo 36:20 He made the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood, standing up-
"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert.

Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

"Standing up" seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable, because the outer tent would keep the wind from blowing over the structure. This detail may be significant if we follow through the idea that the boards represent God's people. They are not to sink into the dust, but to take strength and stability from connection with each other, and to trust in God's protection from the wind.

Exo 36:21 Ten cubits was the length of a board, and a cubit and a half the breadth of each board-
Acacia bushes don't grow so long nor straight. These boards would have been very difficult to construct (see on :20), and would have involved much joining together of pieces of wood which were difficult to work with. It was an appropriate symbol for the kind of human material which goes to make up God's dwelling place. For God dwells in the community of His people, and not within wood and stone. The materials of the tabernacle therefore represent us His people. See on :22.

Exo 36:22 Each board had two tenons, joined one to another. He made all the boards of the tabernacle this way-
"Tenons" is the word for "hands", again encouraging us to see the boards as God's people, joined together by as it were holding hands. See on :21.

Exo 36:23 He made the boards for the tabernacle: twenty boards for the south side southward-

Heb. "on the south side, to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. See on :25.

Exo 36:24 He made forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for its two tenons, and two sockets under another board for its two tenons-
If each socket weighed a talent (Ex. 38:27), the forty silver sockets would have been really big and solid. The connection between the boards was critical, because according to Ex. 26:15 they were "standing up". This seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable. So the large size and weight of the sockets is appropriate. The internal cohesion and corroboration within the account of the tabernacle is such that it is a profound reflection of the Divine inspiration of the record.

Exo 36:25 For the second side of the tabernacle, on the north side, he made twenty boards-
"The north side" is literally "the left side". As noted on Ex. 36:23, the south side was "to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. The left hand side was considered the side of lesser favour (Gen 48:13-20). This perhaps was why the candlestick was placed on the right or south side of the tent (Ex. 40:24).

Exo 36:26 and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board-
Sockets, *eden*, is related to *adon*, "Lord", in that the word carries the same idea of strength. Again, language appropriate to persons is used of the tabernacle components; for the whole thing pointed forward to the body of believers, in whom God walks and dwells.

Exo 36:27 For the far part of the tabernacle westward he made six boards-
"Westward" is LXX "the back". These six boards would have given a breadth of only nine cubits. We can therefore conclude that the corner post boards of :28 on each side were half a cubit broad, to account for the extra cubit.

Exo 36:28 He made two boards for the corners of the tabernacle in the far part-
As explained on :27, these corner posts were half a cubit broad.

Exo 36:29 They were double beneath, and in the same way they were all the way to its top to one ring. He did this to both of them in the two corners-

The Hebrew of the commandment in Ex. 26:24 is unclear. GNB, which uses "frames" instead of NEV "boards", offers: "These corner frames are to be joined at the bottom and connected all the way to the top. The two frames that form the two corners are to be made in this way".

Exo 36:30 There were eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; under every board two sockets-
The LXX gives "posts" instead of "boards", suggesting there may have been other material in between those posts. "Sockets" is rendered "bases" by some. The idea was that the boards did not sink down into the dust of the earth (see on :15), but the whole structure was kept upright by the tight connection between the boards / posts. These "eight boards" are the six and two of :27,28.

Exo 36:31 He made bars of acacia wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle-
As noted often, acacia wood is very weak. The bars themselves would likely have been made from various parts of this weak bush wood being joined together. The boards likewise were made of this very weak material which it was difficult to join together. But the overall design enabled the whole system to stand strongly, without sinking into the earth (Ex. 26:15), because of the strength of the interconnections. It is a profound picture of the strength of the overall body of believers thanks to the working of God's Spirit and His design; at least potentially. And the strength is only possible if the interconnections are made and not broken by petty arguments about "fellowship".

There is an exact symmetry between the commands to make the tabernacle items- e.g. “You shall make bars…” (Ex. 26:26) - and the record of the fulfilment of the work: “He made… bars”. This is to demonstrate how strictly obedient Moses was to all the commands, hence the comment that he was faithfully obedient in all the work of God’s house (Heb. 3:2,5). In all this, Moses was a type of the perfect obedience of Christ to God. However, we also note that earlier in his life, Moses tended to argue back with God and find every reason *not* to be obedient. As he grew spiritually, he became more naturally and enthusiastically obedient to God’s demands rather than trying to find ways around them, and as such he becomes a pattern for our spiritual growth too.

Exo 36:32 and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the tabernacle for the hinder part westward-
We are left to assume that these bars would have passed through rings made on the boards for this purpose.

Exo 36:33 He made the middle bar to pass through in the midst of the boards from the

one end to the other-
This middle bar would therefore have been 30 cubits / 45 feet long. It would have had to be constructed of bits of acacia, which is no more than a common thorn bush. This singular middle bar, which held the boards in shape and close to each other, looks forward to the Lord Jesus.

Exo 36:34 He overlaid the boards with gold, and made their rings of gold for places for the bars, and overlaid the bars with gold-
The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are.

Exo 36:35 He made the veil of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cherubim. He made it the work of a skilful workman-
The veil symbolized the flesh of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:20); and yet into it was woven scarlet, a symbol of His blood and sacrifice which permeated His mortal life. The lesson is that the cross is a daily way of life. The Lord taught this when He asked us to take up the cross daily: to live each day in the exercise of the same principles which He lived and died by. Let's not see spiritual life as a survival of a few crises, as and when they present themselves. It's a way of life, and the principles which lead us to the little victories (when we scald ourselves with hot water, when we dirty a newly washed shirt...) will give us the greater ones also, when (e.g.) we stand before a tribunal, or face death in whatever form.

The veil represented the flesh of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:20), and also the fact that the way into the most holy place, representing God Himself in Heaven, was somehow barred. But when the Lord died, the veil was torn from top [by God] to bottom (Mt. 27:51), and thus the way into direct personal fellowship with God was permanently opened for all- not just the high priest once a year (Heb. 9:8,24; 10:19). This understanding was so radical for Jewish minds. For the high priest could only nervously enter the most holy place briefly, once every year on the day of atonement. But now the believer in Christ can enter into full and permanent fellowship with God Himself. This was all achieved through the Lord's flesh being torn. The fine linen speaks of His righteousness (Rev. 19:8), the blue of His association with God in Heaven, the crimson of His blood, and the purple of His Kingship (Jn. 19:2). All this was worked into the veil, and the overall product of it was glory to God, represented by the image of cherubim superimposed upon all this.

Exo 36:36 He made four pillars of acacia for it, and overlaid them with gold. Their hooks were of gold. He cast four sockets of silver for them-

At this point we may note that the LXX usually gives "incorruptible wood" for "acacia". Yet as noted on :20, "acacia" is s.w. "thorn". It was the common thorn bush of the desert, a result of the curse in Eden; and yet there is this sense of incorruption and eternity associated with it by the LXX. The LXX has Ex 30:1-10 coming after Ex. 26:32, and this may well be correct.

Exo 36:37 He made a screen for the door of the tent, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of an embroiderer-

The New Testament therefore speaks of "the second veil" (Heb. 9:3) which screened the most holy place. This was of the same material as the veil which covered the door into the holy place, but was more elaborate, including the cherubim motif whereas the first veil didn't. Perhaps the idea is that it is through the Lord Jesus, represented by the veil, that we enter into the community of believers; He is the door and by Him alone a sheep can enter the fold. But it is likewise also through Him, displaying an even greater glory and beauty, that we shall enter into the presence of God Himself. By entering into Him we in prospect enter into the salvation presence of God personally; we are saved in prospect, we live the eternal life, as John's Gospel stresses.

The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work.

Exo 36:38 and the five pillars of it with their hooks. He overlaid their capitals and their fillets with gold, and their five sockets were of brass-

We contrast this gold and brass with the gold and silver fittings for the veil which screened the most holy place. It is easy to over interpret, to see significance never intended, in our European obsession with a 'this = that' schema or hermeneutic. Probably the simple idea was that there was to be an increasing sense of glory as one approached closer to the most holy place. We may note that the expense, beauty and intricacy of the tabernacle grew greater the closer one got to the most holy. There was no natural light in the tabernacle; it had no windows. And only the high priest could enter the most holy once / year. The progressive beauty of God's tabernacle was revealed to fewer and fewer people, the further one progressed. This is in total contrast to the religious ways of the surrounding religions, which made the greatest display of

glory and beauty on the outside, in the eyes of as many as possible; and progressively decreased in detail and beauty within them.

EXODUS CHAPTER 37

Exo 37:1 Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood. Its length was two and a half cubits, and its breadth a cubit and a half, and a cubit and a half its height-
Ex. 25:10 "They shall make an ark" becomes "I made an ark" in Moses' autobiography (Dt. 10:3), although apparently Bezaleel made the ark (Ex. 37:1). The people were generous when asked, but were not real workers. Perhaps Moses himself had to make the ark because they didn't get to it. Or maybe his work was counted as theirs, as happens between the Lord Jesus and ourselves.

A cubit is about 18 inches (45 cm.). The ark was not at all large, for God's glory doesn't require grandiose human artistry nor anything large scale. His glory is manifested in the small and humble things. This was a lesson which David and Solomon failed to learn in their obsession about building a grandiose building for God's glory to dwell in.

Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'. Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel; and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 37:2 He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a moulding of gold for it around it.
The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with gold. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest gold. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure gold. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of

love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are. The mention of a "crown" or "moulding of gold" is as if it represented a person, a King- the Lord Jesus.

Exo 37:3 He cast four rings of gold for it, in its four feet-
The ark had feet, literally "walking feet", feet bent as if walking, to symbolize how the ark was always moving on. We recall that God spoke of how He had "walked" in the tabernacle and therefore didn't want a fixed temple (2 Sam. 7:6).

Even two rings on its one side, and two rings on its other side-
The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God. See on Ex. 25:27.

Exo 37:4 He made poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold-
"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

Exo 37:5 He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to bear the ark-
This was a deconstruction of the Egyptian religious arks, which were displayed and carried in processions. God's ark was concealed, and only carried when it was without religious significance, being moved between sanctuaries.

Exo 37:6 He made a mercy seat of pure gold. Its length was two and a half cubits, and a cubit and a half its breadth-
This was the cover or lid of the ark, with the wings of the cherubim overshadowing it, and upon this the blood of atonement was sprinkled each year at the day of atonement. The blood would have built up over the years. Paul interprets this as symbolic of the blood of the Lord Jesus on the cross. It is a seat or throne in that it is upon that that God's glory is enthroned. But we note the small size of it. God doesn't need anything large scale by human standards. "Mercy seat" is a form of the Hebrew word for 'covering' which is usually used for the covering of sins; literally "the means of propitiation". The LXX word used here is directly applied to the Lord Jesus in Rom. 3:25. It was the blood which was the basis of atonement (Lev. 17:11), but the actual mercy seat, the slab of gold which was the cover of the ark, was put by metonymy for the blood. It is upon this that God's glory dwells and is revealed. His forgiveness is Yahweh at His most glorious, and it is in this that God meets with man (Ex. 25:22). We note that the mercy seat or cover was of pure gold, not acacia word overlaid with gold. It may have been a literal cover over the ark which was detachable.

The mercy seat is clearly stated in Rom. 3:25 to represent the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom has been set forth for all to see the salvation of God in Christ. But note that only the High Priest once / year was able to view the mercy seat covered in the blood of atonement. It's as if we are each now the High Priest, if we are in Christ. We can now with boldness, not as the fearful High Priest, enter the Most Holy place (Heb. 10:29). The veil has been opened. We can enter, in order to gain atonement for others. The "seat" implies someone sat upon it- there God was enthroned in all the glory of His forgiveness of men through the blood of Christ. He "dwelt between the cherubim" (Ps. 80:1; 99:1). There was the impression held by Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:15) and David (2 Sam. 6:2) that God dwelt between the cherubim, over the mercy seat. "Justice and judgment" are where God was enthroned (Ps. 89:14), and this refers to the blood sprinkled mercy seat where God was especially enthroned in glory on the day of Atonement. His forgiveness and salvation has integrity, it's not a turning of a blind eye, a waiving of principle. In this is the wonder of our salvation. Note that the cherubim peered down upon the blood- alluded to in 1 Pet. 1:11,12, which says that the Angels earnestly look into the things of the blood of Christ. The cherubim were of gold, of one piece with the mercy seat, but Jesus was not an Angel by nature (see Heb. 1)- which warns us not to over-interpret tabernacle types.

Exo 37:7 He made two cherubim of gold. He made them of beaten work, at the two ends of the mercy seat-
The cherubim had wings (:9) and could have human and animal forms, according to Ez. 1,10. In this sense they could be said to resemble the sphinx forms which were such a common part of Egyptian religion. The similarity is in the fact that God was deconstructing Egyptian religion, just as the plagues were aimed at the gods of Egypt. Instead of openly displayed sphinx like creatures memorializing the dead, these were the hidden symbols of God's living presence amongst His people, hidden away in the holiest place, and only briefly seen once every year by the high priest.

Exo 37:8 one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end. He made the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends-
The cherubim represented those through whom God was manifested, be it Angels or His people. For this is how the cherubim are used in Ezekiel. But they are of one part with the mercy seat, which represented the Lord Jesus (Rom. 3:25). This speaks of His deep unity with us, shown in His life by His being of our nature, and now through the presence of His Spirit within those who are "in" Him.

Exo 37:9 The cherubim spread out their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, with their faces toward one another. The faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat-
Speaking of the things of the blood of the Lord Jesus, Peter comments: "Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12), as if he saw in the cherubim some representation of the Angels looking down at the blood of atonement sprinkled upon the mercy seat. And yet Peter implies that we too "look into" those things. And thus we note that the cherubim were looking down at the blood, not at each other; as our focus should be upon the Lord's blood, and not each other.

The pagan god tabernacles all feature some kind of throne, upon which the god visibly sits. The cherubim of the Israelite tabernacle are similar to the Mesopotamian *karibu*, cherubim, upon which their gods sat. Phoenician and Egyptian art uncovered by archaeologists shows they believed in cherubim very similar in form to those described in Ezekiel's visions of Yahweh's cherubim. The throne of Yahweh was the ark, covered by the cherubim. There, above the blood spattered lid of the ark (or "mercy seat"), supported by the cherubim, the pagan mind expected to see Israel's God enthroned. The similarities to the pagan shrines were intentional- to set up this expectation. But there was nothing there. It was, to their eyes, an empty throne- just as God appears to be absent to so many people today. There was no visible image resting upon the wings of the cherubim, nothing on the throne / lid of the ark but the blood of atonement (which pointed forward to that of God's Son).

Exo 37:10 He made the table of acacia wood. Its length was two cubits, and its breadth was a cubit, and its height was a cubit and a half-
The Ugaritic poems speak of the furniture in Baal's heavenly temple, and it's very similar to that in the Most Holy Place. But the poems especially focus upon Baal's bed and chests of drawers for his clothing. These are noticeably absent in Yahweh's tabernacle furniture.

The table of show bread was to be made of acacia wood, which was effectively the weak wood from a thorn bush; but David planned to make it of pure gold, and even worked out the weight of gold required for it (1 Chron. 28:16). And Solomon indeed made it of gold (1 Kings 7:48), leading to it being known as "the pure table" (2 Chron. 13:11). Religion had overtaken spirituality, form had eclipsed content. Likewise the "tables of silver" David ordered to be made (1 Chron. 28:16) do not feature in the tabernacle. He was missing the point- that God wanted His holiest symbols made of common, weak things like acacia wood. For His strength and glory is made perfect in weakness. David claims these plans were from God (1 Chron. 28:19), although as discussed on 1 Chron. 28:12, they were in fact from his own mind. The way these things were taken into captivity, with no record of this golden table ever being returned, surely reflects God's judgment upon this kind of religious show. He prefers a humble house church in an inner city room, rather than a gold plated cathedral. The way some exclusive churches speak of 'maintaining a pure table' suggests they have made the same essential mistake as David did.

Exo 37:11 He overlaid it with pure gold, and made a gold moulding around it-
The table of shewbread looked ahead to the breaking of bread in the Christian experience. It had a crown (NEV "moulding") around it, as if it were the king's table. And indeed it is. We sit there as guests at the king's table, and it is not for us to use it as "our" table, excluding or ejecting others from it.

Exo 37:12 He made a border of a handbreadth around it, and made a golden moulding on its border around it-
The golden moulding or crown is twice stressed (:24), as if it really was the king's table. The purpose of the rim was for the rings for carrying it (:27).

Exo 37:13 He cast four rings of gold for it, and put the rings in the four corners that were on its four feet-
The ark had feet, literally "walking feet", feet bent as if walking, to symbolize how the ark was always moving on. We recall that God spoke of how He had "walked" in the tabernacle and therefore didn't want a fixed temple (2 Sam. 7:6). See on :5.

Exo 37:14 The rings were close by the border, the places for the poles to carry the table-
"Places" is the Hebrew word usually used for a house. A different word would have been used if the idea was merely a "place". There is a purposeful juxtaposition between the image of stability carried by the idea of a "house", and the fact that the rings and poles were in order that this furniture could be carried and moved on. God's permanent, characteristic way is the way of dynamism, moving on.

Exo 37:15 He made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold, to carry the table-
The need to be mobile and always moving on is stressed throughout the record of the tabernacle. There could have been some blanket statement like "All the tabernacle equipment had rings on it so that poles could be put in the rings, and it could be carried". But the record labours this mobile nature of the whole system; see on :14.

Exo 37:16 He made the vessels which were on the table, its dishes, its spoons, its bowls, and its pitchers with which to pour out, of pure gold-
Yahweh had a "table". The Mesopotamian gods likewise had a table (*passuru*) upon which food was placed as a meal for the god (as in Is. 65:11). But the beakers, cups and vessels on Yahweh's table remained empty; the wine was poured out onto the sacrifices and vaporized; the priests ate the shewbread. There was no pretence that Yahweh was a hungry god who needed to be fed by His worshippers. To the pagan mind, this would've meant that if He didn't eat, He wasn't actually around nor powerful. Again, the difference and similarities were intentional, in order to point up the need for faith in the power and existence of Yahweh.

Ex. 25:30 adds: "You shall set bread of the presence on the table before me always". "The bread of the presence" doesn't simply mean that it was bread which was in God's presence; for that is the meaning covered by "before Me always". Rather the idea is that God's especial presence was there in the eating of the bread. The God who dwelt the other side of the veil, over the mercy seat, as it were came out from there and was present when the bread was eaten. We may have here some hint that there is a special presence of the Father and Son at the breaking of bread, which is the Christian equivalent of this table (Mt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 11:10).

Exo 37:17 He made the lampstand of pure gold. He made the lampstand of beaten work. Its base, its shaft, its cups, its buds, and its flowers were of one piece with it-
"The candlestick" or menorah is only ever spoken of in the law of Moses in the singular, but in 1 Chron. 28:15 David decided there were to be multiple such candlesticks. By

doing so, he ignored the symbolism of the one candlestick, the one people of God; such was his obsession with mere religion. See on :10.

The candlestick represents the assembly of believers (Rev. 1:20). It was made of beaten work, representing how all those in the true church will be beaten into a shape through which they can be lights for God. "Hammered" or "beaten" suggests that through blow by blow on material heated in the furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10), God works out a place where His glory may be revealed. And that place is our lives.

Exo 37:18 There were six branches going out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of its one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of its other side-
The lampstand represents God's people (Rev. 1:20), and it had seven lamps; the six branches and the central stem, upon which there was also a lamp. Seven is the number of wholeness and completion. Perhaps the idea is that there is to be a complete manifestation of God through the witness of His people, burning the oil of the Spirit. Each component member witnesses to Him in a slightly different way, not only in this life but throughout the generations of God's people. Likewise the body of Christ in the same way manifests Christ to the world.

Exo 37:19 three cups made like almond blossoms in one branch, a bud and a flower, and three cups made like almond blossoms in the other branch, a bud and a flower: so for the six branches going out of the lampstand-
The almond is the first tree in Palestine to bud, so it means literally the watching tree, as if it were alive and eager to come to life. So it is appropriate for the candlestick, which represented God's people. Jeremiah sees the branch of an almond tree and is comforted that "I watch over My word to perform it" (Jer. 1:11,12). The word translated 'hasten' or "watch over" is very similar to the word for 'almond'. Almonds are associated with God's eyes; the bowls of the lampstands were almonds (Ex. 25:33,34). Zech. 4:2 talks about these almond bowls on the candlestick, and Zech. 4:10 interprets them as the "eyes of the LORD which run to and fro through the whole earth". 2 Chron. 16:9 talks about the Angels in the same way; "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him". Similarly in Rev. 4:5 the lamps in the bowls of almond are equated with the "seven spirits (or Angels) of God". Rev. 5:6 equates the seven eyes with the seven spirits. Thus the almond rod which Jeremiah saw represented God's eyes or Angels who would watch over the word of God which Jeremiah was to speak to perform it. And He does likewise with the witness of all those represented within the candlestick.

Israel was one nation under God; they were represented by one seven-branched candlestick. But in the New Testament vision of Rev. 1:20, each church is represented by an individual candlestick, and the body of Christ as a whole is represented by seven

candlesticks, seven being the number of completion. This suggests that each local congregation is seen as autonomous by Christ; no other candlestick can dictate to another what they should do. If they fail to give light as they should, then this is dealt with by Christ Himself, the One who walks amongst the seven candlesticks and is in their midst (Rev. 1:13); He alone can remove a candlestick (Rev. 2:5).

Exo 37:20 In the lampstand were four cups made like almond blossoms, its buds and its flowers-
The menorah or "candlestick" is from a root meaning to yoke. In the Christian context, the yoke, the uniting power, is the Lord Jesus (Mt. 11:30). He is the unique power which binds together His otherwise disparate people into one candlestick. Thereby Christian unity becomes a witness to the world, at least that is the intention. All disunity between believers therefore causes the candlestick not to function, and the light of witness is thereby the less.

Exo 37:21 and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, and a bud under two branches of one piece with it, for the six branches going out of it-

The language of buds, flowers and branches invites us to see the candlestick as a tree of life giving light in the darkness of the tabernacle, which had no natural light. The candlestick represents the local church in our times (Rev. 1:20); we as communities of believers are to be as the tree of life, offering eternity to a dark world; hence Prov. 11:30 likens the fruit of the righteous to the tree of life, which results in winning people for eternity. In this sense the ecclesia, the community of believers, is to be as the tree of life to others by their words (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 15:4).

Exo 37:22 Their buds and their branches were of one piece with it. The whole thing was one beaten work of pure gold-
The fact the candlestick was made from one piece of gold is emphasized; it speaks of the unity of the local church, achieved through much patient beating out of the material which comprises it. The candlestick represents the assembly of believers (Rev. 1:20). It was made of beaten work, representing how all those in the true church will be beaten into a shape through which they can be lights for God. "Hammered" suggests that through blow by blow on material heated in the furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10), God works out a place where His glory may be revealed. And that place is our lives.

Exo 37:23 He made its seven lamps, and its snuffers, and its snuff dishes, of pure gold-
The mention of seven lamps confirms that there was a central stem with a lamp, and six

branches coming out of it with a total of six lamps on them- making seven lamps. Ex. 25:37 adds: "And they shall light its lamps to give light to the space in front of it". The candlestick was on the south end of the holy place, shedding light "opposite" (Heb., NEV "in front of it"), i.e. towards the northern end where the veil was, and where the table of shewbread was, symbolizing fellowship with God. This is the purpose of our witness; to direct people towards fellowship with God and entry to the most holy place.

Gold wasn't the strongest or most practical material for these instruments. But it represents faith (1 Pet. 1:7). We aren't the best instruments for God to use in His house, but He prefers to use the soft and those who aren't humanly qualified for His work- because He works by faith in us, and by our faith in Him rather than our human strength.

Exo 37:24 He made it of a talent of pure gold, with all its vessels-
A talent was 94 pounds or 42.6 kg. This was a huge amount of gold, but all the same, due to the dense weight of gold, the candlestick would have been quite small if it were solid. 42 kg. of solid gold is about the size of two standard size books. This fits the theme that everything in the tabernacle was small scale, not large. The ecclesia of God, represented by the candlestick (Rev. 1:20), is small but gives huge light in a dark place, pointing towards the entrance to the most holy place. It is depicted as large and a source of particular glory in the famous depiction of the capture of Jerusalem by Titus, but either the candlestick of those times was only gold plated, or the size was exaggerated.

Exo 37:25 He made the altar of incense of acacia wood. It was square: its length was a cubit, and its breadth a cubit. Its height was two cubits. Its horns were of one piece with it-
Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place, where there was the incense altar [prayer- Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4], the table of shewbread [the breaking of bread] and candlestick [church life], shining light towards the entrance to the most holy place where God dwelt between the cherubim.

GNB "18 inches long and 18 inches wide, and it is to be 36 inches high". Again we note the small scale of the tabernacle and its furniture. God doesn't need grandiose religious symbols.

Exo 37:26 He overlaid it with pure gold, its top, its sides around it, and its horns. He made a gold moulding around it-
The mention of a "crown" or "moulding of gold" is as if it represented a person, a King- the Lord Jesus.

Exo 37:27 He made two golden rings for it under its moulding crown, on its two ribs, on its two sides, for places for poles with which to carry it-
"Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God. See on :3.

Exo 37:28 He made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with gold-
"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 37:29 He made the holy anointing oil and the pure incense of sweet spices, after the art of the perfumer-
The specific perfumer in view was Bezaleel.

EXODUS CHAPTER 38

Exo 38:1 He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood. It was square. Its length was five cubits, its breadth was five cubits, and its height was three cubits-
In 2 Chron. 4:1, David and Solomon replaced this with "An altar of brass, twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and ten cubits in height". This was far larger than the altar of the tabernacle, which was 5 x 5 x 3. 5 cubits is 7.5 feet (225 cm.), 3 cubits is 1.5 feet (45 cm.) Clearly the idea was that far more animals were going to be offered. And yet David and Solomon were forgetting the lesson taught through the sin with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother; God doesn't want sacrifice, but rather broken, contrite hearts (Ps. 40:6-8). Just as God didn't want a physical house built to Him, but rather wanted to build a house of people with humble hearts open to the working of His Spirit. The altar was of brass, whereas that of the tabernacle was of common, weak acacia wood (Ex. 27:1,2). This taught that the basis of acceptable sacrifice and approach to God is the recognition of our common weak humanity, and sacrifice is offered to God upon that basis. But Solomon had no recognition of his own moral frailty and humanity, and was convinced that as David's son and the Messianic seed [as he imagined], he was therefore perfect. And it seems David too somehow rationalized his sin with Bathsheba by the end of his life, and lacked grace and humility.

Exo 38:2 He made its horns on its four corners. Its horns were of one piece with it, and he overlaid it with brass-
Whilst there are similarities with the concept of religion which Israel had been used to in

Egypt, there were significant differences. The altars of Egypt tended to have the horns of previously sacrificed animals attached to them. But the horns of Yahweh's altar were in order to bind the sacrifices (Ps. 118:27), they had practical function; and were a symbol of Yahweh's salvation (1 Kings 1:50)- not the triumph of secular man over an impressive animal.

Exo 38:3 He made all the vessels of the altar, the pots, the shovels, the basins, the forks, and the fire pans. He made all its vessels of brass-
Jewish tradition has it that the fire which came down from Heaven in Lev. 9:24 remained burning; and this fire was preserved burning all night and day. Hence the need for "fire pans" (Ex. 27:3) to keep the fire burning whilst the altar was being cleaned or the remains of sacrifices removed from it.

Exo 38:4 He made for the altar a grating of a network of brass, under the ledge around it beneath, reaching halfway up-
This implies that the altar was a brass plated box, with a grating on the top to feed air to the fire with air. Through this the ashes would have fallen into a pan below.

Exo 38:5 He cast four rings for the four ends of brass grating, to be places for the poles-
The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 38:6 He made the poles of acacia wood, and overlaid them with brass-
"Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being

worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

Exo 38:7 He put the poles into the rings on the sides of the altar, with which to carry it. He made it hollow with planks-
"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 38:8 He made the basin of brass, and its base of brass, out of the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
Perhaps this suggests that their devotion to God led them to no longer be so concerned with their own image and appearance.

Exo 38:9 He made the court: for the south side southward the hangings of the court were of fine twined linen, one hundred cubits-
The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. It perhaps appropriately designated the boundary between the believer and the world, represented by the linen fence which marked the enclosure of the tabernacle. 100 cubits is 58 yards or 53 meters.

Exo 38:10 their pillars were twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver-
"Fillets" is rendered "connecting rods" by some, and "sockets" as "bases".

Exo 38:11 For the north side one hundred cubits, their pillars twenty, and their sockets twenty, of brass; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver-
Nearly all the features of the tabernacle suggest parts of the body. The girl in Solomon's song portrays her lover as having "legs as pillars [s.w. "pillars" here] set upon sockets [s.w. "sockets" here, meaning "bases"] of gold" (Song 5:15). The pillars therefore correspond to legs, and the bases / "sockets" to feet. It was as if the tabernacle was surrounded by men's legs and feet, holding hands with each other.

Exo 38:12 For the west side were hangings of fifty cubits, their pillars ten, and their sockets ten; the hooks of the pillars, and their fillets, of silver-
GNB "with ten posts and ten bases".

Exo 38:13 For the east side, eastward fifty cubits-
LXX adds "their pillars ten, and their sockets ten".

Exo 38:14 The hangings for the one side were fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three-
Summed up in GNB: "On each side of the entrance there are to be 71/2 yards of curtains, with three posts and three bases". Fifteen cubits is 6.8 meters, or 7.5 yards. But LXX gives "fifty cubits".

Exo 38:15 and so also for the other side: on this hand and that hand by the gate of the court were hangings of fifteen cubits; their pillars three, and their sockets three-
See on :14. But LXX gives "fifty cubits".

Exo 38:16 All the hangings around the court were of fine twined linen-
For "linen" see on :9. "Hangings" is literally 'covering', and covering is a major theme of the tabernacle (Ex. 25:20; 26:36,37; 35:12; 37:9; 39:34; 40:3,21). For the message was of the atonement or covering which is in the Lord Jesus.

Exo 38:17 The sockets for the pillars were of brass. The hooks of the pillars and their fillets were of silver; and the overlaying of their heads, of silver; and all the pillars of the court were filleted with silver-
GNB "All the posts around the enclosure are to be connected with silver rods, and their hooks are to be made of silver and their bases of bronze". Silver rods seems another feature of the tabernacle which might appear at first blush to not at all be how man would have designed things.

Exo 38:18 The screen for the gate of the court was the work of the embroiderer, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen. Twenty cubits was the length, and the height in the breadth was five cubits, like to the hangings of the court-
This describes the curtain over the door of the tabernacle in similar language to how the veil hiding the Most Holy is described. Entrance to both the court and to the most holy place was through a veil made of the same design. The Lord Jesus alludes to this in teaching that "I am the door". The only way to get on the path to God is through Him. This

rules out all non-Christian paths to God. Christ is the door of the tabernacle through which we enter at our conversion and baptism (Jn. 10:9). By doing so we also enter, in prospect, through the veil into the Most Holy of eternity and Divine nature. The height of the curtains was such that a man would have to bow his head in order to pass underneath it, teaching the humility required to approach God's presence.

Exo 38:19 Their pillars were four, and their sockets four, of brass; their hooks of silver, and the overlaying of the heads, and their fillets, of silver-
"Sockets" is GNB "bases", and "fillets" is "rods".

Exo 38:20 All the pins of the tabernacle, and around the court, were of brass-
The "pins" are the tent pegs.

Exo 38:21 This is the amount of material used for the tabernacle, even the Tabernacle of the Testimony, as they were counted, according to the commandment of Moses, for the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest-
GNB is clearer: "Here is a list of the amounts of the metals used in the Tent of the LORD's presence, where the two stone tablets were kept on which the Ten Commandments were written. The list was ordered by Moses and made by the Levites who worked under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest". We note that the work of accounting was given to Ithamar rather than to Nadab or Abihu, who were later to show themselves apostate. Perhaps they already showed signs of lack of integrity at this stage. Time and again we note the internal corroboration within the inspired record.

Exo 38:22 Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, made all that Yahweh commanded Moses-
Bezaleel means shelter of / for God, appropriate for a man who built His tent / tabernacle. This reinforces the idea that God prefers to dwell in a tent, and not in a physical brick building. David and Solomon willfully ignored this in their obsession with building a temple. It's possible (although see my commentary on 1 Chron. 2:18) that Bezaleel was little more than a child. For 1 Chron. 2:19,20 says that Caleb was the father of Hur. Caleb was only 40 when he first spied out the land (Josh. 14:7). "The son of..." is not a precise term in Hebrew and can simply mean a relative, but there is still the idea of a relative in a younger generation than the 'father'. Bezaleel was a generation or two older than Bezaleel; and when Caleb was 40, Bezaleel made the tabernacle that same year. This would be typical of how God works through the weak and those considered inappropriate by men. He gave His Spirit to the young Bezaleel, who may have been only 12 years old, and through him built His dwelling place. We can be sure there would have been many older and experienced builders, who had worked for the Egyptian building projects, who would have been far more qualified in secular terms.

Exo 38:23 With him was Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, an engraver and a skilful workman, and an embroiderer in blue, in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen-
This seems to imply that Aholiab was already a master craftsman; but he could only do the work because God blessed and developed the 'natural' talent which Aholiab was willing to present to God's service. God sometimes gives us the opportunity to develop our 'natural' talents for use in His service- other times, He asks us to do that which is for us a taking up on the cross.

"The skilful workman" of Ex. 28:15 and elsewhere may specifically refer to Aholiab (Ex. 35:35; 38:23). Perhaps Paul saw in this man a representation of us all- for he urged us likewise to be careful workmen when it comes to the understanding and teaching of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Exo 38:24 All the gold that was used for the work in all the work of the sanctuary, even the gold of the offering, was twenty-nine talents, and seven hundred thirty shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary-
The total weight of all the gold, silver and brass comes to 10.4 tones or 10,400 kg. In addition to this there was the gold used and destroyed in the destruction of the golden calf. This would however only make a very small amount per person, if indeed two million of them left Egypt. But see on Ex. 12:37. They did indeed spoil the Egyptians, but we can assume that they gave nearly all their wealth to the tabernacle project; perhaps that is the intention of the note in Ex. 33:6 that they stopped wearing jewellery from then onwards. And yet they continued worshipping idols all through the wilderness journey, despite their stellar generosity to Yahweh's tabernacle. We also can reflect that transporting this tabernacle on poles was a major exercise.

Exo 38:25 The silver of those who were numbered of the congregation was one hundred talents, and one thousand seven hundred seventy-five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary-
The census of Ex. 30:16 required each man of military age to pay a half shekel of silver. It was used for the silver sockets in the boards of the tabernacle etc. There were 600,000 men of military age who left Egypt (Ex. 12:37); if they each paid a half shekel, this would have been 300,000 shekels of silver. 3000 shekels make one talent, so this would have made 1000 talents of silver. Which is exactly the amount of silver mentioned in Ex. 38:27. However, there were actually 603,550 men (Ex. 38:26). And we wonder whether each man actually paid what was asked. We see here the way in which the Biblical record often doesn't worry about literal exactitude, but presents an overall picture.

Exo 38:26 a beka a head, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for each

one who passed over to those who were numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men-
"Beka" is literally 'that which is divided', a divided shekel or half shekel. See the discussion of whether this number is literal on Ex. 12:37.

Exo 38:27 The one hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; one hundred sockets for the one hundred talents, a talent for a socket-
If each socket weighed a talent (Ex. 38:27), the forty silver sockets connecting the boards would have been really big and solid. The connection between the boards was critical, because according to Ex. 26:15 they were "standing up". This seems to mean that the boards were not to merely sink into the dust of the earth, but to hold together in such a way that they would be stable. So the large size and weight of the sockets is appropriate. The internal cohesion and corroboration within the account of the tabernacle is such that it is a profound reflection of the Divine inspiration of the record.

Exo 38:28 From the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels he made hooks for the pillars, overlaid their capitals, and made fillets for them-
The weak acacia wood was to be overlaid with silver. "Overlay" in Hebrew carries the idea of to be seen, to be looked at. This was how God looked at that weak acacia wood, as if it was the finest silver. This was an Old Testament anticipation of what the New Testament calls imputed righteousness; we the weak acacia wood, the thorn bush, are looked at as pure silver. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, and one outcome of love is to consider the beloved as far more glorious than they are.

Exo 38:29 The brass of the offering was seventy talents, and two thousand four hundred shekels-
God remembers to this day how much everyone gave of what material, and has preserved the record in His written word. This is encouragement to us that no sacrifice for God’s house is ever forgotten, but He eternally remembers it.

Exo 38:30 From this he made the sockets to the door of the Tent of Meeting, the bronze altar, the bronze grating for it, all the vessels of the altar-
*"*Vessels" is the same Hebrew word translated "jewels" when we read that the Hebrews were to 'borrow' "jewels" from the Egyptians (Ex. 3:22; 11:2; 12:35). All they took from Egypt / the world was to be used in the Lord's work, and that is an abiding principle.

Exo 38:31 the sockets around the court, the sockets of the gate of the court, all the pins of the tabernacle, and all the pins around the court-

The amount of brass was enough for us to assume that the tent pegs and sockets or GNB "bases" were very solid. They would have had to be very strong to hold up the tabernacle against desert winds.

EXODUS CHAPTER 39

Exo 39:1 Of the blue, purple, and scarlet, they made finely worked garments, for ministering in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as Yahweh commanded Moses-
Scarlet and purple were the colours of royalty or rulership, yet it was intertwined with the priestly garments. There was always the theme of king-priests. It was perhaps God's initial intention that the leadership of Israel should be by the priests, and their choice of a human king and the subsequent ruling dynasty through David and the tribe of Judah was not His ideal intention.

Exo 39:2 He made the ephod of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen-
The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. We also see that the religious style which they had been used to in Egypt was being alluded to but deconstructed. They were being given a system of religion not completely foreign to them, but also radically different to all systems they had previously used or encountered. This is why the Pentateuch alludes to things like the laws of Hammurabi, or the existing creation myths- to deconstruct them.

Exo 39:3 They beat the gold into thin plates, and cut it into wires, to work it in the blue, in the purple, in the scarlet, and in the fine linen, the work of the skilful workman-
This may refer to one specific "skilful workman", Bezaleel or Aholiab.

Exo 39:4 They made shoulder straps for it, joined together. At the two ends it was joined together-
LXX "It shall have two shoulder-pieces joined together, fastened on the two sides". "Joined / Coupled together" is s.w. "have fellowship with" (Ps. 94:20), and often of men 'joining together'. The theme of coupling and joining together occurs throughout the record of the tabernacle, and is used e.g. of the joining together of the curtains (Ex. 26:3). Unity amongst believers is to be the outcome of the indwelling of God's glory. Disunity results from simply not having perceived His glory. For before that, all disunity disappears as we are awed by His grace and convicted of our own smallness and unworthiness.

Exo 39:5 The skilfully woven band that was on it, with which to fasten it on, was of the same piece, like its work; of gold, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen; as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The significance of the colours should not be over emphasized. Israel in the wilderness only had a limited range of things with them, and as with the use of the acacia wood for the tabernacle construction, God was [and is] in a sense limited by the material He choses to have available to work with. But see on :1.

Exo 39:6 They worked the onyx stones, enclosed in settings of gold, engraved with the engravings of a signet, according to the names of the children of Israel-

LXX "emerald". The LXX is the version quoted repeatedly in the New Testament, often preferring its renderings to that of the Masoretic text. And yet the LXX differs from the Hebrew in the description of the precious stones, and their order in the breastplate. It is unwise therefore to seek to find meaning in the actual stones. These precious stones would have been extracted from the amulets or jewellery given to Israel by the Egyptians when they left Egypt. The significant thing is that the names of God's people were engraved upon them. God's people were carried before God by the High Priest, looking forward to how we are personally represented by name before God, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus in Heaven itself. Man is not alone, none are forgotten or unknown. That is the simple take away.

The names of God's people were engraved upon the stones which were on the High Priest's clothing. God's people were carried before God by the High Priest, looking forward to how we are personally represented by name before God, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus in Heaven itself. Man is not alone, none are forgotten or unknown. That is the simple take away. But "engraved" is the word usually translated "open", "to make appear". We are revealed before God, our life situation and personality type is openly made to appear before God, by our great High Priest.

Exo 39:7 He put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod, to be stones of memorial for the children of Israel, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The idea wasn't that God might forget His people and so He needed to be reminded by the Priest wearing these stones with their names on; rather they were a reminder to Israel that they were each personally remembered by God all the time.

Bearing on the shoulders by the High Priest in order to gain atonement surely looks forward to the Lord bearing the cross on His shoulders. Yet He bore our sins. The cross is presented as symbolic of the weight of our sins. This is symbolic of how Christ, our High Priest, carries the names of all God's people on His shoulders and over His heart

(:8) as He stands for us in God's presence. The preciousness of the stones reflects our high value in God's sight.

Ex. 28:10 adds: "six of their names on the one stone, and the names of the six that remain on the other stone, in the order of their birth". The names of the tribes were to be written on the two shoulder stones of the High Priest "in the order of their birth" (Ex. 28:10). Seeing that Reuben was deposed from being the first born, we may wonder why there is this curious requirement. And the answer is perhaps just very practical. For if we take the tribes in the order of their birth, the list is: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali upon one stone, and Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin upon the other stone. There are then exactly 25 Hebrew letters on each stone. This kind of perfect symmetry would be impossible to arrange by any uninspired hand. It is this kind of internal corroboration which to me is the most powerful argument for a Divinely inspired Bible.

Exo 39:8 He made the breastplate, the work of a skilful workman, like the work of the ephod; of gold, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen-
"Breastplate" is LXX "oracle", as if the judgment flashed out from the urim and thummim associated with the breastplate was God's word or oracle to His people. For "linen" see on :2. "The skilful workman" may specifically refer to Aholiab (Ex. 38:23). Perhaps Paul saw in this man a representation of us all- for he urged us likewise to be careful workmen when it comes to the understanding and teaching of God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Exo 39:9 It was square. They made the breastplate double. Its length was a span, and its breadth a span, being double-
GNB "9 inches long and 9 inches wide". 23 x 23 cm. Again we note the small size of the things associated with the tabernacle, compared with the grandiose surface level religion of the other peoples. David and Solomon's obsession with building a large scale temple reflects how they failed to grasp this. The breastplate was quite small, compared to the grandiose religious clothing of other religions.

Exo 39:10 They set in it four rows of stones: a row of ruby, topaz, and beryl was the first row-
The faithful believers are likened to a stone with a unique name written on it (Rev. 2:17). We are each called to uniquely reflect and refract the light of God's glory in a way slightly different to anyone else, just as the stones on the breastplate all glimmered with their own unique beauty. Unity isn't the same as uniformity. LXX "a sardius, a topaz, and emerald". See on :6 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 39:11 and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and an emerald-
LXX "a carbuncle, a sapphire, and a jasper". See on :6 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 39:12 and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst-
LXX has "a ligure" for "jacinth". See on :6 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text.

Exo 39:13 and the fourth row, a chrysolite, an onyx, and a jasper. They were enclosed in gold settings-
LXX "chrysolite, and a beryl, and an onyx stone". See on :6 for the difference between the LXX and the Hebrew text. "Chrysolite" is Hebrew '*tarshish*', from the idea of long endurance. "Ships of tarshish" therefore refer to long distance trading vessels, not a specific location called Tarshish.

Exo 39:14 The stones were according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet, everyone according to his name, for the twelve tribes-
The long sentence here belabours the point several times over that the names of Israel were engraven or 'opened up' upon the stones. The idea is that the people of God were individually represented by name before God by the High Priest / the Lord Jesus.

Exo 39:15 They made on the breastplate chains like cords, of braided work of pure gold-
LXX calls "the breastplate" "the oracle", see on :8. The attachment of the breastplate to the inner clothes of the High Priest is emphasized. The impression is of careful connection of the precious stones to the person of the High Priest- all looking forward to our connection with the Lord Jesus.

Exo 39:16 They made two settings of gold, and two gold rings, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate-
As noted on :15, the impression is of careful connection of the precious stones to the person of the High Priest- all looking forward to our connection with the Lord Jesus. LXX is quite different: "And Aaron shall take the names of the children of Israel, on the oracle of judgment on his breast; a memorial before God for him as he goes into the sanctuary".

Exo 39:17 They put the two braided chains of gold in the two rings at the ends of the breastplate-
The almost monotonous stress continues- that the chains connected the breastplate to

the ephod. The lesson from all this is that God's people are indeed truly connected to their High Priest. And that connection, like they themselves, is all supremely precious- the most valuable metal and stones are used to represent it.

Exo 39:18 The other two ends of the two braided chains they put on the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod, in its front-
As noted on :16,17, the cameraman of Divine inspiration is zoomed in very close up here. The connection of God's people to their High Priest is being laboured.

Exo 39:19 They made two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the breastplate, on its edge, which was toward the side of the ephod inward-
GNB "make two rings of gold and attach them to the lower corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod".

Exo 39:20 They made two rings of gold, and put them on the two shoulder straps of the ephod underneath, in its front, close by its coupling, above the skilfully woven band of the ephod-
GNB "attach them to the lower part of the front of the two shoulder straps of the ephod, near the seam and above the finely woven belt". There is nowhere that we have more detail about a piece of clothing in the Bible. The attachment of the symbols of God's people to the High Priest is clearly of the utmost importance to Him.

Exo 39:21 They bound the breastplate by its rings to the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it might be on the skilfully woven band of the ephod, and that the breastplate might not come loose from the ephod, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
GNB "so that the breastpiece rests above the belt and does not come loose". Again we note the constant emphasis upon the connection between the breastplate and the ephod, looking ahead to the unbreakable connection between God's people and the Lord Jesus in His work of mediation for us before God.

Exo 39:22 He made the robe of the ephod of woven work, all of blue-
This plain single colour [perhaps indigo] would have thrown into contrast the variegated patterns of the ephod and breastplate.

Exo 39:23 The opening of the robe in its midst was like the opening of a coat of mail, with a binding around its opening, that it should not be torn-
The Lord having His own clothes put back on Him meant that He would have been dressed in blood sprinkled garments for the walk to Golgotha. Again His holy mind

would have been on the Messianic prophecies of Is. 63:3 about a Messiah with blood sprinkled garments lifted up in glorious victory. Or perhaps He saw the connection to Lev. 8:30, where the priests had to have blood sprinkled garments in order to begin their priestly work. This would have sent His mind to us, for whom He was interceding. Likewise when He perceived that His garment would not be rent, He would have joyfully perceived that He was indeed as the High Priest whose garment was not to be rent (Ex. 39:23).

The Lord's robe He wore to the cross was without seam and not torn (Jn. 19:23,24). There He acted as High Priest, with the names of God's people on His shoulders, upon which He carried the cross; and in His heart. "Now is the judgment of this world", He predicted of the cross; and the cross was indeed the judgment of the world. This was matched by the urim and thummim being on the breastplate, flashing out judgment.

Christ died as the supreme High Priest, and the soldiers decided not to rend His garment but instead to throw dice to see which of them should get it (Jn. 19:24). As He hung on the cross, looking down and noticing what they were doing, He would have remembered this teaching about the High Priest's garment, and taken encouragement that He was indeed doing the High Priestly work to its ultimate term. His blood stained, dirty outer garment- perhaps woven by his social outcast of a mother- was equivalent of the High Priest's robe of "glory and beauty" (Ex. 28:2).

Exo 39:24 They made on the skirts of the robe pomegranates of blue, purple, scarlet, and twined linen-
The golden bells on the High Priest's garments were familiar in local religions as charm to ward off demons by their noise. But they are used in the Divine scheme of things to remind of God's holiness and the danger of human sin impinging upon this and thus leading to death. And thereby fear of demons was to be replaced by fear of God's holiness and human sin.

LXX "pomegranates of a flowering pomegranate tree".

Exo 39:25 They made bells of pure gold, and put the bells between the pomegranates around the skirts of the robe, between the pomegranates-
The pomegranate was full of seeds. The suggestion was that the mediation of the High Priest was to produce a multitudinous seed, in fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. Hebrew tradition claims there were 12 pomegranates on the hem, appropriate to the 12 tribes of Israel. All this came to full term in the priestly work of the Lord Jesus. As noted on :23, the robe looked ahead to that of the Lord Jesus, and so we note how He healed those who took hold of the hem of His robe (Mt. 9:20; 14:36). Perhaps they perceived His High Priestly nature.

Exo 39:26 a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate, around the skirts of the robe, to minister in, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
The bells can be understood as meaning that there was to be an element of proclamation in the work of the priest. Ex. 28:35 adds: "It shall be on Aaron to minister; and his sound shall be heard when he goes in to the holy place before Yahweh, and when he comes out, so that he will not die".
"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16) may be alluding to how the High Priest had to have bells so that "his sound may be heard... that he die not" (Ex. 28:35; this idea of the sound being heard is picked up in Ps. 19 concerning the spread of the Gospel).

Exo 39:27 They made the coats of fine linen of woven work for Aaron, and for his sons-
Ex. 28:40 adds that these clothes were "for glory and for beauty". The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world (Dt. 26:19 s.w.). Again we see repeated the ideal intention that all Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

Exo 39:28 and the turban of fine linen, and the linen headbands of fine linen, and the linen breeches of fine twined linen-
"The fine linen is the righteousness of the saints" (Rev. 19:8) suggests that the entire body of believers ["saints"] are seen as indeed they are, a priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). This is how we will be presented to the Lord, as priests now equipped for eternal service. This is what eternity will be about- serving in the spirit of priests. And we are to train for this now, and at least develop the desire to do that work.

Exo 39:29 and the sash of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
"Sash" is AV "girdle". "The embroiderer" was specifically Bezaleel or Aholiab (Ex. 38:23), and the word is more commonly translated "needlework". This was typically women's work, but a theme of the construction of the tabernacle is that the work was done by God's Spirit using people for His purpose. We may connect this with how the likes of chemists and goldsmiths were used for the rough work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's time. On one hand, our natural talents are used by God; and

yet we are also called to step out against the wind of our natural inclination in God's service.

Exo 39:30 They made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote on it a writing, like the engravings of a signet: HOLY TO YAHWEH-
Most of the surrounding tabernacles featured quite a lot of noise- especially incantations and spoken formulas regarding the holiness of the god and shrine. There were few spoken words in the Mosaic rituals; "Holy to the Lord" was written upon the forehead of the High Priest rather than stated by incantations (GNB 'Dedicated to the LORD', LXX has "holiness of the Lord"). We could maybe go so far as to say that we see here the exaltation of God's written word, with all the faith and understanding which this requires, as opposed to the incantations of other worship systems. The plate or rosette on the High Priest's turban would've recalled pagan plates which warded off supposed demons; but this one spoke of "Holiness to Yahweh", again replacing the negative with the positive.

Exo 39:31 They tied to it a lace of blue, to fasten it on the turban above, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
"Lace" is s.w. "wire", "ribband", "line"; we note it was not a golden chain but a lace. That the Priest's crown was to be made of linen rather than solid gold or some other precious metal could appear some kind of anticlimax- most leaders of other religions had something solid on their heads. White linen represents righteousness (Rev. 19:8); it's as if the intention was to highlight the fact that simple righteousness is of such great value and power in God's sight rather than any visible ostentation.

Exo 39:32 Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was finished. The children of Israel did according to all that Yahweh commanded Moses; so they did-
There is huge emphasis upon the exact obedience to the commandments given before the apostacy with the golden calf. But it was really Moses, Bezaleel and Aholiab who did most of the work. Their obedience and work was counted to all Israel. The idea of imputed righteousness is found throughout the Bible, and not just in the New Testament letter to the Romans.

Exo 39:33 They brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent, with all its furniture, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets-
The interconnected nature of the tabernacle construction is continually stressed. For this is the nature of God's system of manifestation amongst His people to this day- various aspects and individuals linking in with each other, according to His design. There is no way an individual can reach God's Kingdom alone.

Exo 39:34 the covering of rams' skins dyed red, the covering of sea cow hides, the veil of the screen-
The sea cow hides would have been picked up by them whilst camped by the Red Sea. Whatever we pick up along the way in our wilderness journey- is to be used by God, and devoted to Him by us.

Exo 39:35 the ark of the testimony with its poles, the mercy seat-
"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood, which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with gold.

Exo 39:36 the table, all its vessels, the show bread-
"The bread of the presence" (Ex. 25:30) doesn't simply mean that it was bread which was in God's presence; for that is the meaning covered by "before Me always". Rather the idea is that God's especial presence was there in the eating of the bread. The God who dwelt the other side of the veil, over the mercy seat, as it were came out from there and was present when the bread was eaten. We may have here some hint that there is a special presence of the Father and Son at the breaking of bread, which is the Christian equivalent of this table (Mt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 11:10).

Exo 39:37 the pure lampstand, its lamps, even the lamps to be set in order, all its vessels, the oil for the light-
GNB reads in the possible ellipsis: "the lampstand of pure gold". As the gold for it weighed around 40 kg., it would have been quite small, given the density of gold. "The candlestick" or menorah is only ever spoken of in the law of Moses in the singular, but in 1 Chron. 28:15 David decided there were to be multiple such candlesticks. By doing so, he ignored the symbolism of the one candlestick, the one people of God; such was his obsession with mere religion.

Exo 39:38 the golden altar, the anointing oil, the sweet incense, the screen for the door of the Tent-
Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place, where there was the incense altar [prayer- Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4], the table of shewbread [the breaking of bread] and candlestick [church life], shining light towards the entrance to the most holy place where God dwelt between the cherubim.

Exo 39:39 the bronze altar, its grating of brass, its poles, all of its vessels, the basin and its base-
The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 39:40 the hangings of the court, its pillars, its sockets, the screen for the gate of the court, its cords, its pins, all the instruments of the service of the tabernacle, for the Tent of Meeting-
The tent of meeting is here defined as the tabernacle. The reference is to the tent which included the holy place and the most holy place (Ex. 29:11; 30:20). But the actual place of meeting between God and His people was over the mercy seat, the lid of the ark of the covenant, which was in the most holy place and only seen by the high priest briefly once / year. But it was as if God as a king left His throne and came forth to meet His people, represented by the priests, at the door of the holy place, the "tent of meeting".

Exo 39:41 the finely worked garments for ministering in the holy place, the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office-
AV "the cloths of service" [NEV "finely worked garments"] may refer to the cloths used for covering the various items as they were transported around.

Exo 39:42 According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did all the work-
But it was really Moses, Bezaleel and Aholiab who did most of the work. Their obedience and work was counted to all Israel. The idea of imputed righteousness is found throughout the Bible, and not just in the New Testament letter to the Romans.

Exo 39:43 Moses saw all the work, and behold, they had done it as Yahweh had commanded, even so had they done it: and Moses blessed them-
Moses' personal blessing of the people was that of God (Dt. 33); and when he looked

with pleasure upon the completed tabernacle and blessed Israel, he was imitating God's inspection and blessing of the completed natural creation (Ex. 39:43). Yet Israel tragically failed to appreciate the degree to which God was manifest in the words of Moses, as they did with Christ. This is shown by them asking for Moses to speak with them, not God; they failed to realize that actually his voice was God's voice. They failed to see that commandments given 'second hand' really are the voice of God (Ex. 20:19). Perhaps our appreciation of inspiration is similar; we know the theory, but do we really see the wonder of the fact that what we read is the awesome voice of God Himself?

When Moses looked with pleasure upon the completed tabernacle and blessed Israel, he was imitating God's inspection and blessing of the completed natural creation (Gen. 1:31); as if now a new creation had been begun in the lives of Israel, just as it is in us through baptism into Christ (cp. the Red Sea crossing)- 2 Cor. 5:17.

EXODUS CHAPTER 40

Exo 40:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
We must remember in interpreting what follows that this was all spoken personally to Moses.

Exo 40:2 On the first day of the first month you shall raise up the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting-
The components of the tabernacle had been made and brought to Moses, and he was to assemble it by hand. Jewish tradition has it that Moses was Divinely empowered in assembling it all in one day, and therefore didn't do it with his own hands. Heb. 9:11 appears to allude to this and deconstruct it: "Christ having become a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands". The tabernacle was indeed made or assembled with hands, unlike the spiritual tabernacle of the house of believers which is being put together by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Moses pitched the tent, but the spiritual tabernacle has been pitched without hands, by the Spirit of Jesus (Heb. 8:2). The Lord Jesus alluded to these things by saying that He could raise up a new temple through His death and resurrection, without hands (Jn. 2:19-21). "Raise up", used here of raising or assembling the tabernacle, was interpreted by the Lord as implying resurrection. The idea was that the tabernacle looked ahead to the new system of believers which the Lord was to bring about through His sacrifice.

Exo 40:3 You shall put the ark of the testimony in it, and you shall screen the ark with the veil-
The "testimony" refers to the tables of the covenant, the ten commandments, which

were within the ark; the connection between the ark and the “testimony” is very strong in the record. The ark was symbolic of Christ, in whom dwelt the word and covenant of God.

Exo 40:4 You shall bring in the table, and set in order the things that are on it. You shall bring in the lampstand, and light its lamps-
The candlestick was on the south end of the holy place, shedding light "opposite" (Heb., NEV "in front of it"), i.e. towards the northern end where the veil was, and where the table of shewbread was, symbolizing fellowship with God. This is the purpose of our witness; to direct people towards fellowship with God and entry to the most holy place.

Exo 40:5 You shall set the golden altar for incense before the ark of the testimony, and put the screen of the door to the tabernacle-
Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place, where there was the incense altar [prayer- Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4], the table of shewbread [the breaking of bread] and candlestick [church life], shining light towards the entrance to the most holy place where God dwelt between the cherubim.

Exo 40:6 You shall set the altar of burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting-
Sacrifice is necessary before we can enter God’s presence. Sacrifice doesn’t simply mean giving material things to God; it refers to giving up to God that which is personal and valuable to us. We’re not involved with God simply in order to get from Him; in this case, spirituality would be purely selfish, as it is in many religions. Authentic relationship with God depends upon our having the spirit of sacrifice; not in the sense that we can only get to God if we give something, for that too would be too primitive and a denial of grace as the basis of our relationship with God. But His grace and the wonder of fellowship with Him cannot be accepted by us passively nor with indifference; our natural response, if we believe it, is to want to give to Him.

Exo 40:7 You shall set the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and shall put water therein-
This would imply a change of perspective in the description, which so far has been from the most holy place and outwards, whereas this is now from the perspective of someone approaching from the outside. Either that, or the mention of the basin / laver is not placed in order. Possibly the idea is to emphasize the critical importance of washing the priests before entering the holy place, pointing forward to the importance of

baptism.

Exo 40:8 You shall set up the court around it, and hang up the screen of the gate of the court-
For Moses alone to do this all in one day would have perhaps required superhuman help; see on :1,2. The weight of some of the items would have surely been too much for him to carry or manipulate alone.

Exo 40:9 You shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is in it, and shall make it holy, and all its furniture; and it will be holy-
The anointing process takes our Christian minds to the Christ, the anointed one, and we who are anointed through being in Him (2 Cor. 1:21).

Exo 40:10 You shall anoint the altar of burnt offering, with all its vessels, and sanctify the altar; and the altar will be most holy-
We wonder why the altar is here called "most holy" although it stood outside of the tent of meeting. All the tabernacle was called "most holy" (Ex. 30:29), but here there seems an especial note made that the altar was to be made "most holy". It was in the court, not in the holy place nor most holy place. The idea may be that the God who dwells in the most holy place between the cherubim is so pleased with sacrifice, that He accepts even the place outside the tabernacle as most holy.

Exo 40:11 You shall anoint the basin and its base, and sanctify it-
This may represent the need for the washing of baptism in order to come to Christ, the altar (Heb. 13:10). This was required if they didn't want to die (Ex. 30:20). It is baptism which is the washing or "laver" of regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5). The fact we are to wash in this laver suggests that all baptized are all priests; we are a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). It is for us to take seriously the work of priestly service, it falls to all who are baptized; and we must therefore overcome the typical human tendency to leave such work to others.

Exo 40:12 You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and shall wash them with water-
The laver was situated just in front of the door of the tent, so presumably this was done in the laver.

Exo 40:13 You shall put on Aaron the holy garments; and you shall anoint him, and sanctify him, that he may minister to Me in the priest's office-
It is hard to imagine how Moses could have erected the tabernacle and done all this on

one day. It confirms the suggestion on :2 that he could only have done this with Divine help. However it could be that this anointing of Aaron and his sons was deferred and not done until the time of Lev. 8:1 ff.

Exo 40:14 You shall bring his sons, and put coats on them-
See on :13. Ex. 28:40 adds that these clothes were "for glory and for beauty". The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world (Dt. 26:19 s.w.). Again we see repeated the ideal intention that all Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

Exo 40:15 You shall anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may minister to Me in the priest's office. Their anointing shall be to them for an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations-
The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting covenant" evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase "everlasting covenant" is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David's throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated "eternal", "perpetual", "everlasting" in the Old Testament? James Strong defines olahm as literally meaning "the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity". It was God's purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn't grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of "practically eternity". For all of us, the spectre of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God's eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Likewise the Sabbath is described as a perpetual, eternal ordinance between God and His people (Ex. 31:16). Yet in the New Testament we read that the Old Covenant has been done away; and the Old Covenant clearly included the ten commandments (Dt. 4:13), one of which was concerning the Sabbath. For this reason the New Testament is at pains to explain that Sabbath keeping is not now required of God's people (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-3). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7).

Exo 40:16 Moses did so. According to all that Yahweh commanded him, so he did-
There is huge emphasis upon the exact obedience of Moses to the commandments. And yet his careful obedience to the letter regarding the "house" or tabernacle is commented upon in Heb. 3:2-5. The idea is that all that obedience to commandment was still nothing compared to that of the Lord Jesus. For He was not only obedient to commandment, but more positively achieved a personality and character which was to be the basis of an eternal spiritual house.

Exo 40:17 It happened in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up-
As discussed on :1,2, this meant that Moses assembled the tabernacle alone in one day- and surely required Divine help to do so.

Exo 40:18 Moses raised up the tabernacle, and laid its sockets, and set up its boards, and put in its bars, and raised up its pillars-
The rabbis like to note that there are three references to Moses' assembly of the tabernacle (:2,17,18), which they see as pointing forward to the three temples [the third yet to be built by Messiah].

Exo 40:19 He spread the covering over the tent, and put the roof of the tabernacle above on it, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
"As Yahweh commanded Moses" is a phrase runs as a refrain throughout the chapter, as an appropriate ending to the book. See on Ex. 36:31.

Exo 40:20 He took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the poles on the ark, and put the mercy seat above on the ark-
The ark was always ready to be moved on. The continual mention of rings and poles is

because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Exo 40:21 He brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the screen, and screened the ark of the testimony, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
There may be a reference here to the two veils (cp. Heb. 9:3 "the second veil"), one over the entrance to the holy place, and the other over the entrance to the most holy

Exo 40:22 He put the table in the Tent of Meeting, on the side of the tabernacle northward, outside of the veil-
"Side" is literally "thigh", and constantly we find language appropriate to the human body used in describing the tabernacle. It was all a hint that it was looking ahead to a greater and more perfect tabernacle (Heb. 9:11) in a person, Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Exo 40:23 He set the bread in order on it before Yahweh, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
"Before Yahweh" may imply that by this point, there was some presence of God already in the most holy place beyond the veil. Or perhaps an Angel was standing with Moses as he assembled the tabernacle.

Exo 40:24 He put the lampstand in the Tent of Meeting, opposite the table, on the side of the tabernacle southward-
"The north side" is literally "the left side". As noted on Ex. 26:18, the south side was "to the right". Semitic thought is often expressed from the perspective of a person facing east. The left hand side was considered the side of lesser favour (Gen 48:13-20). This perhaps was why the candlestick was placed on the right or south side of the tent (Ex. 40:24).

Exo 40:25 He lit the lamps before Yahweh, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
"Before Yahweh" may imply that by this point, there was some presence of God already

in the most holy place beyond the veil. Or perhaps an Angel was standing with Moses as he assembled the tabernacle. Ex. 27:20 recorded that "You shall command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light". "Pure olive oil" apparently refers to olive juice which bursts naturally from the first ripe olives. But we enquire where Israel obtained olive oil from in the wilderness, especially such "pure" olive oil to such great amounts as required here? I suggest that this was God's ideal intention, and many of these laws were applicable only in contexts when obedience to them was possible. God's law is not therefore at all a reflection of a God who is a literalist or legalist. For by its nature, the law of Moses shows that He was not like that.

Exo 40:26 He put the golden altar in the Tent of Meeting before the veil-
The incense altar is called "the golden altar" because the incense represents prayer, and gold is the symbol of faith. And prayer "works" by faith. It was before the veil which screened the most holy place, because the smell of the incense would have entered there, even if man cannot. Just as our prayers enter heaven itself.

Exo 40:27 and he burnt incense of sweet spices on it, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
“A pleasant / sweet aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Exo 40:28 He put up the screen of the door to the tabernacle-
The New Testament therefore speaks of "the second veil" (Heb. 9:3) which screened the most holy place. This was of the same material as the veil which covered the door into the holy place, but was more elaborate, including the cherubim motif whereas the first veil didn't. Perhaps the idea is that it is through the Lord Jesus, represented by the veil, that we enter into the community of believers; He is the door and by Him alone a sheep

can enter the fold. But it is likewise also through Him, displaying an even greater glory and beauty, that we shall enter into the presence of God Himself. By entering into Him we in prospect enter into the salvation presence of God personally; we are saved in prospect, we live the eternal life, as John's Gospel stresses.

Exo 40:29 He set the altar of burnt offering at the door of the tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting, and offered on it the burnt offering and the meal offering, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
This may refer specifically to the offerings Moses was to make during the seven days of the rituals for the consecration of Aaron and his sons. The daily burnt offering was from then on to be offered by Aaron.

Exo 40:30 He set the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water therein, with which to wash-
Before we can come to offer acceptable sacrifice and do God's work, we must firstly wash in baptism. The water may have come from the stream from the smitten rock. This is used in the New Testament to represent the spirit of Christ. It is this which we are washed in by water baptism; we must therefore be born of water-and-spirit (Jn. 3:3-5).

Exo 40:31 Moses, Aaron, and his sons washed their hands and their feet there-
The Lord alludes to this in Jn. 13:10 and implies it applies to all His people. Baptism is in essence ongoing, as the Lord progressively sanctifies us for His service in practice.

Exo 40:32 When they went into the Tent of Meeting, and when they came near to the altar, they washed, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
The altar of sacrifice would have therefore been walked passed in order to wash in the laver, and then they would have returned to offer at the altar. 'Coming near' the altar is therefore used to refer to offering sacrifice, rather than in any literal sense.

Exo 40:33 He raised up the court around the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the gate of the court. So Moses finished the work-
Jesus had this in mind when just before His death He said that He had finished the work God had given Him to do (Jn. 17:4); and He died saying "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). He felt His work had been to build a dwelling place for God- not in a literal tabernacle, but in the hearts of willing men and women whose weakness and sin He had enabled to be overcome through His sacrifice. See on :2. Moses "reared up" the tabernacle, representing us (2 Cor. 6:16); "So Moses finished the work" God had given him to do. Dt. 31:24 likewise speaks of Moses finishing the work. The Hebrew for "reared up" is also

used in the context of resurrection and glorification / exaltation. As our Lord sensed His final, ultimate achievement of the Father's glory in His own character, He could look ahead to our resurrection and glorification. He adopted God's timeless perspective, and died with the vision of our certain glorification in the Kingdom. This fits in with the way Psalms 22 and 69 (which evidently portray the thoughts of our dying Lord) conclude with visions of Christ's "seed" being glorified in the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which also speak of the temple (also representative of the ecclesia) being a *work* which was *finished* (e.g. 2 Chron. 5:1). In His moment of agonized triumph as He died, the Lord Jesus saw us as if we were perfect.

What God did at creation, He can do at any time. When Moses “finished the work” of the tabernacle (Ex. 40:33), there is clear allusion to God ‘finishing the work’ of creation (Gen. 2:2). The whole phrase “Behold I have given you…” (Gen. 1:28) occurs later when the Priests are told what God has given them (Ex. 31:6; Lev. 6:10; Num. 18:8,21; Dt. 11:14).

Exo 40:34 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle-
This was "the cloud" which had covered Sinai (s.w. Ex. 24:15,16). Both holy place and most holy were filled. The glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle when it was erected (Ex. 40:34), as it would later fill the temple (2 Chron. 7:1). But it was God's intention that His glory should fill all the earth; the same words are used in Num. 14:21. The apparently intense manifestation of Himself in a specific place was only a foretaste of what He wished to bring about in "all the earth". And yet Judaism misread this as meaning that His glory was there alone in a specific holy place. They failed to perceive that it was merely a localized foretaste of His intention to make this a universal experience, and the tearing down of the veil at the Lord's death was evidence enough of the progression of this plan. When exiled from the sanctuary, David in his Psalms often perceives that God's glory fills and shall fill all the earth (Ps. 72:19; Hab. 2:14).

Exo 40:35 Moses wasn’t able to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud stayed on it, and Yahweh’s glory filled the tabernacle-
This implied that Moses wished to enter but couldn't, perhaps preparing him for his later experience of being unable to enter the promised land as he wished. But typically these things look ahead to how Moses and the legal system associated with him created a desire to enter into God's glory, and into the Kingdom- but failed to achieve it. And so they looked ahead to the achievement of the Lord Jesus. Likewise the glory in the later temple precluded the priests from entering it (1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chron. 5:14; 7:2).

Exo 40:36 When the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward, throughout all their journeys-
"Onward" is Heb. 'to pull up', alluding to the pulling up of tent pegs. The process of moving onward would have been a major, regular upheaval. They would've preferred to stay where they were. And this is a feature of our wilderness journey after our Red Sea baptism; we are always being moved on further, in various ways. And this goes right against the conservatism which is such a major part of the human condition.

Exo 40:37 but if the cloud wasn't taken up, then they didn't travel until the day that it was taken up-
They didn't know their itinerary ahead of time, each day and night they would've wondered whether they'd be called to move on or not. Their lives in this sense had no stability. If the Red Sea crossing represents our baptisms (1 Cor. 10:1,2) then this speaks of our lives afterwards being under God's leadership and guidance, we in that sense cannot map out how we would wish our journey to be. There was no prior warning how long they were to remain in any one place; sometimes they stayed a year in one place, at other times they had to travel even by night. This was all at the commandment or word of the Lord. If the Red Sea deliverance represents our baptism, the wilderness journey is like our journey through life towards the promised land of God's Kingdom. We are led by an Angel, and the path we take is determined by God. Sometimes we are suddenly and unexpectedly asked to move forward; sometimes quickly, travelling by night, as it were; other periods of our lives can appear static and leading nowhere. But in all these situations we are still being led- if we remain obedient to the word of God.

Exo 40:38 For the cloud of Yahweh was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys-
Practically this meant that they were shielded from the desert heat in the day time, and kept warm at night. Such was (and is) Yahweh's sensitivity to His people in their wilderness journey towards the Kingdom.

Ex. 13:21 also says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led

Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)? When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud* of *fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:15-17; Dt. 5:22).

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: LEVITICUS

LEVITICUS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 1

Lev 1:1 Yahweh called to Moses and spoke to him out of the Tent of Meeting, saying-
The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to “the Lord spake unto Moses” (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books. It could of course be argued that these are the words of a Divinely inspired editor. But consider this alternative.

Lev. 1:1 appears to follow straight on from the previous narrative in Exodus. It could be that all of Leviticus is an account of the words of Yahweh to the Levites during the eight days of consecration after the tabernacle was built. For the whole book specifically addresses the Levites, and how they were to conduct priestly work.

Lev 1:2 Speak to the children of Israel and tell them, ‘When anyone of you offers an offering to Yahweh-
"Of you" means that the invitation to offer freewill offerings which now follows was limited to the community of Israel. But within them, "anyone" could offer- including women, who were typically excluded from such religious opportunities in the surrounding cults.

You shall offer your offering of the livestock, from the herd and from the flock-
They were not to keep some animals specially for sacrifice; they were to take the sacrificial animals out of the herd, just as the Lord Jesus was One taken out of the herd of humanity. We are to be living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), not reserving just part of our lives for God. The Lord Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice, and He was taken out of the common herd of humanity, not preserved specially for His work. We also learn from this that they were not to hunt wild animals in order to offer them. They may well have become blemished in the process of being hunted and slain.

Lev 1:3 If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). The thoughtful Israelite would have perceived that all the animas offered were not totally without blemish- for none was, upon minute examination. The requirement for a male sacrifice was not because God considered the female gender inferior; rather was it because He was asking that they

offer their most valuable animal to Him, and not their least valuable. And male animals were more valuable than female.

"Without blemish" was how Noah was (s.w. Gen. 6:9), and how God wished Abraham and all his seed to be (s.w. Gen. 17:1). We all fail to be perfect; blemishes remain. So perhaps the idea was that the animal represented how the offerer wished to be; but it was only an animal, not a man. And therefore the thought would have arisen that it must surely look forward to some perfect, unblemished human who was the representative of all men. And that was the need which was met in the death of the Lord Jesus.

He shall offer it at the door of the Tent of Meeting, that he may be accepted before Yahweh-
The offerer personally was to bring it. It was not to be brought by someone else, for sacrifice was to involve personal engagement and not be performed as mere tokenistic ritual through a third party. And that is an abiding principle. The offerer firstly had to enter through the gate into the court, before approaching the altar. The height of the gate meant that most would had to bow their heads. Humility was the first requirement, and this is what made sacrifice acceptable.

Lev 1:4 He shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him-
Putting the hand on the animal's head was to show that the animal represented the offerer. He showed thereby that he deserved to die, and wished to give his total life to God just as the animal would be totally offered to God. We see here God's principle of accepting us on the basis of the representative sacrifice of Christ; the equivalent of our putting our hand on the head of the sacrifice is the act of baptism into Christ and abiding "in Christ", He being our representative and we being His. The Hebrew means more to the effect of leaning on the head, as if a very intense act of identification was being made.

Lev 1:5 He shall slaughter the bull before Yahweh. Aaron's sons, the priests, shall present the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious,

because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 1:6 He shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into pieces-
Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously.

Lev 1:7 The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay wood in order on the fire-
In all the many commands about sacrifices, we must remember that God was not in need of them. If He were hungry, He would not tell *us* (Ps. 50:12). The legislation and concepts were therefore purely for our benefit, and that of His people at the time. We therefore need to discern the teaching.

Lev 1:8 and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall lay the pieces, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire which is on the altar-
The wood was to be placed in order on the fire (Lev. 1:7), suggesting the use of several bits of wood to be laid in order, with the parts also laid in order upon them. This was as if each part of the Lord's life (and ours) had its own cross. We think of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus upon the stake of wood, effectively done by the priests who arranged His crucifixion.

Lev 1:9 but its inward parts and its legs he shall wash with water. The priest shall burn the whole on the altar, for a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
There is huge emphasis upon the "inward parts" in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or

righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 1:10 If his offering is from the flock, from the sheep, or from the goats, for a burnt offering, he shall offer a male without blemish-
This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 1:11 He shall kill it on the north side of the altar before Yahweh. Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar-
Golgotha was on the north side of Jerusalem, and all these sacrifices look ahead to the Lord's death there. The laver was on the west side of the altar, the place of ashes on the east (Lev. 1:16), and the approach to the altar from the south would have been up a slope to avoid approaching the altar by steps and uncovering nakedness. The north side would have been the only appropriate place for this. So there is an impressive corroboration of the records here, with this command to kill the animals on the north side of the altar.

Lev 1:12 He shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat. The priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is on the altar-
The offerer "shall cut it into his pieces" (Heb.)- the pieces of the animal were the pieces of the offerer, so the ambiguous genitive suggests. The offerer was represented by the sacrifice. The parts were washed in the water (of the word) before the final crucifying of flesh. But the sacrifice also represented that of the Lord Jesus, as well as of the offerer; for He on the cross was the representative of all God's people.

Lev 1:13 but the inward parts and the legs he shall wash with water. The priest shall offer

the whole, and burn it on the altar-
This is picked up by Paul in Rom. 7 where he says that he delights in God's law after the inward man, or innards. He sees himself as cut open and offered to God. All this provokes powerful self-examination. Does the zeal of God's house consume every part of the offering of our lives as we lay ourselves before Him at the Passover meal? Does it eat us up? Do our faces and words and way of speaking reflect the crucifixion of every part of our lives? Or does our triviality, our inability to spiritually concentrate our minds, our lack of sustained enthusiasm for the Lord's work reflect the fact that we are not like that animal as it lay dead and still in its parts on that altar, that we are not in the spirit of Christ. Our attitudes to money, holidays, relationships, standard of living, commitment to study of the word, zeal for preaching, all raise question marks in our minds. It is easy to take immediate refuge in the fact that salvation is through the grace of the Lord's sacrifice, not works. But before we go on to those sentiments, let us accept that we do all have an urgent need for improvement.

It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 1:14 If his offering to Yahweh is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall offer his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons-
Those who couldn't afford larger animals could offer birds. But these regulations may also apply to those rituals which required a bird to be offered for all (Lev. 15:14,29; Num. 6:10). Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year (Song 2:12; Jer. 8:7); whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable

brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 1:15 The priest shall bring it to the altar, and wring off its head, and burn it on the altar; and its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar-
Lev. 1:15 A.V. mg. stipulates that if the offering was a bird, "pinch off the head with the nail" - as if a nail used in the process, perhaps for nailing the parts to the wood (cp. the nailing of the Lord Jesus to the cross).

Lev 1:16 and he shall take away its crop with its filth, and throw it beside the altar on the east side, in the place of the ashes-
LXX describes the removal of the feathers, and apparently taking away "the crop with its filth" apparently sounds "as when made ready for cooking". The idea was that this was a meal being prepared, for the idea was that the offerer was eating with God. And despite the humble nature of the meal, God was eating with this offerer. For the altar was effectively the table of Yahweh. The east side was nearest to the exit to the court, so this was the logical place for any refuse to be placed. We marvel at the consistent internal corroboration of the Biblical record.

Lev 1:17 He shall tear it by its wings, but shall not divide it apart-
The tearing of the wings was equivalent to the dividing into parts of the larger sacrifices (Lev. 1:6,12). Only the small size of the bird precluded dividing it.

The priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh'-
“A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore

accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 2

Lev 2:1 'When anyone offers-
"Anyone", literally "any soul / person", is a term carefully chosen. For women as well as men were encouraged to offer- in contrast to the generally male based system of offerings in the surrounding religions. There is also no age limit- anyone and everyone was encouraged to offer, even a grain offering if they could not manage an animal.

An offering of a grain offering to Yahweh, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it-
Frankincense was a type of incense which would have given a pleasing smell to the burning flour. This represented how pleased God was with the offering even of a handful of flour (:2). Small sacrifices please Him immensely. And they are what comprise daily life.

Lev 2:2 He shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests; and he shall take his handful of its fine flour, and of its oil, with all its frankincense; and the priest shall burn its memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
Paul writes often that he "makes mention" or 'remembers' his brethren in regular prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek *mneia* is the word used in the LXX for the "memorial" of the incense or the meal offering (Lev. 2:2,16; 6:15; 24:7), or the constant fire on the altar (Lev. 6:12,13). That fire, that flour, that incense, had to be carefully and consciously prepared; it had to be the result of man's labour. And likewise, Paul seems to be saying, he first of all thought through the cases which he then presented to the Father.

Lev 2:3 That which is left of the grain offering shall be Aaron's and his sons'. It is a most holy thing of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire-
The language of "most holy" is juxtaposed against the fact that this was referring to a simple grain offering, a 'little something' offered by literally anyone within Israel (see on :1). But such tiny offerings were "most holy" to God; we think of the Lord's attitude to the widow offering her two small coins.

Lev 2:4 When you offer an offering of a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil-

God was pleased to accept just flour; but there was the opportunity to bake a cake from the flour and bring that to the altar. For the idea was that the altar was the table of Yahweh, and they were eating with Him. And you don't eat flour together at a meal table, you eat cakes. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love. See on :14.

Lev 2:5 If your offering is a grain offering baked in a pan, it shall be of unleavened fine flour, mixed with oil-
Paul writes of the church in Corinth that God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mixed" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made.

Lev 2:6 You shall cut it in pieces, and pour oil on it. It is a grain offering-
Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously. This was taught in the dividing up of the offerings into pieces (see on Lev. 1:17).

Lev 2:7 If your offering is a grain offering of the pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil-
The continual stress upon the usage of oil [*shehmen*] may look ahead to the *meshiach*, the Christ, the anointed one. All aspects of the offerings looked ahead to the Lord Jesus Christ. "The pan" is LXX "the hearth".

Lev 2:8 You shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to Yahweh: and it shall be presented to the priest, and he shall bring it to the altar-
We note how it was the priest who was to place the sacrifices upon the altar. 1 Pet. 2:5 surely alludes to this; we are "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (cp. Rom. 15:16).

Lev 2:9 The priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial, and shall burn it on the

altar, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
“A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 2:10 That which is left of the grain offering shall be Aaron’s and his sons’. It is a thing most holy of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire-
The "most holy" nature of the humble grain offering is stressed (:3). The grain offering was just a little flour, a 'little something' offered by literally anyone within Israel (see on :1). But such tiny offerings were "most holy" to God; He has a particular interest in those 'little somethings' we offer to Him, and they are very holy to Him.

Lev 2:11 No grain offering, which you shall offer to Yahweh, shall be made with yeast; for you shall burn no yeast, nor any honey, as an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
Even though leaven was prohibited in offerings (Lev. 2:11), God was willing to accept a peace offering with leaven in it (Lev. 7:13). Yeast represented sin (1 Cor. 5:8). Honey and yeast would’ve made the grain pleasing to men; but the lesson was that what pleases people isn’t what is necessarily pleasing to God. He wants a person as they are, from the heart, and wanted to teach that He wants us as we are without any element of fermentation (which yeast and honey produced). God wanted salt and not honey on His food; for the altar is presented as the table of Yahweh at which a man ate with his God. Honey was widely used in pagan sacrifices, and God wished to cut off all possibility of serving idols in the name of Yahweh worship. And yet this is what Israel did, despite His best efforts in this legislation to help them maintain a total separation between such kinds of worship.

Lev 2:12 As an offering of firstfruits you shall offer them to Yahweh: but they shall not ascend for a pleasant aroma on the altar-

The "them" refers to leaven and honey, which could be offered as firstfruit offerings (Lev. 23:17; 2 Chron. 31:5). But they were not to be burnt, but given to the priests. As noted on :11, leaven and honey are associated with fermentation and therefore moral corruption. We may discern here that less than perfect offerings are still welcomed and encouraged by God; such is His desire for engagement with man, and His wish to accept the imperfect offering we bring.

Lev 2:13 Every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; neither shall you allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt-
The altar was understood as the table of Yahweh, where He ate together with the offerer. To eat bread and salt was a sign of fellowship and acceptance in covenant, and the presence of salt in the sacrifices was therefore insisted upon (Lev. 2:13). A "covenant of salt" was an eternal covenant (Num. 18:19). The reminder therefore was that our relationship with God is eternal, not a passing phase in our lives, nor just a mere religious crutch to help us get through this life. For truly, God is man's friend and accepts us at His table. The salt represents gracious speech (Col. 4:6) and peace with one another (Mk. 9:50); without these things, no matter how great our sacrifice, it cannot be accepted by God. Hence Jesus taught that we should not offer our sacrifices to God until we have done what we can to get at peace with our brother (Mt. 5:24). Salt was a symbol of covenant relationship with God; yet in the NT this salt stands for love, peace and kind speaking the one to the other (Mk. 9:50; Col. 4:6). This is the result of true membership in covenant relationship; a true and abiding love for all others in covenant.

Lev 2:14 If you offer a grain offering of first fruits to Yahweh, you shall offer for the grain offering of your first fruits grain in the ear parched with fire, bruised grain of the fresh ear-
*"*Grain in the ear" is *Abib*, the month of Passover which was at the time of grain harvest. But "grain in the ear" is literally green ears; just before harvest, some of the immature grain could be offered as a freewill offering. This was an opportunity for higher level of devotion from those eager to show personal gratitude for redemption from Egypt in addition to the Passover. As discussed on :4, here was another opportunity to serve God on the highest level.

Lev 2:15 You shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it: it is a grain offering-
The incense gave the offering a sweet smell, portraying God's acceptance of it and how pleasing are such 'little things' of freewill sacrifice. The offering of the frankincense was therefore to teach the offerer this. And we must ever remember that God Himself was not in need of such sacrifices of incense. If He were hungry, He would not tell *us* (Ps.

50:12). The legislation and concepts were therefore purely for our benefit, and that of His people at the time. We therefore need to discern the teaching.

Lev 2:16 The priest shall burn as its memorial portion part of its crushed grain, and part of its oil, along with all its frankincense: it is an offering made by fire to Yahweh'-
The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 3

Lev 3:1 'If his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings; if he offers it from the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before Yahweh-
This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 3:2 He shall lay his hand on the head of his offering-
An act of personal identity, looking forward to our acts of identity with the representative sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. Baptism, breaking bread and especially having His spirit and living His kind of life are all the equivalent in our times.

And kill it at the door of the Tent of Meeting: and Aaron's sons, the priests shall sprinkle the blood around on the altar-
To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before

God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 3:3 He shall offer of the sacrifice of peace offerings an offering made by fire to Yahweh; the fat that covers the inner parts, and all the fat that is on the inward parts-
There is huge emphasis upon the "inward parts" in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 3:4 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away-
"Take away" is the word usually used for declining, refusing etc. The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. See on :3.

Lev 3:5 Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar on the burnt offering, which is on the wood that is on the fire-
The reference is to how the daily burnt offering was never to be overlooked, this was to be offered first, and then the voluntary peace offerings on top of that. Regular basic daily disciplines are so important in spiritual life. Any extra activity must not be allowed to take away from them.

It is an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the

colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 3:6 If his offering for a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh is from the flock; male or female, he shall offer it without blemish-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Lev 3:7 If he offers a lamb for his offering, then he shall offer it before Yahweh-
Although peace offerings were completely voluntary, they were not to think that therefore they could not respect God’s holiness and give Him that which was second best (:6) or offer it where they liked. Many of the sacrifices we make to God are likewise not compulsory, but the spirit of giving God the best which permeates the Law of Moses should remain with us. We may be able to deduce that peace offerings could be offered in other places, and there appear to be examples of that in later scripture; but if a lamb was offered, it must be "before Yahweh", seeing that the lamb particularly looked ahead to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus "before Yahweh".

Lev 3:8 and he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it before the Tent of Meeting: and Aaron’s sons shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar-
To lay the hand upon is a phrase which means more than merely touching the head, but implies leaning upon or pushing upon. It is rendered "lean his hand [upon a wall]" (Am. 5:19). It was an act of very conscious identity. The same phrase is used of how God's hand upholds those who spiritually fall (Ps. 37:24). So we see the mutuality of relationship between God and man. We strongly place our hand upon the offering of the Lord Jesus, and God places His hand upon us. Paul may have this idea in view when he speaks of how he grabs hold of Jesus and is grabbed hold of by Jesus (Phil. 3:12); just as the Lord seized hold of Peter drowning in the lake, as Peter grabbed hold of Him. That incident surely was a mini parable of our redemption.

Lev 3:9 He shall offer from the sacrifice of peace offerings an offering made by fire to Yahweh; its fat, the entire tail fat, he shall take away close to the backbone; and the fat that covers the inwards, and all the fat that is on the inwards-
The idea is as in LXX "the fat [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9; 7:3). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 3:10 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away-
"Take away" is the word usually used for declining, refusing etc. The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all

the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which he heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 3:11 The priest shall burn it on the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire to Yahweh-

The metaphor invites us to see the altar as God's table, at which He as it were ate the sacrifices. At the breaking of bread service, we come to the table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21); the offering we bring is ourselves. And yet God has placed on the altar, on the table before us, the sacrifice of His Son, and invites us to eat with Him there. Eating with someone was understood as a sign of religious fellowship. At the breaking of bread, we are therefore celebrating our living fellowship with God Himself.

The peace offering was the "food (also translated "bread") of the offering made... unto the Lord" (Lev. 3:11). The peace offering was therefore God's food, or bread. Yet the offerer was invited to eat the bread of God. This implied that when the offerer sat down to eat the food, as it were, God was sitting with him, also eating of it. This was symbolized in human terms by the fact that the priest, as God's representative, ate part of the peace offering, while the offerer ate the other part. Presumably they sat down together to do this. The closeness of God which this implies is almost beyond our comprehension. We are invited to see the exquisite beauty of true fellowship with God. The idea of eating the bread of God, the sacrifice which represents His son, and thereby having fellowship with Him, should send our minds forward to John 6. "The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven", i.e. our Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:33). Not for nothing do some Rabbis speak of 'eating Messiah' as an expression of the fellowship they hope to have with Him at His coming.

Lev 3:12 If his offering is a goat, then he shall offer it before Yahweh-

God is eager for fellowship with man, and wanted by all means to eat with man through the peace offerings. It seems there were various kinds of animals which could be used, in accordance with the possibilities of the offer*er.* The goat appears to be the lowest rank. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 3:13 and he shall lay his hand on its head, and kill it before the Tent of Meeting; and the sons of Aaron shall sprinkle its blood around on the altar-

David rejoiced in God's mercy to him, perhaps in the context of his sin with Bathsheba. He asks: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his (spiritual) benefits toward me?". He decides that he will offer a peace offering: "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving (the peace offering; Lev. 7:12)... I will take the cup of salvation... I will pay my vows... in the presence of all his people... in the courts of the Lord's house". As we sit "before the Lord" at the memorial meeting, beholding the cross of Christ and the blood of Calvary, we should be intensely aware of God's great benefits towards us: our salvation assured, sin forgiven, peace with God. Our response

should be to renew our vows joyfully, in the ecclesia, God's house, in the presence of His people, as we eat the peace offering, the sacrifice of thanksgiving. As the peace offering was to be offered publicly, "before the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. 3:13), so in the sight of each other we too renew our vows and express our peace with God. And if we are all at peace with God, we should therefore be at peace with each other.

Lev 3:14 He shall offer from it as his offering, an offering made by fire to Yahweh; the fat that covers the inward parts, and all the fat that is on the inward parts,-
The inward man of Rom. 7:22 is what is so important; yet the LXX in Lev. 3:14-16 uses the same word to describe the fat surrounding the intestines, which God appeared to so value in the sacrifices. It was not that He wanted that fat in itself; but rather He saw that fat as representing a man's essential spirituality, that which is developed close to the heart, unseen by others, but revealed after death.

Lev 3:15 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away-
See on :10; the legislation is identical.

Lev 3:16 The priest shall burn them on the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma; all the fat is Yahweh's-
The offerer put his hand on its head, thereby associating himself with it. In a sense, the animal therefore represented the offerer. But it had to be "without blemish" (Lev. 3:1), and to produce a "sweet savour" when burnt (Lev. 3:16). But how are we to offer ourselves as an unblemished sacrifice? We are surely each aware of our desperate sinfulness. The answer is in the fact that the language of the peace offering sacrifice is applied to Jesus. "He is our peace" (Eph. 2:14), our peace offering by metonymy (in the same way as Christ was made "sin" for us, i.e. a sin offering). He is the unblemished animal (1 Pet. 1:19), and if we are in Christ, we too will be counted as being without spot and blemish (Eph. 5:27). We ought to know whether we are in Christ. If we are, we will be seen by God as just as pure as He is.

Lev 3:17 It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings, that you shall eat neither fat nor blood'-
The fat was understood as the best part of the animal, although today for health reasons we tend to consider the meat to be of more interest than the fat. They were to give to God that which they perceived to be the most valuable and not keep it for themselves, within the frames of understanding and perception within which they then lived. They were not to indulge themselves on what seemed best to them, but to offer it to God. And that principle applies to us.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 4

Lev 4:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
God spoke to Moses, who then spoke to the Israelites (:2). He is presented as mediator between God and man, looking ahead to the greater prophet like him, Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If anyone sins unintentionally, in any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and does any one of them-
We note that the legislation about the cities of refuge likewise reflected God's special concern about unintentional sin. He recognizes that there are different kinds of sin. And in this we see His sensitivity, for the other legal codes at the time saw everything in black and white terms of obedience or disobedience to legal statutes. The word for "unintentionally" is s.w. 'deceived' (Job 12:16). It could be that God also recognizes that some are deceived into sin, and therefore treats those who lead into sin more severely than those who are led into sin. Likewise the New Testament condemns false teachers, but seems to be more acceptive of the falsely taught, the misguided.

Lev 4:3 if the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer for his sin, which he has sinned, a young bull without blemish to Yahweh for a sin offering-
Sins of ignorance still needed to be atoned for. Sin is a felt offence against God, whether or not we were aware of it at the time. If we accidentally step on someone's foot and they don't tell us about it until tomorrow, it doesn't mean that we didn't hurt them at the time. The sins we committed before baptism, in ignorance, were still felt by God and need atonement- which is available freely through being "in Christ". David asked to be forgiven for the sins he committed which he didn't know about (Ps. 19:12 cp. Ps. 90:8). We should pray the same. But this means we are asking for forgiveness for sin which we haven't specifically repented of. We should likewise forgive others for their sins which although *we* so clearly feel them, they themselves don't realize they have committed them. We can, if we wish, insist that we shall only forgive those who repent to us of their sins. But the problem with that approach is that *as* we forgive others, the basis we choose upon which to relate to them, so we will be forgiven (Mt. 6:12). If we trust we are forgiven for sins we aren't conscious of, even though they are very clear to God and felt by Him, then we ought to forgive others for their sins even when they don't perceive (at this point in their spiritual journey) that they have sinned.

Lev 4:4 He shall bring the bull to the door of the Tent of Meeting before Yahweh; and he shall lay his hand on the head of the bull, and kill the bull before Yahweh-
To lay the hand upon is a phrase which means more than merely touching the head, but implies leaning upon or pushing upon. It is rendered "lean his hand [upon a wall]" (Am. 5:19). It was an act of very conscious identity. The same phrase is used of how God's hand upholds those who spiritually fall (Ps. 37:24). So we see the mutuality of relationship between God and man. We strongly place our hand upon the offering of the Lord Jesus, and God places His hand upon us. Paul may have this idea in view when he speaks of how he grabs hold of Jesus and is grabbed hold of by Jesus (Phil. 3:12); just as

the Lord seized hold of Peter drowning in the lake, as Peter grabbed hold of Him. That incident surely was a mini parable of our redemption.

Lev 4:5 The anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull, and bring it to the Tent of Meeting-
'Christ' means 'the anointed one', and so Jewish minds would have associated 'Jesus Christ' with the priest who saves ['Jesus' means 'Yahweh's salvation'].

Lev 4:6 The priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before Yahweh, before the veil of the sanctuary-
The blood of the sin offering was to be sprinkled "before the LORD, before the veil" (Lev. 4:6,17). Yet the veil was a symbol of the flesh of the Lord Jesus at the time of His dying. At the time of the sprinkling of blood when the sin offering was made, the veil [the flesh of the Lord Jesus] was identifiable with Yahweh Himself. The blood of the offerings was poured out "before Yahweh" (Lev. 4:15 etc.), pointing forward to how God Himself, from so physically far away, "came down" so that the blood shedding of His Son was done as it were in His presence. And who is to say that the theophany that afternoon, of earthquake and thick darkness, was not the personal presence of Yahweh, hovering above crucifixion hill? Over the mercy seat (a symbol of the Lord Jesus in Hebrews), between the cherubim where the blood was sprinkled, "there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee" (Ex. 25:22). There we see the essence of God, and there in the cross we hear the essential word and message of God made flesh.

The sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices around the altar is mentioned several times, but only for the sin offering do we read that the priest was to sprinkle it with his finger. This perhaps pointed forward to how there was to be a very personal connection between the priest and the atonement made for others, just as there was between the Lord Jesus and the atonement He made for us. The blood would presumably have made the priest unclean and unable to further officiate, again looking forward to the ending of the priestly function through the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:7 The priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before Yahweh, which is in the Tent of Meeting-
The sweetness of the incense speaks of how pleasing is prayer to God; for incense represents prayer later in the Bible. But that acceptability and pleasure is dependent upon confession of sin, and the sacrifice of the blood of the Lord Jesus.

And he shall pour out all of the rest of the blood of the bull at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
We think of the blood of Christ trickling down the stake to the ground.

Lev 4:8 He shall take all the fat of the bull of the sin offering off of it: the fat that covers the inward parts, and all the fat that is on the inward parts-
There is huge emphasis upon the “inward parts” in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 4:9 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, he shall take away-
"Take away" is the word usually used for declining, refusing etc. The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which he heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 4:10 as it is taken off of the bull of the sacrifice of peace offerings. The priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering-
The emphasized similarity with the peace offering was because the idea of the sin offering was to restore peace with God.

Lev 4:11 The bull's skin, all its flesh, with its head, and with its legs, its inward parts, and its dung-

The idea is, "the whole bull" (:12). In the same way as we cannot choose to live in isolation from the Father and Son, so we cannot separate ourselves from others who bear the same Name. The Scribe well understood all this: "There is one God... and to love him... and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mk. 12:32,33). Those whole offerings represented the whole body of Israel (Lev. 4:7-15). The Scribe understood that those offerings taught that all Israel were unified together on account of their bearing the same Name of Yahweh. We must love others who bear that Name "as ourselves", so intense is the unity between us.

Lev 4:12 even the whole bull shall he carry forth outside the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire. Where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned-

The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 4:13 If the whole congregation of Israel sins, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and are guilty-

LXX "and they should do one thing forbidden of any of the commands of the Lord". James may have this in mind when he says that obeying all the law but breaking just one commandment will lead to condemnation (James 2:10). His argument becomes all the more powerful if he is alluding here, for the point is then made that this holds true even if that one commandment is broken in ignorance. Clearly the only way to justification with God is through faith in the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:14 when the sin in which they have sinned is known, then the assembly shall offer

a young bull for a sin offering, and bring it before the Tent of Meeting-
The closest historical example of this is when Josiah discovered the book of the law, and realized that Israel were guilty of disobedience in ignorance. But he did far more than follow the ritual prescribed here. See on Lev. 6:5. Again we see how the Mosaic law was not a chain, a wearisome and limiting leash upon man, but rather a springboard to using personal initiative to respond to the principles taught- often to a far greater extent than mere obedience to the letter of the law. We see this in the way Boaz interpreted the Levirate law, and also the laws about allowing gleaning.

Lev 4:15 The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before Yahweh; and the bull shall be killed before Yahweh-
Before the priests who represented God. God Himself is in Heaven, but His representatives on earth are functionally Him to other people. We must therefore watch our behaviour and who we are, because we who have been baptized into His Name are His representatives on earth.

Lev 4:16 The anointed priest shall bring of the blood of the bull to the Tent of Meeting-
The sins of ignorance were the only offerings where the offering was to be brought to the tent of meeting, to be taken beyond the altar of burnt offering. It emphasized the gravity of what had been done; that God was especially interested in how man responds once he becomes aware of his failures. And that is an abiding principle.

Lev 4:17 and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before Yahweh, before the veil-
This describes the priest as sprinkling the blood "before the LORD, even before the veil". This implies that the veil and the "LORD" were associated, as if the Angel, the 'LORD', was just behind the veil, i.e. in the Most Holy. See on Ps. 78:60. The rending of the veil at the Lord's death therefore as it were displayed God Himself to men.

Lev 4:18 He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar which is before Yahweh, that is in the Tent of Meeting; and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering, which is at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
The altar in view is that of incense (as in :7). The ritual of the offering was very similar to that for the high priest if he personally realized he had sinned. Perhaps there is to be deduced the idea that the high priest was representative of all Israel. They were in him, and he was in them. This looks ahead to the representative nature of the Lord's sacrifice and relationship with His people; as a representative and not a substitute.

Lev 4:19 All its fat he shall take from it, and burn it on the altar-
If the sacrifice was to be treated as the high priest's sin offering (:20), we can assume this included the kidneys etc.; see on :9.

Lev 4:20 Thus shall he do with the bull; as he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this; and the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven-
Again and again the point is made- atonement and forgiveness was still required even for sins of ignorance. The hurt to God had still been caused. Repentance was still needed. Otherwise there would be a disinterest in learning God's ways, a preference to remain in ignorance. Whereas once we grasp that sins of ignorance are still culpable sins, we will rather be motivated to learn all we can of God's ways. If we love God, we will want to please Him, we will want to know what He wishes from us, we will desire to learn His ways.

Lev 4:21 He shall carry forth the bull outside the camp, and burn it as he burned the first bull. It is the sin offering for the assembly-
He needed help to carry an entire bull, hence LXX "they shall carry forth the calf whole without the camp".

Lev 4:22 When a ruler sins, and unwittingly does any one of all the things which Yahweh his God has commanded not to be done, and is guilty-
Again we note that guilt is still reckoned even for past sins of ignorance. See on :20. We don't read "*If* a ruler sins...", but "when". This ought to have warned Israel against desiring a human king; they were being reminded that all human leadership has feet of clay, and leaders sin.

Lev 4:23 if his sin, in which he has sinned, is made known to him-
The double emphasis that he "has sinned" must be noted; ignorance doesn't work some kind of automatic atonement for sin. See on :20. "Is made known to him" could suggest he has his sin pointed out to him. We think of the situation with king Uzziah in 2 Chron. 26:18.

He shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without blemish-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Lev 4:24 He shall lay his hand on the head of the goat, and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before Yahweh. It is a sin offering-
For "lay his hand", see on :4. The scenario presented here is quite counter instinctive, especially in the societies of those days. You didn't point out sin to a leader (:23), and he typically would be proud and angry rather than humbly penitent.

Lev 4:25 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering. He shall pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering-
On one level, God surely foreknew that the scenario here described, whereby leaders of Israel humbly accepted rebuke and followed this ritual, was just not going to happen. And yet the whole legislation was given because this was God's hope. We think of all the detailed legislation of Ez. 40-48 for the exiles, in order that they might restore the temple. But it was not obeyed. This is one of the most tragic dimensions of God- setting up so much potential which is wasted. Perhaps David alludes to this legislation when he laments that there was no sacrifice prescribed for a king who had sinned as he had; for his sins were not those of ignorance but of presumption.

Lev 4:26 All its fat he shall burn on the altar, like the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin, and he will be forgiven-
The record of the sin offering in Lev. 4:10,26,31,35 stresses an impressive four times that the animal was to be prepared and offered in a similar way to the peace offerings, (e.g.) "as the fat is taken away from the peace offering". This serves to emphasize the link between the two sacrifices; the peace offering was in gratitude and rejoicing for the peace of sins forgiven. For this reason it was totally voluntary.

Lev 4:27 If anyone of the common people sins unwittingly, in doing any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and is guilty-
LXX "and they should do one thing forbidden of any of the commands of the Lord". See on :13. "The common people" is literally 'the people of the land / *eretz*', a phrase which usually refers to the non-Israelite peoples within the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 23:7; 42:6; Num. 13:18,28; 14:9; Dt. 28:10; Josh. 4:24; 1 Kings 8:43,53; 1 Chron. 5:25 etc.). This would be the likely understanding of the phrase here (and in Lev. 20:2,4).

Lev 4:28 if his sin, which he has sinned, is made known to him, then he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he has sinned-
The ruler was to offer a male, but the common person was to offer a female. It may

simply be because female animals cost less, and the ruler was to realize that he had greater responsibility in his failure and needed to show this in the kind of sacrifice he made.

Lev 4:29 He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering-
The person had to personally kill the animal, not delegate it to a priest or someone else. It would've been an unpleasant experience, but designed to teach the seriousness of sin. 'This animal has done nothing wrong; it's *me* who ought to be dying for my sin' would've been the thought of all sensitive, spiritually minded people who did this. And this is our thought as we survey the cross with the son of God dying upon it for our sins.

Lev 4:30 The priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar-
Because the altar represented the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10), it has been wrongly argued that these rituals speak of the cleansing of the nature of the Lord Jesus by His own death. This runs far too close to making the Lord Jesus a sinner who needed reconciliation with God; whereas His perfect character made Him for ever "one" with His Father, both before and after His death. Rather I suggest the blood of the sin offering was placed on the altar (and other items) in order to demonstrate how they achieved any forgiveness of sin. They only functioned in practice through their identification with the blood of Christ, represented by that of the bull slain as a sin offering. It as impossible that the blood of a bull could take away sin; it only functioned in this way insofar as God foresaw the blood of His Son (Heb. 10:4). The horns of the altar were perceived as the place of salvation for sinners (1 Kings 1:51; 2:28). But this was only finally to be true through the power of the blood of Christ. This idea was taught by the daubing of sin offering blood on the horns of the altar- as an act of identification of the altar with the blood, rather than to somehow make the metal of an unclean altar now clean. The whole system was dedicated to God, and accepted by Him, only through its association with the future blood of the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:31 All its fat he shall take away, like the fat is taken away from off of the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh; and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven-
"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong

delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 4:32 If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish-

F*or "female" see on :28*. This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 4:33 He shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering-

Many of the offerers would never have killed an animal. The experience would have been traumatic for some of them, and a powerful lesson in the effect of sin, even if committed unwittingly.

Lev 4:34 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering; and all the rest of its blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar-

"The base of the altar" points ahead to the significance of the blood at the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus.

Lev 4:35 All its fat he shall take away, like the fat of the lamb is taken away from the sacrifice of peace offerings; and the priest shall burn them on the altar, on the offerings of Yahweh made by fire; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin

that he has sinned, and he will be forgiven'-
The sin of crucifying the Lord Jesus is very generously presented as a sin of ignorance by the Lord's saying that "they know not what they do", confirmed by Peter's appeal to repent although "Through ignorance you did it" (Lk. 23:34; Acts 3:17). Repentance was therefore encouraged on the basis of having had sin made known to them. And the offering for that sin had already been made, in the Lord's death. Their sin of [apparent] ignorance was therefore in fact the forgiveness for their sin- if they actualized it by recognition and repentance.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 5

Lev 5:1 'If anyone sins, in that he hears the a legal call to testify, he being a witness, whether he has seen or known, if he doesn't speak, then he shall bear his iniquity-
Sins of omission, of turning a blind eye, are just as culpable as sins of commission. If we are witnesses, we will bear witness; we will naturally. We have to; and note how Lev. 5:1 taught that it was a sin not to bear witness / testify when one had been a witness. This may well be consciously alluded to in the language of witness which we have in Lk. 24:48. We each have the witness of the Lord's resurrection in ourselves (1 Jn. 5:10).

Lev 5:2 Or if anyone touches any unclean thing, whether it is the carcass of an unclean animal, or the carcass of unclean livestock, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and it is hidden from him, and he is unclean, then he shall be guilty-
Haggai comments that it was easier to be made unclean than to be made clean; touching holy things didn't impart holiness to a person, whereas touching unclean things made people unclean (Hag. 2:11-14). It's easy to be made unspiritual by association with unspiritual things, the things which are dead, which have no spiritual life in them, which are going nowhere- hence Paul alludes to this by saying "Touch not the unclean thing" in the context of appealing for believers to quit worldly associations (2 Cor. 6:17). However, on the other hand, this is no proof for the wrong idea of 'guilt by association'. The Lord Jesus touched lepers in order to heal them.

Lev 5:3 Or if he touches the uncleanness of man, whatever his uncleanness is with which he is unclean, and it is hidden from him; when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty-
Sins of ignorance still needed to be atoned for. Sin is a felt offence against God, whether or not we were aware of it at the time. If we accidentally step on someone's foot and they don't tell us about it until tomorrow, it doesn't mean that we didn't hurt them at the time. The sins we committed before baptism, in ignorance, were still felt by God and need atonement- which is available freely through being "in Christ". David asked to be

forgiven for the sins he committed which he didn't know about (Ps. 19:12 cp. Ps. 90:8). We should pray the same. But this means we are asking for forgiveness for sin which we haven't specifically repented of. We should likewise forgive others for their sins which although *we* so clearly feel them, they themselves don't realize they have committed them. We can, if we wish, insist that we shall only forgive those who repent to us of their sins. But the problem with that approach is that *as* we forgive others, the basis we choose upon which to relate to them, so we will be forgiven (Mt. 6:12). If we trust we are forgiven for sins we aren't conscious of, even though they are very clear to God and felt by Him, then we ought to forgive others for their sins even when they don't perceive (at this point in their spiritual journey) that they have sinned.

Lev 5:4 Or if anyone swears rashly with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatever it is that a man might utter rashly with an oath, and it is hidden from him; when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty of one of these-
LXX speaks in harsher terms of the man who swears rashly: "That unrighteous soul, which determines with his lips to do evil or to do good...". The idea would be that even a desire to do good was rendered unrighteous through the huge sin of swearing rashly. It would seem that Jephthah's rash vow falls in this category. He need not have performed it, had he been aware of the legislation here. Or perhaps he intentionally chose not to perform it. Maybe he rose up to a higher level than the following the letter of the law here; or maybe like Saul wishing to slay his son Jonathan, there was a death wish against his daughter. These questions are intentionally left open in the inspired text, as there is some designed benefit from our reflection upon them.

Lev 5:5 It shall be, when he is guilty of one of these, he shall confess that in which he has sinned-
The normal Hebrew word translated "praise" is also translated "confess" in the context of confessing sin (Lev. 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num. 5:7). Contrition of heart because of appreciating our own failures is therefore one way of praising Yahweh's Name. So often does the word "praise" occur in the context of praising the *Name* of Yahweh, or the praising of "the God of Israel", i.e. Yahweh. Praise is related to the realization that sin has been forgiven. Hezekiah's praise on realizing God's mercy to him was expressed in a desire to walk in quiet fellowship with God for the rest of his life. There is no suggestion that praise was some kind of ecstatic exuberance of emotion

Lev 5:6 and he shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh for his sin which he has sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin-
"His sin... he has sinned... his sin" labours the fact that sins of ignorance are really sin.

And must be dealt with. It emphasized the gravity of what had been done; that God was especially interested in how man responds once he becomes aware of his failures. And that is an abiding principle.

Lev 5:7 If he can't afford a lamb, then he shall bring his trespass offering for that in which he has sinned, two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, to Yahweh; one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering-
AV "His trespass which he hath committed" labours the point that sin of ignorance really is still sin. The usual order of the description of the offerings is sin offering, then burnt offering [speaking of dedication promised after the receipt of forgiveness] and then the peace offering, celebrating peace with God through forgiveness and commitment to the dedicated life, spoken of in the burnt offering.

Lev 5:8 He shall bring them to the priest, who shall first offer the one which is for the sin offering, and wring off its head from its neck, but shall not sever it completely-
A.V. mg. stipulates that if the offering was a bird, "pinch off the head with the nail" - as if a nail used in the process, perhaps for nailing the parts to the wood (cp. the nailing of the Lord Jesus to the cross).

Lev 5:9 He shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar; and the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering-
"The base of the altar" points ahead to the significance of the blood at the foot of the cross of the Lord Jesus. See on Lev. 4:30.

Lev 5:10 He shall offer the second for a burnt offering, according to the ordinance; and the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin which he has sinned, and he shall be forgiven-
The sin offering always preceded the burnt offering, which represented dedication to God. Before we can acceptably dedicate ourselves to God in any enterprise or aspect of our lives, we must first be right with God, cleansed from our sins; for good works alone cannot compensate for the sin we have committed.

Lev 5:11 But if he can't afford two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, then he shall bring his offering for that in which he has sinned, the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it, neither shall he put any frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering-
Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year (Song 2:12; Jer. 8:7); whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and

were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 5:12 He shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it as the memorial portion, and burn it on the altar, on the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. It is a sin offering-
The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Lev 5:13 The priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin that he has sinned in any of these things, and he will be forgiven; and the rest shall be the priest's, as the grain offering-
God thirsts for relationship with us, and doesn't want human poverty to mean that we can't get atonement. In Bible times, religion was the hobby of the wealthy; yet God wants relationship with all. Although it was a principle that shedding of blood was required for forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22), God was prepared to allow a non-blood sacrifice if this was all a person had to offer. Aware of this, Heb. 9:22 says that "*almost* all things" under the Law were cleansed by the shedding of blood- but not literally all, because the writer knew that there was this possibility of offering flour offerings instead of the required animal. The fact God is prepared to make concessions to human weakness shouldn't lead us to any spirit of minimalism in how we consider sin or the standards of God's holiness.

Lev 5:14 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
As explained on Lev. 1:1, Leviticus is largely teachings specifically addressed to the Levites, so the unwitting sin with "holy things" (:15) refers specifically to the Levites making unintentional errors.

Lev 5:15 If anyone commits a trespass, and sins unwittingly, in the holy things of

Yahweh; then he shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh, a ram without blemish from the flock, according to your estimation in silver by shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Lev 5:16 He shall make restitution for that which he has done wrong in the holy thing, and shall add a fifth part to it, and give it to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and he will be forgiven-
"Done wrong" is "for the harm that he has done". I find this wonderful; a sin of ignorance, an unintentional mishandling of Divine things, causes "harm"- to the sensitive soul of God Himself. A French proverb says that to understand all (as God does) is to forgive all; but it also means to be hurt by all so much the more. Just as little children assume their parents are insensitive and mere rocks of strength and provision, so we can fail to appreciate our Heavenly Father's sensitivity. Love, promises, covenant relationship, feeling for others, revealing yourself to the object of your love- this is all part of what it means for this sensitive God to enter covenant relationship with us. See on Lev. 19:12.

Lev 5:17 If anyone sins, and does any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done; though he didn't know it, yet he is guilty, and shall bear his iniquity-
The Lord Jesus Christ knew from Isaiah 53 that He was to bear Israel's sins, that the judgments for their sins were to fall upon Him. Israel 'bore their iniquities' by being condemned for them (Num. 14:34,35; Lev. 5:17; 20:17); to be a sin bearer was therefore to be one condemned. To die in punishment for your sin was to bear you sin. There is a difference between sin, and sin being laid upon a person. Num. 12:11 brings this out: "Lay not the sin upon us... wherein we have sinned". The idea of sin being laid upon a person therefore refers to condemnation for sin. Our sin being laid upon Jesus therefore means that He was treated *as if* He were a condemned sinner. He briefly endured within Him the torment of soul which the condemned will feel.

Lev 5:18 He shall bring a ram without blemish from of the flock, according to your estimation, for a trespass offering, to the priest; and the priest shall make atonement for him-
This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with

Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Israel were not to grow some crops, or raise some animals, just for God, and others for themselves. They were not to make this difference. They were to give Him e.g. lambs "out of their flock"; not enforcing a difference between that which is for God and that which is for ourselves. In other words, they were not to make a difference between spiritual and personal life; it is us, our daily lives and situations, which God wishes to be part of.

Concerning the thing in which he sinned and didn't know it, and he will be forgiven-
We note that the legislation about the cities of refuge likewise reflected God's special concern about unintentional sin. He recognizes that there are different kinds of sin. And in this we see His sensitivity, for the other legal codes at the time saw everything in black and white terms of obedience or disobedience to legal statutes. The word for "didn't know it" or "unintentionally" is s.w. 'deceived' (Job 12:16). It could be that God also recognizes that some are deceived into sin, and therefore treats those who lead into sin more severely than those who are led into sin. Likewise the New Testament condemns false teachers, but seems to be more acceptive of the falsely taught, the misguided.

Lev 5:19 It is a trespass offering. He is certainly guilty before Yahweh'-
"Certainly guilty" continues the great emphasis upon the fact that atonement and forgiveness was still required even for sins of ignorance. The hurt to God had still been caused. Repentance was still needed. Otherwise there would be a disinterest in learning God's ways, a preference to remain in ignorance. Whereas once we grasp that sins of ignorance are still culpable sins, we will rather be motivated to learn all we can of God's ways. If we love God, we will want to please Him, we will want to know what He wishes from us, we will desire to learn His ways.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 6

Lev 6:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
We will read now about theft and fraud (:2-7), and then the text goes straight on to speak of burnt offerings (:8,9). Perhaps the connection in thought is that these words have specifically in view the temptation to steal from others and then offer the stolen goods

as an offering to Yahweh- which is exactly the problem addressed in Is. 61:8. So it clearly was a problem in Israel. See on :7. The principle is that we are not to offer to Yahweh that which cost us nothing (1 Sam. 24:24) and that is the abiding take away lesson.

Lev 6:2 'If anyone sins, and commits a trespass against Yahweh, and deals falsely with his neighbour in a matter of deposit, or of bargain, or of robbery, or has oppressed his neighbour-
The oppression in view is things like not paying him his hire every day (Dt. 24:14,15; Lev. 19:13). "Oppress" is the same word translated "deceive"; to not oppress others through deceiving them would elicit the heaviest judgment from God, when the person realized the deception and cried to God because of it (Dt. 24:15). Deceiving / oppressing a neighbour was a sin against Yahweh (Lev. 6:2 s.w.), because He has a special interest in the poor. And His law reflects that. We should likewise have such a special interest, rather than ever seeking to analyze why people are poor. Fraud and oppression were Israel's experience in Egypt. Constantly, the law of Moses urges them to remember their spiritual biography, and this awareness is intended to elicit grace to others, never treating them as Israel were treated in Egypt. Our lives before baptism were lived as it were in Egypt (1 Cor. 10:1,2), and so the principle applies to us too.

Lev 6:3 or has found that which was lost, and dealt falsely therein, and swearing to a lie; in any of all these things that a man does, sinning therein-
"Found that which was lost" is the phrase quoted by the Lord Jesus in His parables of the lost sheep and coin (Lk. 15:6). He had engaged with these same words which we are reading. Finding the lost was to be a source of open joy, rather than being used secretly for personal advantage and benefit. And so it is with all pastoral work in finding the lost.

Lev 6:4 then it shall be, if he has sinned, and is guilty, he shall restore that which he took by robbery, or the thing which he has gotten by oppression, or the deposit which was committed to him, or the lost thing which he found-
Robbery was effectively what the exaggeration, mind games, manipulation, white lies and deceitful dealing of :2 was reckoned as. These things creep in so easily into any business dealings between people; and God sees them as robbery.

Lev 6:5 or any thing about which he has sworn falsely; he shall restore it even in full, and shall add a fifth part more to it. To him to whom it belongs he shall give it, in the day of his being found guilty-
Broken relationships were to be restored as quickly as possible "in the day", so the restoration was to be made immediately. In all human failure, reconciliation involves

some level of restoration, be it verbal or material. Zacchaeus alludes to this when he says that he would restore fourfold that which he had stolen by deceit. This was far more than the "fifth part" required by the law (Lk. 19:8). Again we see how the Mosaic law was not a chain, a wearisome and limiting leash upon man, as if he were a dog ever miserably constrained from what he would like to do; but rather a springboard to using personal initiative to respond to the principles taught- often to a far greater extent than mere obedience to the letter of the law. We see this in the way Boaz interpreted the Levirate law, and also the laws about allowing gleaning. See Lev. 4:14 for another example.

Lev 6:6 He shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh, a ram without blemish from the flock-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

According to your estimation, for a trespass offering, to the priest-

This is a reminder that we are reading commandments addressed to the Levites. Many stolen things were in forms other than money, so they had to estimate what was a fifth amount of the value of the stolen sheep, or whatever.

Lev 6:7 The priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh, and he will be forgiven concerning whatever he has done to become guilty'-

"To become guilty" could equally be translated "in the presentation of a sin offering". And this would connect with the suggestion on :1, that we may be here dealing specifically with a case of a person stealing from others in order to make the sin offering required for some earlier sin.

Lev 6:8 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
See on :1 for the connection between the following laws of the burnt offering, and the preceding commandments about fraud.

Lev 6:9 Command Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the burnt offering: the burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning; and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it-
The idea may be that there was not to be a moment, night or day, when the principle of sacrifice was not being demonstrated. And this should feature in our lives. But the lamb specifically looked ahead to the Lord Jesus. There is a sense in which His sacrifice for us is eternally ongoing.

Lev 6:10 The priest shall put on his linen garment, and he shall put on his linen breeches upon his body; and he shall remove the ashes from where the fire has consumed the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar-
This was the garment of Ex. 28:4,39,42 (see notes there). The entire body of believers are described as being figuratively clothed in linen at the Lord's return, in that it represents the imputed righteousness of the saints / believers (Rev. 19:8). The allusion to the 'clothing upon' of the nakedness of flesh at the Lord's return is clear; the same figure is found in 2 Cor. 5:4. But the implication is that we shall then be as ordained priests- we shall go forth into eternity to do the work of priesthood, helping others to come to Yahweh. Our experiences now, especially our frustrations in being unable to do or achieve this work, are all in order to prepare us for such an eternity.

Lev 6:11 He shall take off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place-
We think of the slain, sacrificed body of the Lord Jesus being removed to a clean place, buried outside the city of Jerusalem, wrapped in a clean linen cloth (cp. the garments of :10) and laid in a new tomb, wherein no man had been laid (Mt. 27:59), and therefore ritually clean.

Lev 6:12 The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not go out; and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning: and he shall lay the burnt offering in order upon it, and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings-
The fire of the altar was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening.

Lev 6:13 Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out'-

There was fair emphasis on this, that always a lamb should be smouldering as a burnt offering to God. Our devotion to God, as a community of believers and as individuals, must be 24/7; it's not a matter of occasional flashes of devotion, weekly attendance at meetings etc. Whatever special devotions we make, our regular daily evening and morning prayers and devotions are to never to be missed. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

Lev 6:14 'This is the law of the grain offering: the sons of Aaron shall offer it before Yahweh, before the altar-
The humblest offering, just some flour, was before Yahweh. He has a special interest in the offering of little things from little people; see on :17.

Lev 6:15 He shall take from there his handful of the fine flour of the grain offering, and of its oil, and all the frankincense which is on the grain offering, and shall burn it on the altar for a pleasant aroma, as its memorial, to Yahweh-
Frankincense was a type of incense which would have given a pleasing smell to the burning flour. This represented how pleased God was with the offering even of a handful of flour. Small sacrifices please Him immensely. And they are what comprise daily life.

The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Paul writes often that he "makes mention" or 'remembers' his brethren in regular prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek *mneia* is the word used in the LXX for the "memorial" of the incense or the meal offering (Lev. 2:2,16; 24:7), or the constant fire on the altar which was for a memorial (Lev. 6:15). That fire, that flour, that incense, had to be carefully and consciously prepared; it had to be the result of man's labour. And likewise, Paul seems to be saying, he first of all thought through the cases which he then presented to the Father.

Lev 6:16 That which is left of it Aaron and his sons shall eat. It shall be eaten without

yeast in a holy place. They shall eat it in the court of the Tent of Meeting-
The priests had no inheritance amongst Israel, they survived by eating parts of the offerings. Their eating of them represented God's 'eating' of the sacrifices, the altar being described as His table (Mal. 1:7,12), His acceptance of the offerer and fellowship with them- for eating what had been brought to you was a sign of acceptance and religious fellowship with the donor.

Lev 6:17 It shall not be baked with yeast. I have given it as their portion of my offerings made by fire. It is most holy, as the sin offering, and as the trespass offering-
The language of "most holy" is juxtaposed against the fact that this was referring to a simple grain offering, a 'little something' offered by literally anyone within Israel (see on Lev. 2:1). But such tiny offerings were "most holy" to God; we think of the Lord's attitude to the widow offering her two small coins.

Lev 6:18 Every male among the children of Aaron shall eat of it, as their portion forever throughout your generations, from the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. Whoever touches them shall be holy'-
This doesn't mean that holiness was transferred by touching them, for holiness cannot be spread like that (Hag. 2:11-13). Rather the idea is that the males who touched them must be ritually clean (Lev. 22:6,7). Perhaps we as the new priesthood are to learn from this that we are to partake of the memorial bread and wine in a "clean" way, i.e. having examined ourselves and recognizing our uncleanness. For by a great paradox, that is what it means to be clean before God.

Lev 6:19 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The following commands were specifically for the day when Aaron was anointed; as discussed on Lev. 1:1,2, it seems all of Leviticus is aimed specifically in this context.

Lev 6:20 'This is the offering of Aaron and of his sons, which they shall offer to Yahweh in the day when he is anointed: the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering perpetually, half of it in the morning, and half of it in the evening-
An ephah is about 22 liters. "Perpetually" may refer specifically to the days of the consecration rituals for Aaron and his sons; see on Lev. 1:1. Roughly one kilogram of flour baked into a cake (:21) was to be offered every morning and evening. This relatively small, low value offering was perhaps to remind them of the supreme importance to God of small, regular sacrifices.

Lev 6:21 It shall be made with oil in a griddle. When it is soaked, you shall bring it in. You

shall offer the grain offering in baked pieces-
The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously. This was taught in the dividing up of the offerings into pieces (see on Lev. 1:17).

For a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
“A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 6:22 The anointed priest that will be in his place from among his sons shall offer it. By a statute forever, it shall be wholly burnt to Yahweh-
‘Christ’ means ‘the anointed one’, and so Jewish minds would have associated ‘Jesus Christ’ with the priest who saves [‘Jesus’ means ‘Yahweh’s salvation’].

Lev 6:23 Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned. It shall not be eaten’-
Again we see that this refers specifically to the ritual of the dedication of the priests. For Lev. 7:9 is clear that generally, "Every grain offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is dressed in the pan, and on the griddle, shall be the priest’s who offers it". The priests were not to eat parts of their own dedicatory offering, as they usually did with the offerings of others. We as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) shouldn’t take any personal benefit from what we give to God, otherwise the concept of personal sacrifice to God is somewhat lacking in meaning. We are not to offer that which costs us nothing (1 Sam. 24:24). The priests were so used to dealing with the needs of others for atonement and acceptability with God- but they were not to forget that they too needed this, hence they too had to offer sacrifice. Our dealings with the unsaved world shouldn’t lead us to forget our own personal need for reconciliation with God.

Lev 6:24 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
God spoke to Moses, who then spoke to the Aaronites (:25). He is presented as mediator between God and man, looking ahead to the greater prophet like him, Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 6:25 Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This is the law of the sin offering-
I suggest this refers to specific sin offering when Aaron was consecrated. See on :20,26.

In the place where the burnt offering is killed, the sin offering shall be killed before Yahweh. It is most holy-
That is, on the north side of the altar (Lev. 1:11). Golgotha was on the north side of Jerusalem, and all these sacrifices look ahead to the Lord's death there. The laver was on the west side of the altar, the place of ashes on the east (Lev. 1:16), and the approach to the altar from the south would have been up a slope to avoid approaching the altar by steps and uncovering nakedness. The north side would have been the only appropriate place for this. So there is an impressive corroboration of the records here, with this command to kill the animals on the north side of the altar.

Lev 6:26 The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. It shall be eaten in a holy place, in the court of the Tent of Meeting-
It was not to be taken out of the court and eaten. And yet the priestly share of the offerings could usually be eaten by their families. So we are confirmed in understanding that this refers to a specific sin offering when Aaron was consecrated. See on :20,25.

Lev 6:27 Whatever shall touch its flesh shall be holy-
This doesn't mean that holiness was transferred by touching them, for holiness cannot be spread like that (Hag. 2:11-13). Rather the idea is that the males who touched them must be ritually clean (Lev. 22:6,7).

When there is any of its blood sprinkled on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was sprinkled in a holy place-
This makes us think of the blood sprinkled garments of the Lord Jesus which are prophesied in Gen. 49:11; Is. 63:3). This therefore was a terrible image for those steeped in Mosaic concepts, just as His invitation to drink His blood. To accept His sacrifice meant a radical rethinking of Mosaic images.

Lev 6:28 But the earthen vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken; and if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, it shall be scoured, and rinsed in water-
Unglazed, porous pottery could have absorbed some of the blood, so it had to be destroyed. The water was presumably from the laver (Ex. 30:28). The Hebrew for

"scoured" implies being made bright in the fire. The breaking of earthen vessels is an image used for the breaking of humanity. We hold God's truth, the blood of Christ, in earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7), which must be broken at the last day when our mortality is swallowed up. We are to pass through fire and water so that we will be eternally preserved.

Lev 6:29 Every male among the priests shall eat of it: it is most holy-
When the Lord Jesus presented Himself as the sin offering and invited His people to eat the symbol of it in the breaking of bread meeting, He was inviting us to see ourselves as a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9), no longer assuming some group of specialists would look after the spiritual concerns of others, but everyone, male and female, taking responsibility. This was a radical, difficult idea to accept for first century Jewish Christians, and it is hard for us today too, accustomed as we are to assigning responsibility to others rather than taking it ourselves.

Lev 6:30 No sin offering, of which any of the blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be eaten: it shall be burned with fire'-
What was in view were the sin offerings for the high priest and the whole congregation (Lev. 4:3,12-21), and the sin offering of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:27).

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 7

Lev 7:1 'This is the law of the trespass offering. It is most holy-
There's a difference between the trespass offering ["guilt offering"] and the sin offering, which is hard to define; and the terms are at times used interchangeably. It seems that the trespass offering was made when a specific sin had been done more consciously, whereas the sin offering was required when sin had been committed less consciously, or when a more general recognition of the fact we are sinners was required.

Lev 7:2 In the place where they kill the burnt offering, he shall kill the trespass offering; and its blood he shall sprinkle around on the altar-
To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that

blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 7:3 He shall offer all of its fat: the fat tail, and the fat that covers the inward parts-
There is special emphasis upon the fat, which was perceived as the best part of the animal, and the most covered inward parts. After recognizing our sin, we must be prepared to offer these to God. David understood the spirit of the trespass offering when after his sin with Bathsheba he offered to God his inward parts (Ps. 51:6).

The idea is as in LXX "the fact [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 7:4 and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the loins, and the cover on the liver, with the kidneys, shall he take away-
"Take away" is the word usually used for declining, refusing etc. The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which he heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 7:5 and the priest shall burn them on the altar for an offering made by fire to Yahweh: it is a trespass offering-
"Burn" is literally 'to smoke'. The idea is that the offering of the inward parts went up to God; see on :4.

Lev 7:6 Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy-
The priests had no inheritance amongst Israel, they survived by eating parts of the offerings. Their eating of them represented God's 'eating' of the sacrifices, the altar being described as His table (Mal. 1:7,12), His acceptance of the offerer and fellowship with them- for eating what had been brought to you was a sign of acceptance and

religious fellowship with the donor.

Lev 7:7 As is the sin offering, so is the trespass offering; there is one law for them. The priest who makes atonement with them shall have it-
It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 7:8 The priest who offers any man's burnt offering, even the priest shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has offered-
This skin could be eaten, or used to make clothes or other items from the hide. "Skin" is s.w. "leather". But it had been burnt, so we wonder whether there was any practical benefit from having it. Perhaps it was solely in order to teach the priests that they were themselves sinful, like Adam, who was given the skin of the first offering.

Lev 7:9 Every grain offering that is baked in the oven, and all that is dressed in the pan, and on the griddle, shall be the priest's who offers it-
We wonder whether these methods of preparing the grain offering refer to the usage of the fire on the altar in order to prepare it, either by frying or baking. The "pan" would therefore be one of the "pans" which are descried as utensils for use in the sanctuary. For not all visitors to the sanctuary would have a home nearby where there was an oven for them to prepare it before they arrived.

Lev 7:10 Every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, belongs to all the sons of Aaron, one as well as another-
God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mixed" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made.

Lev 7:11 This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which one shall offer to Yahweh-
Peace offerings were voluntary, but they were still regulated. Our desire to serve God on our own initiative doesn't mean that we can ignore His principles and totally do our own thing.

Lev 7:12 If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving unleavened loaves mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mixed with oil-

The idea is, "for a thanksgiving offering". Continually we should offer this sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15), the thankfulness that wells up from knowing we are forgiven, the joy born of regular, meaningful repentance. And we do this "by" or 'on account of' the sacrifice of Jesus for us, which enables this forgiveness and thereby repentance (Heb. 13:12,15). This "sacrifice of praise" is alluded to in Jer. 33:11, which describes our offering "the sacrifice of praise... for his mercy" at the beginning of the Kingdom. Praise will [and does] bring forth sacrifice / action. Yet "praise" here is the same Hebrew word translated "thanksgiving"; and the sacrifice of thanksgiving was the peace offering, a commemoration of our free conscience and the peace of sin forgiven (Lev. 7:12-15). If we seriously confess our sins and believe in forgiveness, we should be experiencing a foretaste of the praise we will be offering at the start of the Kingdom, as we embark upon eternity.

The Hebrew for “thanksgiving" is rendered "confession" (of sin) in Ezra 10:11. We see that the peace offering was linked with confession of sin. It is significant that after Manasseh's marvellous confession of sin (is there any greater encouragement as to the possibility of repentance than his case?), he then offered peace offerings (2 Chron. 29:31). In Hezekiah's time, all those who were of a "free heart" offered "thank offerings", i.e. peace offerings (2 Chron. 29:31 cp. Lev. 7:12), after they had consecrated themselves. The free conscience that comes from realistic re- dedication was reflected in making the peace offering. Coming to the breaking of bread should have a like motivation.

David rejoiced in God's mercy to him, perhaps in the context of his sin with Bathsheba. He asks: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his (spiritual) benefits toward me?" . He decides that he will offer a peace offering: "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving (the peace offering; Lev. 7:12)... I will take the cup of salvation... I will pay my vows... in the presence of all his people... in the courts of the Lord's house". As we sit "before the Lord" at the memorial meeting, beholding the cross of Christ and the blood of Calvary, we should be intensely aware of God's great benefits towards us: our salvation assured, sin forgiven, peace with God. Our response should be to renew our vows joyfully, in the ecclesia, God's house, in the presence of His people, as we eat the peace offering, the sacrifice of thanksgiving. As the peace offering was to be offered publicly, "before the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. 3:13), so in the sight of each other we too renew our vows and express our peace with God. And if we are all at peace with God, we should therefore be at peace with each other.

Lev 7:13 With loaves of leavened bread he shall offer his offering with the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving-

Even though leaven was prohibited in offerings (Lev. 2:11), God was willing to accept a peace offering with leaven in it (Lev. 7:13). And for a freewill offering, He would accept a deformed animal (Lev. 22:23), even though this was against His *preferred principle* of absolute perfection in offerings. There was no atonement without the shedding of blood; and yet for the very poor, God would accept a non-blood sacrifice. This all reflected the zeal of God to accept fallen men. Or perhaps the idea was that despite the presence of our flesh and moral weakness, represented by the leaven, man can still be at peace with God. For none of us reach perfect sinlessness, but we can still find peace with God.

Lev 7:14 Of it he shall offer one loaf out of each offering for a gift offering to Yahweh. It shall be the priest's who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings-

LXX "And he shall bring one of all his gifts, a separate offering to the Lord: it shall belong to the priest who pours forth the blood of the peace-offering". GNB "You shall present one part of each kind of bread as a special contribution to the LORD". The reference is to the three kinds of bread listed in :12.

Lev 7:15 The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning-

The law of the peace offerings was designed so as to encourage the person who decided to make such a freewill offering to execute immediately- they were to eat it the same day they offered it, and the sacrifice would be totally unacceptable if it was killed but left for some days (Lev. 19:5-7). If we have an impulse to respond to the Lord, we should respond to it immediately. This isn't mere impetuosity. It's a spirit of always having an immediacy of response, which empowers us to overcome the procrastination which holds us back so much.

Lev 7:16 But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow, or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice; and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten-

The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas

Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Lev 7:17 but what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned with fire-
As noted on :15,16, the spontaneous desire to offer a peace offering was not to be spun out over a period of days. The condemnation for doing so was severe (:18). This chapter will go on to warn against various ways of using the peace offering for the benefit of the offerer. One such idea may have been to kill meat and eat it over three days, and then claim this was a peace offering- when actually it involved eating meat which the offerer wanted to eat anyway. So the warning is against using voluntary offerings [in whatever way] as a front for doing our own thing, offering what cost us very little, and only appearing to others to have a great religious devotion.

Lev 7:18 If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed to him who offers it. It will be an abomination, and the soul who eats any of it will bear his iniquity'-
The Septuagint uses the word translated "imputed" in the NT with regard to sacrifices [symbolic of Christ's death on the cross] being "reckoned" to a person (Lev. 7:18; Num. 18:27,30); and of Shimei asking David not to "reckon" his guilt to him, to judge him not according to the obvious facts of the case (2 Sam. 19:20). The Old Testament is at pains to stress that Yahweh will *not* justify the guilty (Ex. 23:7; Is. 5:23; Prov. 17:15). This is where the unique significance of Jesus comes in. Because of *Him*, His death and our faith in it, our being in Him, God can justify the wicked in that they have died with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), they are no longer, they are only "in Christ", for them "to live is Christ". They are counted as in Him, and in this way sinners end up justified.

Lev 7:19 'The flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. It shall be burned with fire. As for the flesh, everyone who is clean may eat it-
The fact someone had made the freewill decision to offer a peace offering didn't mean they could eat it unclean, or that they could allow the meat of the offering to be unclean. This ancient regulation is strikingly relevant to the modern mindset, to the effect that if I make a voluntary donation to my church, I am somehow justified to live and carry on as I wish, regardless of God's basic moral demands.

Lev 7:20 but the soul who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings that belongs to Yahweh, having his uncleanness on him, that soul shall be cut off from his people-

See on :19. Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

The peace offering was a voluntary sacrifice. But this didn't mean that the offerer could be careless, or think that having made a special sacrifice to God somehow made his uncleanness of no significance. Taking the initiative in serving God is good, but it shouldn't make us think that we are somehow above God's principles and can be unclean in other aspects of our lives.

It was not allowed for unclean offerers to eat peace offerings (Lev. 7:20), nor could Levites or priests approach to the sacrifices whilst unclean (Lev. 22:3). But there is no statement that the offerer had to be clean, indeed Dt. 12:22 says that some sacrifices could be eaten by the offerer whilst unclean. We see here God's willingness to by all means accept the offerer of sacrifice.

Lev 7:21 When anyone touches any unclean thing, the uncleanness of man, or an unclean animal, or any unclean abomination, and eats some of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which belong to Yahweh, that soul shall be cut off from his people'- The peace offering was one of the many antecedents of the memorial meeting. Once

the offerer had dedicated himself to making it, he was condemned if he didn't then do it, and yet also condemned if he ate it unclean (Lev. 7:18,20). So a man *had* to either cleanse himself, or be condemned. There was no get out, no third road. The man who ate the holy things in a state of uncleanness had to die; his eating would load him with the condemnation of his sins (Lev. 22:3,16 AV mg.). This is surely the source for our possibility of “eating… condemnation" to ourselves by partaking of the breaking of bread in an unworthy manner. And so it is with us as we face the emblems. We must do it, or we deny our covenant relationship. And yet if we do it in our uncleanness, we also deny that relationship. And thus the breaking of bread brings us up before the cross and throne of the Lord Jesus- even now. It brings us to a realistic self-examination. If we cannot examine ourselves and know that Christ is really in us, then we are reprobate; we "have failed" (2 Cor. 13:5 G.N.B.). Self-examination is therefore one of those barriers across our path in life which makes us turn to the Kingdom or to the flesh. If we can't examine ourselves and see that Christ is in us and that we have therefore that great salvation in Him; we've failed.

Lev 7:22 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
This section in :23-27 about not eating fat or blood is sandwiched between other legislation about peace offerings. So the idea may be that the peace offering was not to be used as an excuse to feast oneself on otherwise prohibited parts of the animal. Again, as noted on :19, the warning is against thinking that freewill, voluntary religious devotion can be used for our own personal pleasuring.

Lev 7:23 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘You shall eat no fat, of bull, or sheep, or goat-
These animals are those referred to in :25, animals "of which men offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh". This confirms the suggestion in :23 that we are reading of specific warnings about misusing the peace offering, the idea of voluntary devotion, in order to get around the need to give God the best.

Lev 7:24 The fat of that which dies of itself, and the fat of that which is torn of animals, may be used for any other service, but you shall in no way eat of it-
As noted on :23,24, the context is warning against misusing the spirit of the peace offering. The temptation was to use the fat of the bodies of animals which had died natural deaths, and eat this as a peace offering. This was a specific denial of the vital principle that we are not to offer sacrifice of that which costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Lev 7:25 For whoever eats the fat of the animal, of which men offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh, even the soul who eats it shall be cut off from his people-

The fat and blood represented the best parts of life, and were to be given to God completely. The making of a voluntary sacrifice like the peace offering didn't mean that basic Divine principles could be bypassed, or His moral demands reversed. And we must beware of this mentality in our money oriented age, thinking that financial generosity to the church frees us from other basic moral obligations.

Lev 7:26 You shall not eat any blood, whether it is of bird or of animal, in any of your dwellings-
The blood was understood as representing life (Dt. 12:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves. This principle cannot be gotten around by making a one time act of voluntary devotion to God, such as the peace offering was. The command not to eat of blood or fat was specifically in the context of the legislation about peace offerings; this entire section is about the peace offering (:37).

Lev 7:27 Whoever it is who eats any blood, that soul shall be cut off from his people'-
The blood represented the life (Lev. 17:11). The lesson was that life- both our own and that of others- is God's, and we shouldn't assume that we are our own masters. It is not for us to do what we wish with life- it is God's. Paradoxically, the person who thought they could eat blood, who thought that life was theirs, would lose their life. The only way to live eternally is to give our life back to God who gave it to us. In baptism, we die with Christ, giving our lives to God as He did, but this must be an ongoing principle in our daily living, as we live not to ourselves but to Him (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Pet. 4:2).

Lev 7:28 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
These regulations continue the Divine warning against using the voluntary peace offering as a front for giving an appearance of sacrifice, when in fact the offerer was offering what cost them very little. Such spiritual pride, seen in Ananias and Sapphira, is so obnoxious to God.

Lev 7:29 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'He who offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to Yahweh shall bring his offering to Yahweh out of the sacrifice of his peace offerings-
I suggest in the context of :30 that we are to read this as meaning he must bring the sacrifice of his *own* peace offerings. There was to be no fictive offering through paying someone else to do it. Relationship with God is personal and can only be celebrated between God and the individual. Yet the way of religion [not spirituality] is to get

someone else to do our religious stuff for us.

Lev 7:30 With his own hands-
We cannot get others to do our worship and devotion to God for us. In this lies the grave error of the orthodox idea of a human priesthood who as it were do everything for us. We are to have a deeply personal relationship with God, with Christ as our only mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

He shall bring the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be waved for a wave offering before Yahweh-
The Hebrew word for "waved" means to lift up, to shake, to move to and fro. This style of offering meant that the offerer lifted up the sacrifice to God. The wave offerings were typically eaten by the priests, but first they had to be lifted up to God in recognition that they were being given ultimately to Him and not to the priests personally. The physical lifting up of the sacrifice through the air towards God could represent the ascension of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice to God. See on :32.

Lev 7:31 The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be Aaron's and his sons'-
In addition, as for all offerings, "the front leg, the two jaw-bones, and the rough stomach of ruminants, in which the digestion is completed" was to be given to the priest (Dt. 18:3). These were thought to be the best parts of an animal; and additionally a leg (Lev. 7:32) and the breast (Lev. 7:31) of the offering were also to be given to the priest if it was a peace offering (Num. 18:11).

Lev 7:32 The right thigh you shall give to the priest for a heave offering out of the sacrifices of your peace offerings-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16). See on :30.

Lev 7:33 He among the sons of Aaron who offers the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, shall have the right thigh for a portion-

This could be a repetition of :33, but the Hebrew for "right thigh" is s.w. "leg" and "shoulder", so there may be a reference to two parts of the body.

Lev 7:34 For the waved breast and the heaved thigh I have taken from the children of Israel out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons as their portion forever from the children of Israel-
"Their portion" was the food, and not land on which food could be grown. The land was the portion Yahweh gave to the other tribes. Clearly the more peace offerings offered meant the more food for the Levites; for they took a significant proportion of the meat offered. But peace offerings were voluntary, and the number of them offered reflected the overall spirituality of the people, which in turn was a function of the work of the Levites in teaching them to be spiritually devoted to Yahweh.

Lev 7:35 This is the anointing portion of Aaron, and the anointing portion of his sons, out of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, in the day when he presented them to minister to Yahweh in the priest's office-
GNB "This is the part of the food offered to the LORD that was given to Aaron and his sons on the day they were ordained as priests". Whilst the commandments about offerings in this chapter are all true in a general sense, they are mentioned in the book of Leviticus because the entire book was about the various offerings associated with the specific consecration of Aaron; see on Lev. 1:1. And that included peace offerings.

Lev 7:36 which Yahweh commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that He anointed them. It is their portion forever throughout their generations'-
See on :35. Yahweh anointed the priests (Lev. 7:36) - but in practice Moses did. Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character.

Lev 7:37 This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, and of the sin offering, and of the trespass offering, and of the consecration, and of the sacrifice of peace offerings-
This whole chapter, therefore, has concerned the sacrifices. The apparent interjection in :23-27 about not eating blood or fat, especially of animals which were found dead after dying from natural causes, is therefore also in the context of the offerings. Much of the legislation is therefore aimed at stopping attempts at only appearing to offer sacrifice, when in fact the intention was to please themselves.

Lev 7:38 which Yahweh commanded Moses in Mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children of Israel to offer their offerings to Yahweh, in the wilderness of Sinai-
This indicates Moses' obedience to the commandment to teach Israel God's law. In the day that he received the commandments in Mount Sinai, he taught them to Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. It means that the very day he returned from the mountain to the wilderness, he immediately shared with them the commandments which he had been given. Those who truly sense the bear God's words will be urgent in sharing them with others.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 8

Lev 8:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
I suggested on Lev. 1:1 that perhaps the whole of Leviticus refers to the inauguration of Aaron and his sons. And the following passage is confirmation of that.

Lev 8:2 'Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and the bull of the sin offering, and the two rams, and the basket of unleavened bread-
We see here the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering. Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering [the reference of the unleavened bread in the basket]. So the priests were being convicted of their sin, so that their dedication to Yahweh's service was no mere ritual, but a from the heart desire to serve Him from gratitude for the forgiveness of sin.

Lev 8:3 and assemble all the congregation at the door of the Tent of Meeting'-
The entire congregation could not have fitted there, so we have here an example of the Hebraism whereby the entire group is put for representatives of that group. Thus we read of "all men" being saved, hearing the Gospel etc., when clearly 'representatives of' "all men" are in view.

Lev 8:4 Moses did as Yahweh commanded him; and the congregation was assembled at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
The Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint [LXX], uses the word *ekklesia*, which is used in the New Testament for the church. The body of believers in Christ today are the equivalent of the Old Testament people of God, Israel.

Lev 8:5 Moses said to the congregation, This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded to be done-
The significance of this is that Aaron and his sons were declared the priests by Divine commandment. The later rebellion of Koran was effectively a disagreement with this commandment and Divine choice.

Lev 8:6 Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water-
This washing with water looks ahead to baptism into Christ, by which we become the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). Baptism is not therefore a mere statement of agreement with a denomination or set of theology. It is our inauguration to a life of dedicated service.

Lev 8:7 He put the coat on him, tied the sash on him, clothed him with the robe, put the ephod on him, and he tied the skilfully woven band of the ephod on him, and fastened it to him with it-
Clothing after washing in water (:6) looks ahead to our being clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus after baptism. But it is so that we might then go forward and serve, ministering in the spirit of the Levites.

The commands relating to the rebuilt temple of Ez. 40-48 are expanded upon in Zechariah 3. There we read that Joshua the high priest was to be dressed first with the headpiece and then with the rest of the priestly garments (Zech. 3:5). This is the reverse order to the Mosaic commands in Ex. 29:5-7 and Lev. 8:7-9- implying that this was to be a new kind of high priest. Likewise the two onyx stones and the twelve gemstones of the Mosaic breastplate are replaced by a singular stone for the restored high priest (Zech. 3:9). The religious system offered to the returned exiles was not at all a restoration of the Mosaic system. There are too many differences. The old covenant was broken by Israel and has been abrogated. There is no reason to think that these "weak and beggarly elements" will ever be revived; there is no need for it now that we have the new covenant.

Lev 8:8 He placed the breastplate on him; and in the breastplate he put the Urim and the Thummim-
LXX "The Manifestation and the Truth". These stones appear to have flashed out binary yes / no responses or judgments in response to issues brought before God; they were the means of the manifestation of His truth. This is how they were used on the occasions we will later read of them. This is perhaps why "Breastplate" is LXX "oracle", as if the judgment flashed out from the urim and thummim associated with the breastplate was God's word or oracle to His people. The urim and thummim are where

the precious stones of the breastplate were (Ex. 28:29)- on the heart of the high priest. The answer of God concerning His people was on the heart of the Lord Jesus. The outcome of His judgment of us is so deeply in His heart.

Lev 8:9 He set the turban on his head; and on the turban, in front, he set the golden plate, the holy crown-
This is the plate of Ex. 28:36 "You shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engravings of a signet, 'HOLY TO YAHWEH'". Most of the surrounding tabernacles featured quite a lot of noise- especially incantations and spoken formulas regarding the holiness of the god and shrine. There were few spoken words in the Mosaic rituals; "Holy to the Lord" was written upon the forehead of the High Priest rather than stated by incantations (GNB 'Dedicated to the LORD', LXX has "holiness of the Lord"). We could maybe go so far as to say that we see here the exaltation of God's written word, with all the faith and understanding which this requires, as opposed to the incantations of other worship systems. The plate or rosette on the High Priest's turban would've recalled pagan plates which warded off supposed demons; but this one spoke of "Holiness to Yahweh", again replacing the negative with the positive

As Yahweh commanded Moses-
The careful obedience of Moses is emphasized; by it he became a type of Christ who was totally obedient to God (Heb. 3:2,5). The early chapters of Exodus present Moses as not always obedient, often arguing back with God and trying to find ways around God's commandments to him. In this we see his spiritual growth. This growing acceptance of God's authority and eagerness to obey rather than find ways around His commandments should be a feature of our spiritual growth too.

Lev 8:10 Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and sanctified them-
'Christ' means 'the anointed one'. All these anointed things were therefore symbolic of Him. He fulfilled their meaning in reality within His person, character and work.

Lev 8:11 He sprinkled it on the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all its vessels, and the basin and its base, to sanctify them-
This pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, the Christ, the anointed one, through whom all the sacrifices were made ultimately meaningful. Without Him in the future, the whole system wouldn't have worked.

Lev 8:12 He poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him-

The Septuagint word used for ‘anointing’ here occurs in the New Testament only in 1 Jn. 2:20,27, where we read that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone. I'd therefore be inclined to see 1 Jn. 2:20,27 as alluding to baptism; when we become in Christ, in the anointed, then as 2 Cor. 1:21 says, we too are anointed in a sense. We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism. The words for 'anointing' are unique to 1 John but they occur in the LXX to describe the anointing / initiation of the priests, and of the tabernacle / dwelling place of God (e.g. Ex. 29:7; 35:14,28). John sees us as the dwelling place / tabernacle of the Father, and specifically as the priests.

Ps. 133:1,2 allude here, and clearly understand the oil [which was poured abundantly so that it ran down all his clothing] as representing the blessings of the Holy Spirit: "See how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, that ran down on the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that came down on the edge of his robes". Aaron the High Priest is here likened to the whole community of Israel. They were all anointed, they were united "in him" by the oil of the spirit, looking ahead to the idea of the body of believers being "in Christ", the anointed one, the High Priest.

Lev 8:13 Moses brought Aaron’s sons, and clothed them with coats, and tied sashes on them, and put headbands on them; as Yahweh commanded Moses-
They were not to clothe themselves, but to be clothed by Moses. This may have been to remind Aaron that this was not of his doing, he was merely being used by God, manifest through Moses. But it would also have been to humble Moses, who might have been tempted to assume that he and *his* sons ought to be this new high priest figure and priesthood. For Aaron had consistently been spiritually inferior to Moses. But it was part of Moses' humbling process to make him array his brother as the High Priest and priests, and to realize that not his own sons, but those of his brother, were to be the priests. And so he ended up the humblest man (Num. 12:3). See on :29.

Lev 8:14 He brought the bull of the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the bull of the sin offering-
Whatever special work we embark upon for God, we should always be aware of our own weakness and need for forgiveness. Therefore the consecration of Aaron and his sons for their great work began with sin offerings; their dedication to the work of serving others was to be motivated by an awe at God's personal grace to them. And so it should be with us, as the new priesthood.

Lev 8:15 He killed it; and Moses took the blood, and put it around on the horns of the altar with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar, and sanctified it, to make atonement for it-

The physical furniture of the tabernacle wasn't sinful of itself. It was cleansed in order to demonstrate that whatever humanly beautiful and impressive work we make for God, it is still shadowed by our own sinfulness. The whole system only functioned effectively because of how it looked ahead to the blood of the Lord Jesus. But "atonement *for* it" can as well be "atonement *upon* it". The preposition *al* is of very wide meaning, but generally means "upon", "over" or "above". The idea of 'cleansing' here surely requires the use of water and not blood. The same word is used of "purified / cleansed with water" (Num. 31:23). They were to offer a sin offering and after each sacrifice, they were to clean the altar, upon which atonement had been made. There is no idea here that inanimate objects are somehow sinful. The altar itself, like the Lord Jesus, was not sinful. It was a means to the end of atonement.

Lev 8:16 He took all the fat that was on the inward parts, and the cover of the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat; and Moses burned it on the altar-

The idea may be that these internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which he heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 8:17 But the bull, and its skin, and its flesh, and its dung, he burned with fire outside the camp; as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14;

Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 8:18 He presented the ram of the burnt offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram-
To lay the hand upon is a phrase which means more than merely touching the head, but implies leaning upon or pushing upon. It is rendered "lean his hand [upon a wall]" (Am. 5:19). It was an act of very conscious identity. The same phrase is used of how God's hand upholds those who spiritually fall (Ps. 37:24). So we see the mutuality of relationship between God and man. We strongly place our hand upon the offering of the Lord Jesus, and God places His hand upon us. Paul may have this idea in view when he speaks of how he grabs hold of Jesus and is grabbed hold of by Jesus (Phil. 3:12); just as the Lord seized hold of Peter drowning in the lake, as Peter grabbed hold of Him. That incident surely was a mini parable of our redemption.

Lev 8:19 He killed it; and Moses sprinkled the blood around on the altar-
To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 8:20 He cut the ram into its pieces; and Moses burned the head, and the pieces, and the fat-
We note the continual Mosaic requirement that sacrifices be cut into parts. Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously.

Lev 8:21 He washed the inward parts and the legs with water; and Moses burned the whole ram on the altar. It was a burnt offering for a pleasant aroma. It was an offering made by fire to Yahweh; as Yahweh commanded Moses-
There is huge emphasis upon the “inward parts” in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered

to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 8:22 He presented the other ram, the ram of consecration: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the head of the ram-
This spoke of dedication or consecration to God after the sin offering. This is what should motivate service to God- personal conviction of sin and experience of forgiveness. This ensures our service is given in humility.

Putting the hand on the animal's head was to show that the animal represented the offerer. He showed thereby that he deserved to die, and wished to give his total life to God just as the animal would be totally offered to God. We see here God's principle of accepting us on the basis of the representative sacrifice of Christ; the equivalent of our putting our hand on the head of the sacrifice is the act of baptism into Christ and abiding "in Christ", He being our representative and we being His. The Hebrew means more to the effect of leaning on the head, as if a very intense act of identification was being made.

Lev 8:23 He killed it; and Moses took some of its blood, and put it on the tip of Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot-
As the blood of the ram had to be put on the ear, thumb and toe (Lev. 8:23), so the blood of Christ's atonement should transform and affect every aspect of our lives; our hearing [i.e. our perception], our doing and walking...

Lev 8:24 He brought Aaron's sons; and Moses put some of the blood on the tip of their right ear, and on the thumb of their right hand, and on the great toe of their right foot; and Moses sprinkled the blood around on the altar-

All our service to God is to be done with the awareness of the fact that Christ shed His blood for us- our way of hearing, all we do with our hands and where we go with our feet is to be influenced by our experience of His death for us.

Lev 8:25 He took the fat, and the fat tail, and all the fat that was on the inward parts, and the cover of the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and the right thigh-
The idea is as in LXX "the fact [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9; 7:3). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 8:26 and out of the basket of unleavened bread, that was before Yahweh, he took one unleavened loaf, and one loaf of oiled bread, and one wafer, and placed them on the fat, and on the right thigh-
This was a form of peace offering. Having been convicted of sin, accepting forgiveness through the sin offering, we devote ourselves to God's service. That is what the burnt offering represented. And only after that comes the celebration of peace with God.

Lev 8:27 He put all these in Aaron's hands and in his sons' hands, and waved them for a wave offering before Yahweh-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 8:28 Moses took them from their hands, and burned them on the altar on the burnt offering. They were a consecration for a pleasant aroma. It was an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong

delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 8:29 Moses took the breast, and waved it for a wave offering before Yahweh. It was Moses' portion of the ram of consecration, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
I discussed on :13 how all this was very humbling for Moses. He had briefly been Israel's priest, and was therefore allowed to have the portions of the sacrifices for himself. But now he was handing over the priesthood to Aaron and his sons.

Lev 8:30 Moses took some of the anointing oil, and some of the blood which was on the altar, and sprinkled it on Aaron, on his garments, and on his sons, and on his sons' garments with him, and sanctified Aaron, his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him-
The Lord having His own clothes put back on Him meant that He would have been dressed in blood sprinkled garments for the walk to Golgotha. Again His holy mind would have been on the Messianic prophecies of Is. 63:3 about a Messiah with blood sprinkled garments lifted up in glorious victory. Or perhaps He saw the connection to Lev. 8:30, where the priests had to have blood sprinkled garments in order to begin their priestly work. This would have sent His mind to us, for whom He was interceding. Likewise when He perceived that His garment would not be rent, He would have joyfully perceived that He was indeed as the High Priest whose garment was not to be rent (Ex. 39:23).

Lev 8:31 Moses said to Aaron and to his sons, Boil the flesh at the door of the Tent of Meeting, and there eat it and the bread that is in the basket of consecration, as I commanded, saying, 'Aaron and his sons shall eat it'-
The peace offering was really a matter of voluntary desire, but in this special case of the inauguration of Aaron, it was commanded.

Lev 8:32 What remains of the flesh and of the bread you shall burn with fire-
This continues a major theme in the Mosaic law, that the sacrifices were to be eaten immediately and not left to be eaten over a longer period. The spontaneous desire to

offer a peace offering was not to be spun out over a period of days. The condemnation for doing so was severe (Lev. 7:18). Lev. 7 warns against various ways of using the peace offering for the benefit of the offerer. One such idea may have been to kill meat and eat it over three days, and then claim this was a peace offering- when actually it involved eating meat which the offerer wanted to eat anyway. So the warning is against using voluntary offerings [in whatever way] as a front for doing our own thing, offering what cost us very little, and only appearing to others to have a great religious devotion.

Lev 8:33 You shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting seven days, until the days of your consecration are fulfilled: for He shall consecrate you seven days-
This is the phrase used for not going out of the doors at Passover night, on pain of death (Ex. 12:22). They were to again realize that Israel's redemption from Egypt was theirs personally, and that redemption [like ours] had been in order to serve Yahweh. And that was what they were now doing.

Lev 8:34 What has been done this day, so Yahweh has commanded to do, to make atonement for you-
They were insistently reminded of their own need for atonement as they commenced the work of securing the atonement of others. In all our efforts for others we must bear this in mind.

Lev 8:35 You shall stay at the door of the Tent of Meeting day and night seven days, and keep Yahweh's command, that you don't die; for so I am commanded-
The calling to priesthood was not to be taken lightly. There was the death penalty for not remaining on duty during the seven days of their inauguration (Lev. 8:35), and it could be that Lev. 21:12 implies the same as a general principle. We cannot just resign our responsibilities; for we are called to the priesthood, our baptism and clothing in the righteousness of Christ was our calling and inauguration (see on Lev. 8:6,7). It is not for us to walk away from our calling. We are in this for life, serving until death, and then eternally in God's Kingdom.

Lev 8:36 Aaron and his sons did all the things which Yahweh commanded by Moses-
When Moses said "For so I am commanded" (:35), he really means 'Yahweh commands you through me'. In the preaching of God's word, we become identified with that word; our intimacy and connection with God becomes the greater as we preach His word through our own lips.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 9

Lev 9:1 It happened on the eighth day, that Moses called Aaron and his sons, and the elders of Israel-
The sequence of sin offering, burnt offering and peace offering had been gone through before the seven days of inauguration (Lev. 8:35), as described in Lev. 8. But now they are repeated. Such was the importance of grasping the lessons involved; see on :2.

Lev 9:2 and he said to Aaron, Take a calf from the herd for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering, without blemish, and offer them before Yahweh-
This repeats the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering, although in this case the equivalent of the peace offering was fire coming from Heaven in response to the sin and burnt offering. Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering. So the priests were being convicted of their sin, so that their dedication to Yahweh's service was no mere ritual, but a from the heart desire to serve Him from gratitude for the forgiveness of sin.

Lev 9:3 You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'Take a male goat for a sin offering; and a calf and a lamb, both a year old, without blemish, for a burnt offering-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6;

23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Lev 9:4 and a bull and a ram for peace offerings, to sacrifice before Yahweh; and a grain offering mixed with oil-
The peace offerings are nearly always mentioned as coming after the sin offerings. The peace which they commemorate is spiritual peace with God due to forgiveness. See on :18. God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mingled" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made.

For today Yahweh appears to you'-
"The glory of the Lord became manifest before the whole people" (Heb.). It could be argued that when the fire came down and consumed the sacrifices when the tabernacle was established, this was the specific, one time fulfilment of Ex. 29:43 "There I will meet with the children of Israel; and the place shall be sanctified by My glory". The appearing of Yahweh to His people required that they made themselves right with Him through a sequence of offerings which dealt with their sin and made them acceptable to Him. We in our day are to live in daily expectation of God's appearing to us through the return of Christ; and we too must ensure we are right with Him and can go to meet Him acceptably (Mt. 25:6).

Lev 9:5 They brought what Moses commanded before the Tent of Meeting: and all the congregation drew near and stood before Yahweh-
"Come near before Yahweh" is usually translated "offer [sacrifice] before Yahweh", and is translated that way multiple times. Although rarely (Ex. 16:9; Lev. 9:5) it is used of the congregation coming near before Yahweh. But the congregation didn't generally want to come before Yahweh, and so He chose just the Levites to come before Yahweh (Num. 8:10; 16:9 s.w.). It was God's intention that all Israel should be His servants, a nation of priests. But He changed and ammended His approach, and chose just the Levites for this. We see here how open God is to change, so that by all means He may have relationship with His people. Under the new covenant, all believers are part of a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) as He initially intended even under the old covenant. And yet

there is always the tendency to leave the priestly work to specialists rather than perceiving our personal call to do it.

Lev 9:6 Moses said, This is the thing which Yahweh commanded that you should do: and the glory of Yahweh shall appear to you-
The appearing of Yahweh's glory was conditional upon the recognition of sin which is being underlined in :7 and the subsequent rituals. We cannot perceive the wonder of His glory without conviction of our own sinfulness. For His glory is supremely seen in His forgiveness and grace to sinners.

Lev 9:7 Moses said to Aaron, Draw near to the altar, and offer your sin offering, and your burnt offering, and make atonement for yourself, and for the people; and offer the offering of the people, and make atonement for them as Yahweh commanded-
We sense a reticence within Aaron to accept the calling to priesthood and to make the sin offering. Perhaps he felt so much guilt over the sin of the golden calf; see on :8. Or perhaps the alcohol abuse of his sons we will meet in Lev. 10 was in fact known to him ahead of time. And we can identify with this reserve and struggle to really believe we have been forgiven and can move on in Divine service. Or perhaps he still clung to the idea that his sin with the golden calf was not really his fault and that he had been manipulated by the people.

Lev 9:8 So Aaron drew near to the altar, and killed the calf of the sin offering, which was for himself-
"For himself" suggests the calf was offered in recognition of his sin with the golden calf. See in :8. It is in my view mistaken to assume that Aaron's offering for himself somehow points forward to the Lord Jesus gaining forgiveness for His own nature. This isn't taught in the Bible. The Lord Jesus was perfect, harmless and undefiled- and yet He had human nature. All we posit about human nature we say about the Lord Jesus. It is no sin to be alive, to be human. It is actual, committed sin, in thought and action, which is the barrier between God and man. The character and person of the Lord Jesus is an endless challenge to us as to what is possible within human nature and for humanity.

Lev 9:9 The sons of Aaron presented the blood to him; and he dipped his finger in the blood, and put it on the horns of the altar, and poured out the blood at the base of the altar-
The sin offering involved putting the blood on the horns of the altar of incense in the holy place (Lev. 4:7,16-18) but it seems Aaron could not yet have access there, as Moses was still priest. Aaron could only be in the outer court, where the altar of burnt offering was, until he was fully ordained as high priest.

Lev 9:10 but the fat, and the kidneys, and the cover from the liver of the sin offering, he burned upon the altar; as Yahweh commanded Moses-
These internal organs were not to be eaten by the priests, but were to be wholly offered to God. For our inner things are to be wholly His. David came to understand that all the Mosaic emphasis upon the "kidneys" was because they represented the inner heart or mind. He often uses the word to describe his innermost thoughts (Ps. 7:9; 16:7; 26:2; 73:21; 139:13). Jeremiah likewise (Jer. 11:20; 12:2; 17:10; 20:12). The Hebrew for "kidneys" is a form of the word for "jewel"; for the innermost core thoughts of a person are so precious to God. Likewise the Hebrew for "liver" is literally 'that which he heaviest / most valuable'. For the innermost thoughts are the weighty things to God. We see here the supreme importance of being spiritually minded.

Lev 9:11 The flesh and the skin he burned with fire outside the camp-
The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 9:12 He killed the burnt offering; and Aaron's sons delivered the blood to him, and he sprinkled it around on the altar-
To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

Lev 9:13 They delivered the burnt offering to him, piece by piece, and the head: and he burned them upon the altar-
We note the continual Mosaic requirement that sacrifices be cut into parts. Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously.

Lev 9:14 He washed the inward parts and the legs, and burned them on the burnt offering on the altar-
See on :10. The Mosaic idea of washing the priests and inner parts of the sacrifices is alluded to in Eph. 5:26; the Lord died that "he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word". The Lord's death provided the water which cleanses and sanctifies; and that water which came from His death refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 4:14; 7:39). This was the significance of the water flowing from His side when He was crucified.

There is huge emphasis upon the “inward parts” in the regulations about sacrifices. Our inward parts and thoughts of the heart are laid open before God and should be offered to Him, not just the externalities which men see (Heb. 4:12). The same word is used of Sarah's laughing "within herself" (Gen. 18:12). The sacrifice of Christ was so perfect because His innermost thoughts were offered to God. And it is our thoughts when nobody else is watching which are of the essence to God; "to be spiritually minded", as the New Testament expresses it. This is why Yahweh could not go up in "the midst" of Israel (Ex. 33:3; Num. 14:42; Dt. 1:42), because they didn't have Him in their midst. Thus to marry unbelievers would be a snare "in the midst of you" (Ex. 34:12), right in the inner mind which is what God seeks above all. David in the Psalms speaks of the "inward parts" of the human mind, which are critical in God's judgment of a person as wicked or righteous (e.g. Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11 and Ps. 64:6, where "inward thought" is s.w. "inward parts"). It is those inward parts which were to be washed (Lev. 1:13), just as our innermost heart can be washed by the Spirit which is given at baptism. For this is the gift of the Spirit in the new covenant, whereby God's law is placed within our inward parts (s.w. Jer. 31:33; Ez. 36:26,27) by the God who can form the spirit of man in man's inward parts, the God who can work directly upon the human heart (Zech. 12:1).

Lev 9:15 He presented the people’s offering, and took the goat of the sin offering which was for the people, and killed it, and offered it for sin, like the first-
Jesus spoke of the righteous as sheep and the sinners as goats (Mt. 25:33). A goat rather than a sheep was required because the goat was the representative of the sinful people; it was killed as a recognition by them that their sin deserved death. In baptism we make

the same recognition- that I should die, and I identify myself with the dead body of Christ, and come alive again in Him.

Lev 9:16 He presented the burnt offering, and offered it according to the regulation-
Conviction of sin, taught by the sin offering, leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering.

Lev 9:17 He presented the grain offering, and filled his hand from there, and burned it upon the altar, besides the burnt offering of the morning-
The stress upon "*he* presented" (:16,17) suggests that now Aaron is taking over from Moses as the high priest. We note that the daily burnt offering was never overlooked even when there were additional sacrifices required on that day. Likewise our basic daily devotions to God must never be allowed to slip regardless of whatever other work we are doing for the Lord.

Lev 9:18 He also killed the bull and the ram, the sacrifice of peace offerings, which was for the people; and Aaron's sons delivered to him the blood, which he sprinkled around on the altar-
The peace offerings are nearly always mentioned as coming after the sin offerings. The peace which they commemorate is spiritual peace with God due to forgiveness. The Law always lists the sacrifices in a specific order: sin offering, burnt offering, peace offering (e.g. Lev. 9:2-4). This may foreshadow the New Testament trio: "Grace, mercy and peace". Thus the peace offering is a result of having received mercy. Therefore we keep our peace offering, the memorial meeting, to recall the mercy which we have received. We do not specifically come there to find mercy. We do not need to break bread in order to be forgiven. Ps. 100:4,5 seems to allude to the peace offerings: "Enter into his gates (the peace offering was to be offered at the gate of the tabernacle) with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto Him… for the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting". The peace offering was "the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and in practice it was offered in thanks and praise of God's mercy towards human sin. In similar vein, Ps. 107:17- 21 exults in the wonder of God's mercy in forgiving men. The spirit told Israel to respond by making voluntary peace offerings: "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving" (v.22), i.e. peace offerings (Lev. 7:12).

Lev 9:19 and the fat of the bull and of the ram, the fat tail, and that which covers the inward parts, and the kidneys, and the cover of the liver-
The idea is as in LXX "the fact [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9; 7:3). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context,

and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 9:20 and they put the fat upon the breasts, and he burned the fat on the altar-
The fire which burned up the fat came down from God in :24. So we have here an example of a situation being presented which is a summary of future events. The picture is given, and then we later read the explanation of how it came about. This is typical of so much Biblical writing.

Lev 9:21 and the breasts and the right thigh Aaron waved for a wave offering before Yahweh, as Moses commanded-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 9:22 Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them-
When the offerings are spoken of together, they are always in this order- sin offering, then burnt offering and then peace offering. Firstly we must deal with our sin; then dedicate ourselves to God, as spoken of in the burnt offering. Only then can we have peace with God and fellowship freely with Him, as exemplified in the peace offering.

Within the Pentateuch, the idea of blessing creation paves the way for God promising to "bless" the children of Abraham, and the blessings upon them with which Deuteronomy concludes (see too Lev. 9:22; Num. 6:22-24). The pagan creation stories sometimes spoke of the things created by the gods then blessing *them*. The Sumerians recorded that at 'creation', "The whole universe, the people in unison, to Enlil in one tongue gave praise". But the true God, the God of all grace, not only creates His people and other creatures, but then blesses *them*! And the spirit of that grace should be seen in all our relationships. The Sumerian and Babylonian myths speak of people being created in order to serve the gods, "to bear the yoke of the gods" (S.G.F. Brandon), to relieve them in their everyday work. But the Genesis creation has God creating man and giving him great freedom, and blessing him.

And he came down from offering the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings-
Although the altar was very low, only three cubits (45 cm.) high (Ex. 27:1), Aaron "came

down" from it (Lev. 9:22). This may be understood in the same way as people "went up" and "came down" from the temple. Sacrifice was a 'height'.

Lev 9:23 Moses and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting, and came out, and blessed the people; and the glory of Yahweh appeared to all the people-
Blessing is often associated with forgiveness and acceptance with God. The blessings promised to Abraham and his seed likewise (Acts 3:25,26). If we are Abraham's seed by baptism (Gal. 3:27-29) then we are to be a blessing to the world in that we offer them the way to God's forgiveness and fellowship with Him. The glory of God is only perceptible by those who have been genuinely convicted of their sin.

Lev 9:24 There came forth fire from before Yahweh, and consumed the burnt offering and the fat upon the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted, and fell on their faces-
Jewish tradition has it that the fire which came down from Heaven in Lev. 9:24 remained burning; and this fire was preserved burning all night and day. Hence the need for "fire pans" (Ex. 27:3) to keep the fire burning whilst the altar was being cleaned or the remains of sacrifices removed from it. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13) is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 10

Lev 10:1 Nadab and Abihu the sons of Aaron, each took his censer, and put fire in it, and laid incense on it, and offered strange fire before Yahweh, which He had not commanded them-
The implication of :9 could be that they were drunk when they did this. Nadab and Abihu treated the sacred as secular; and that has to be a warning for all time. As explained on Lev. 9:24, special fire came down from God to show His acceptance of Aaron, and remained burning. Nadab and Abihu took "strange" fire, not this fire; and "strange" suggests Gentile or foreign, so it was likely fire associated with paganism.

Nadab and Abihu kindled strange fire, and it was with that fire that God burnt them up, in symbol of His destruction of all the wicked at judgment day (Lev. 10:2). Our words are as fire, and are to be connected with the fire of condemnation (James 3:5,6), which our words have already kindled (Lk. 12:49). Likewise wrongly gained wealth is the fire that

will burn those who have it at the last day (James 5:3). James is picking up a figure from Is. 33:11, again concerning the final judgment: “Your [own] breath [i.e. words], as fire, shall devour you”. Their breath, their words, were as fire which would in the end be the basis of their condemnation.

Lev 10:2 And fire came forth from before Yahweh, and devoured them, and they died before Yahweh-
Fire coming down from God has just occurred as a sign of His acceptance of sacrifice (Lev. 9:24). We shall either be consumed by God’s fire, or we give ourselves to Him as living sacrifices and are accepted and consumed by Him. There’s a logic of devotion here- whether we live to the flesh or to the Spirit, we are to be consumed anyway. So we may as well be consumed by God’s acceptance of us rather than by His wrath.

Elijah called the fire down in evident allusion to how fire came down from the Lord to destroy Nadab and Abihu and also Sodom (Lev. 10:2; Gen. 19:24). He did the wrong thing from wrong motives and yet he Biblically justified it- for the prophets themselves saw an apostate Israel as being like Sodom (Is. 1:10). Now this is probably how most Christians sin. We rarely harden ourselves and sin in willful defiance. In the heat of the moment the ‘devil’ of our own self-talk persuades us to find a pseudo-spiritual justification for actions which only later we reflect were wrong. The Lord’s wilderness temptations were all about doing justifiable things for wrong motives, based on a self-justifying recollection of Bible passages. And this in essence is how it is with most of our failures. The Lord’s victory and Elijah’s failure should serve to stop us in our tracks in careful and sustained self-examination.

Lev 10:3 Then Moses said to Aaron, This is what Yahweh spoke of, saying, ‘I will be declared holy in those who come near Me, and before all the people I will be glorified’. Aaron held his peace-
If we don't burn up the flesh now, then it will be at judgment day. When the rebels were burnt by fire, Moses commented: "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me" (Lev. 10:3 AV). Either we burn ourselves up in commitment now, or we will be burnt up. God demands us from ourselves. The glaring logic is that seeing the flesh will be dissolved, it must have its judgment, therefore we ought to judge it now and thereby receive acceptance at the judgment; rather than omit to do so now and go through the same dissolution at the judgment, with the result that we will sleep eternally.

God’s destruction of sinners is a constructive declaration of His holiness rather than an angry deity lashing out at people because they offended Him. Any disciplining of others which we may have to do, e.g. of our children or within the family of God, should be done in the same constructive spirit. This incident teaches that we cannot approach

God on our own terms, in our own way, but must do so in the way He has defined in His word. The fact He doesn't respond to human failure so visibly as He did in Moses' time doesn't mean that this is any less true for us today.

Lev 10:4 Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said to them, Draw near, carry your brothers from before the sanctuary out of the camp-
This suggests they were in the holy place, offering upon the incense altar. It also presumably made the priests who carried them ritually unclean. This would have required seven days of purification, and likewise the tabernacle would have been defiled and required days to cleanse it because of defilement with dead bodies. Yet there is no evidence that God required this letter of the law to be fulfilled at this point. And so we see that the inauguration of the tabernacle and priesthood began by grace; for it was all in a ritually unclean state right at its dedication. The lesson of acceptance by grace, by spirit and not letter, was taught from the beginning. There is another example of this noted on :17.

Lev 10:5 So they drew near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp, as Moses had said-
The fact they were dressed in their coats shows that they were attempting to do some kind of religious ritual in a "strange" or Gentile / pagan way. They were destroyed by fire (:2), but their coats were apparently miraculously preserved and not burnt. Perhaps this was so that the next priests who wore those coats would remember what had happened.

Lev 10:6 Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons, Don't let the hair of your heads go loose, neither tear your clothes; that you don't die, and that He not be angry with all the congregation; but let your brothers, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which Yahweh has kindled-
To tear the priestly clothes meant God's wrath with all the congregation and the ending of his priesthood. Caiaphas' equivalent name in Hebrew could suggest 'cast out'; his rending of his priestly clothes at Christ's trial declared him "cast out" of the priesthood (see Lev. 10:6; 21:10). We note too that the sin of one person can bring judgment upon others, in this case "all the congregation". On one hand, God deals with us as individuals. And yet on another, the nature of sin is that others suffer from the effects of the sin of third parties. That is largely the nature of sin.

Lev 10:7 You shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting, lest you die; for the anointing oil of Yahweh is on you. They did according to the word of Moses-
This is the phrase used for not going out of the doors at Passover night, on pain of death

(Ex. 12:22). They were to again realize that Israel's redemption from Egypt was theirs personally, and that redemption [like ours] had been in order to serve Yahweh. And that was what they were now doing.

Lev 10:8 Yahweh spoke to Aaron, saying-
Aaron has now been accepted as high priest in the place of Moses. Despite all the weakness just described. And so Yahweh now addresses him directly, rather than via Moses as earlier.

Lev 10:9 Drink no wine nor strong drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the Tent of Meeting, that you don't die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations-
This suggests that the offering of strange fire may have been under the influence of alcohol. Which means that all the ritual of dedication we have been reading of so far in Leviticus... was done whilst under the influence of alcohol, or at least, involving sons of Aaron who were wont to abuse alcohol. The weakness of the priesthood is apparent. Perhaps it was because he knew this that Aaron was reticent about accepting the dedication of himself and his sons. The Lord Jesus as the great High Priest alluded to this ruling, when He said that He would no longer drink wine until He drinks it again with us (Mt. 26:29). The implication is that after His death and until He returns, He is now on priestly duty for us.

Lev 10:10 and that you are to make a distinction between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean-
The behaviour of the rebels was therefore a failure to make this distinction. "Distinction" or 'make a division' is the word used of how the veil divided between the holy and most holy place (Ex. 26:33). Their bodies were taken out from "before the sanctuary" (:4), so we wonder if they entered the most holy with their strange fire, drunk, and mixing clean and unclean foods. The list of unclean animals which follows in the next chapter was to underline this point; for that list was a distinction between the clean and unclean (Lev. 11:47). Prov. 31:4,5 associates alcohol abuse with forgetting God's law and it seems this is one of the many historical commentaries of Proverbs, alluding back to this incident.

Lev 10:11 and that you are to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which Yahweh has spoken to them by Moses-
The actions of the rebels were perhaps involved with a refusal to teach all Yahweh's statutes. And the priesthood were intended to teach Israel.

Lev 10:12 Moses spoke to Aaron, and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons who were left, Take the grain offering that remains of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, and eat it without yeast beside the altar; for it is most holy-
Because of the sin with the golden calf, God's intention had been to "destroy" Aaron (Dt. 9:20). A person was 'destroyed' by having their family cut off (Am. 2:9). Moses had interceded for Aaron and apparently changed that outcome. But as it happened, the judgment was partially fulfilled, because of their sin. It's rather like Moses offering not to enter the land, so that Israel could. His offer was turned down, but in the end, he did not in fact enter the land, because of his sin. So God works even through human sin, in order to bring about what the sinner really wants. We also learn that human intercession for a sinner may indeed be heard, but if the sinner persists in their way, then they are allowed to choose their own condemnation.

Moses repeats the commands because he is fearful Aaron will not obey them properly, and may be slain as two of his sons had been.

Lev 10:13 and you shall eat it in a holy place, because it is your portion, and your sons' portion, of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire: for so I am commanded-
"For so I am commanded" could suggest these were specific commands given for the inauguration ceremony after the death of Nadab and Abihu. "It is *your portion" signifies that no longer is Moses the priest, taking the portions for himself (Lev. 8:29). They were now Aaron's. I discussed on Lev. 8:13 how all this was very humbling for Moses. He had briefly been Israel's priest, and was therefore allowed to have the portions of the sacrifices for himself. But now he was handing over the priesthood to Aaron and his sons, when surely it had been his natural sense that he ought to have been the priest as he was spiritually more mature than Aaron.*

Lev 10:14 The waved breast and the contributed thigh you shall eat in a clean place, you, and your sons, and your daughters with you; for they are given as your portion, and your sons' portion, out of the sacrifices of the peace offerings of the children of Israel-
We note the inclusion of the daughters. All the family were to come to a clean place and eat. The dedication of the male members to the Divine service was to involve their families too, and they were to be engaged in this dedication ceremony. Constantly we see God's care for the family unit. This is contrast to the secular religious view, that priesthood was for chosen men, and their families must put up with it.

Lev 10:15 The heaved thigh and the waved breast they shall bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave it for a wave offering before Yahweh; and it shall be yours, and your sons' with you, as a portion forever, as Yahweh has commanded-

The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 10:16 Moses diligently inquired about the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burned; and he was angry with Eleazar and with Ithamar, the sons of Aaron who were left, saying-

Moses' faith slipped for a moment; because his spirit was provoked by Israel, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips and was therefore barred from entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven. Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he turned himself and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazer (Ex. 32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted?

Lev 10:17 Why haven't you eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary, since it is most holy, and He has given it to you to carry the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before Yahweh?-

It was true that the letter of the law had been broken. But this was accepted, because Aaron's admission of bad conscience was in the spirit of the law. And so we see that the inauguration of the tabernacle and priesthood began by grace; for it was all in a ritually unclean state right at its dedication. The lesson of acceptance by grace, by spirit and not letter, was taught from the beginning. There is another example of this noted on :4.

Lev 10:18 Behold, its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary: you certainly should have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded-

Aaron the sinner comes over as more righteous than Moses the legalist. "As I commanded... you certainly should... why haven't you...?" is met with the answer that 'I didn't do all that because I was so upset with God and life generally for the slaying of my sons'. And that was the more mature response.

Lev 10:19 Aaron spoke to Moses, Behold, this day they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before Yahweh; and such things as these have happened to me; and if I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have been pleasing in the sight of Yahweh?-
Aaron felt unable to eat with God because of his bad conscience about his sons' behaviour, or maybe because he felt angry with God for killing his sons. Moses expected Aaron to just be obedient to the letter of the law for the sake of it, but Aaron is presented as having done the right thing, living with sensitivity to our conscience and feelings rather than in unthinking obedience to the letter of the law.

Lev 10:20 When Moses heard that, it was pleasing in his sight-
Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. Thus Aaron asks: "Would it have been well pleasing in the sight of Yahweh?", and then we read "And when Moses heard that, it was well-pleasing in his sight".

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 11

Lev 11:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them-
Comparing the lists of clean and unclean animals in Lev. 11 and Dt. 14, we see the Deuteronomy list tends to be more specific. This is understandable; for the people were now going to enter the land, and there would be specific questions about specific animals.

Lev 11:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'These are the living things which you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth-
Dt. 14:3 prefaces this teaching by saying that "you must not eat any abominable thing". See on :13. The word "abominable" has connections with idolatry. The reasons for defining certain animals as clear and others as unclean may be connected to the way in which the unclean animals were used in idol worship, especially by the Egyptians. There is a clear connection between unclean animals and idols in Is. 66:17; Ez. 8:10. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14), every creature is "good" and was made "very good" (1 Tim. 4:4); the differentiations were purely for teaching purposes, and therefore at the Lord's death the differences were collapsed. Peter struggled to accept this, but was taught that the unclean animals had been intended to represent the Gentiles- and now they were to be accepted on an equal footing to the Jews, the supposedly "clean" animals. Again we see the temporary nature of the law of Moses; the animals were not of themselves unclean originally, nor were they after the Lord's death.

Lev 11:3 Whatever parts the hoof, and is cloven-footed-
The sense of the Hebrew is "Whatever parts the hoof, and completely divides it". Some animals part the hoof but don't completely divide it to the end, such as the camel. The lesson would be that there must be clear division between clean and unclean, good and bad, and that division must not be begun and not finished. The line dividing good from evil must run to the end through every part of our lives.

And chews the cud among the animals, that you may eat-
The Hebrew means to bring the food up again, to ruminate. Perhaps this was to represent ruminating upon God's word; and being cloven-footed perhaps speaks of being sure footed and walking stably in life. To chew the cud (ruminate on God's word) but not walk the talk (not having a cloven foot) still makes us unclean (:4). However, it may be that there is little significance in the chewing of the cud of itself, because doing so didn't make the animal unclean of itself- it was just an exercise for Israel to teach them the concept of discernment, self control and obedience to God even when this meant practical inconvenience for them (see on :6).

Lev 11:4 Nevertheless these you shall not eat of those that chew the cud, or of those who part the hoof: the camel, because he chews the cud but doesn't have a parted hoof, he is unclean to you-
Some animals part the hoof but don't completely divide it to the end (see on :3), such as the camel, which has a kind of ball at the back of their foot which means the hoof is not completely divided. The lesson would be that there must be clear division between clean and unclean, good and bad, and that division must not be begun and not finished. The line dividing good from evil must run to the end through every part of our lives.

Lev 11:5 the rock badger, because he chews the cud but doesn't have a parted hoof, he is unclean to you-
As with the language of demons in the New Testament, the Bible here speaks of things as they appear. For hares and rock badgers do chew the cud, but their munching movements, the lower jaw moving backward and forward, suggest they are chewers of the cud- but in fact they don't.

Lev 11:6 the hare, because she chews the cud but doesn't part the hoof, she is unclean to you-
The hare was apparently thought to be avoided by demons ["jinns"] and so was worshipped; hare bones or skills were used as good luck charms, and still are among some Arab tribes. So the reason for having nothing to do with hares was religious rather than because hares are somehow more intrinsically unclean than other animals.

Lev 11:7 the pig, because he has a split hoof, and is cloven-footed, but doesn't chew the cud, he is unclean to you-
Appearing to make a differentiation in our walk, our external life, is no good unless internally we are chewing the cud, masticating our food, ruminating upon God's word (:3). Many people appear to have made a division between themselves and society but this is no evidence that they are spiritual.

Lev 11:8 Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean to you-
The basis of the command to us in our age to "touch not the unclean thing" by being separate from sinful things (2 Cor. 6:17).

Lev 11:9 These you may eat of all that are in the waters: whatever has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, that you may eat-
All fish have fins and scales, it's just that some aren't evident. We see here how the Bible is written in places from the viewpoint of humans, and according to their understanding of things, even if that understanding is false. And this is why we find mental illness attributed to "demons" in the New Testament, even though demons don't exist.

Lev 11:10 All that don't have fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of all the living creatures that are in the waters, they are to be an abomination to you-
The parable of the drag net pictures fishermen sitting down with their catch, throwing away the "bad" fish. These would've been the unclean sea creatures, e.g. crabs, which had got caught up in the net. This represented the 'sitting' of the final judgment at the last day (Mt. 13:48,49). We are to make that same division between good and bad in the choices we make today.

Lev 11:11 and you are to detest them. You shall not eat of their flesh, and you shall detest their carcasses-
As Israel were to "detest" idols and idolatry as "abomination" (Dt. 7:26), so they were to "abhor" and treat as "abomination" unclean animals (Lev. 11:11,13,43), lest they "make yourselves abominable [s.w. "detestable"] with any creeping thing" (Lev. 20:25). I suggest this is the reason why God designated some animals as 'abominable'; because of their association with idol worship. The idols of Egypt were often in the form of animals, and sex with animals was part of the rites. Just as in primitive societies today. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14); no animal is morally more or less clean

than another. The commandments about unclean animals were clearly intended just for Israel living within a culture of idolatry / abomination involving those kinds of animals.

Lev 11:12 Whatever has no fins nor scales in the waters, that is to be an abomination to you-
See on :9. "Abomination" is the language of idolatry, and it was the idolatrous associations which were the basis for these animals being forbidden; see on :2.

Lev 11:13 These you shall detest among the birds they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the vulture, and the black vulture-
"Detest" is the word for "abomination", which further suggests that the unclean birds were to be rejected because they were associated with idol worship; not because they were somehow more intrinsically unclean than the "clean" animals. See on :2.

Lev 11:14 and the red kite, any kind of black kite-
Dt. 14:11 LXX makes it a command that "Ye shall eat every clean bird". The reference may specifically be to the birds used in the ritual of the cleansing of the leper; as if this was the only time a bird may be eaten. For the basis upon which clean and unclean animals were divided [chewing the cud, cloven hooves] doesn't apply to birds. It could be that birds were not to be eaten, apart from those sanctified or "made clean" by the rituals which used birds.

Lev 11:15 any kind of raven-
We note how Elijah was later to be made to depend upon food brought to him by unclean ravens (1 Kings 17:4-6). This was all part of God's program to educate him against exclusivity. God told Elijah that He had commanded unclean ravens to feed him; and thus He reminded Elijah of a basic fact, that God speaks to even unclean animals (Gen. 1:22)- and they obey him. The ravens not only obeyed Yahweh in going to Elijah, but in not eating the food they were carrying. Elijah likely considered that the fact God spoke to him meant that he must therefore have some automatic superiority over others. But not so. It's the same with us. We can consider that because we have heard God's true voice, we thereby are justified before Him. But He speaks to and uses all, clean and unclean.

Lev 11:16 the horned owl, the screech owl, and the gull, any kind of hawk-
These birds all hunt and eat other unclean animals, and many of them were totems of the idols believed in by the nations. Again the idea was to teach God's people the need to keep away from association with things which resembled sin, which would put ideas in the mind which tended towards sin rather than righteousness. This principle is so

relevant today in connection with what we watch or read, for by presenting ourselves continually with sinful associations we are the more likely to ourselves fall into sin.

Lev 11:17 the barn owl, the cormorant, the great owl-
The extensive stress upon not eating owls of any kind (:18)was because the local tribes considered that owls were the most human-like of all birds. They were therefore worshipped and considered as mediators between the gods and man. There was to be no even going near these birds, because association is the basis of so much downward sliding in spiritual terms.

Lev 11:18 the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey-
See on :17. It is common in primitive societies for tribes and individuals to have totems, an animal or plant which they are associated with. This practice is common today in central Africa. Seeing there are no animals unclean of themselves, as the New Testament makes clear, one reason for the specific designation of some animals as "unclean" may be because they were associated with local tribes or individuals who were to be treated as unclean. The meaning of some of the names of the designated "unclean" animals are suggestive of individuals.

Lev 11:19 the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat-
Some of the birds forbidden as unclean were thought to be good luck symbols, and their carcasses were used as medicines or potions used in idol worship. The heron and bat were amongst these. The take away lesson is that we are to avoid all associations with that which is paganic and anti-God.

Lev 11:20 All flying insects that walk on all fours are an abomination to you-
Paul observes that there is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14). These animals were to be unclean “to *you*” because it was part of God’s method of teaching His people to make a moral choice in life, to recognize there is sin and righteousness, clean and unclean. There were hygienic reasons behind the prohibition of some animals, but the essential intention was to teach the concept of making a difference, of looking at something we could partake of and saying ‘No, that is not for me’. The fact God later withdrew the distinction between clean and unclean animals just confirms that they were not clean nor unclean of themselves; all had been created by God and declared “very good” in Genesis (1 Tim. 4:4). The distinctions between them were there to simply educate Israel in practicing the concept of separation and discernment between acceptable and unacceptable things in life.

Lev 11:21 Yet you may eat these: of all winged creeping things that go on all fours, which have legs above their feet, with which to hop on the earth-
Winged creeping things with feet recalls the language of the cherubim. These kinds of animals often had religious symbolism; the bas reliefs of Assyria and Babylon are full of such winged quadrupeds. Again we see that the prohibition about eating them was as it were a fence around the law. They were eaten in worship, and God wanted to ensure that there was not even to be the subconscious suggestion of idolatry for His people.

Lev 11:22 Even of these you may eat: any kind of locust, any kind of bald locust, any kind of cricket, and any kind of grasshopper-
The difference between these and the larger winged creeping things of :21 was simply that these were not generally objects of worship.

Lev 11:23 But all winged creeping things which have four feet, are an abomination to you-
The idea may be that they had the potential to fly, but often preferred to crawl on earth. Refusing to use spiritual potential was seen as a bad thing, and Israel didn't need even the unconscious association with anything which resembled that. This is why so much which passes for entertainment would be better not viewed nor listened to by Christians; there is nothing unclean in itself, but the subliminal associations are what drag us down.

Lev 11:24 By these you will become unclean: whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening-
See on :25. There was no requirement for sacrifice. But Lev. 5:2,6 taught that if a person touches an unclean thing and only later realizes they had done so, then they needed to offer a guilt offering. This seems to teach that moral weakness, immediately recognized, is less serious than unrecognized moral weakness which is later recognized. The requirement for a guilt offering was surely to underline the seriousness of sin even if committed in ignorance. And perhaps to thereby encourage thoughtfulness about and awareness of God's law, so that the cost and inconvenience of making a guilt offering was not incurred.

Lev 11:25 Whoever carries any part of their carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening-
The more conscious was the association with uncleanness, the greater was the effort which made to be made to achieve cleansing. Thus if someone knowingly carried a carcass, they had to was their clothes in addition to being unclean. There is definitely a

principle connection between knowledge and responsibility, and conscious defilement requires greater cleansing.

Lev 11:26 Every animal which parts the hoof, and is not cloven-footed, nor chews the cud, is unclean to you. Everyone who touches them shall be unclean-
See on :7. Parting the hoof, appearing to make a differentiation in our walk, our external life, is no good unless internally we are chewing the cud, masticating our food, ruminating upon God's word (:3). Many people appear to have made a division between themselves and society but this is no evidence that they are spiritual. Or we may note the warning that some part the hoof but aren't cloven footed, meaning that although they appear to make a division in their walk, they don't do so to the end. For not being cloven-footed means that the parted hoof doesn't remain parted right to the end of the hoof.

Lev 11:27 Whatever goes on its paws, among all animals that go on all fours, they are unclean to you. Whoever touches their carcass shall be unclean until the evening-
GNB "all four-footed animals with paws", LXX "all the wild beasts that moves upon its fore feet". The Hebrew for "paws" is the usual word for "hands". It is used in the sense of 'power' (1 Sam. 4:3 and often). Perhaps the message is that those animals which so overtly trust in their own natural strength and power should be avoided. Or maybe the idea is that animals which appear to be a mix of the animal and the human [by having "hands"] should be avoided. For these were the animals worshipped in paganism, and half human, half divine idols and gods are found everywhere in pagan thought. For the same reason as humans shouldn't have sex with animals, even the subliminal suggestion of these animals was to be avoided. For man is not on the same level as the beasts, and he should not act like that.

Lev 11:28 He who carries their carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. They are unclean to you-
We may enquire why a person would need to carry a carcass of an unclean animal. Possibly in order to move a carcass out of the way; but more likely, to use it for food or its skin for clothing. And this was forbidden. So the extra duty of washing clothes was introduced, because such behaviour was likely to lead closer to sin. We may despise fences around laws as legalistic, but in reality, the way of the Spirit requires wisdom and an appreciation in practical daily life decisions and structuring of our tendency to fall into sin.

Lev 11:29 These are they which are unclean to you among the creeping things that creep on the earth: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard-

AV "The mouse". The mouse is associated with idolatry in Is. 66:17. This shows how these laws were intended to keep Israel well away from even the subliminal suggestion towards such idolatry. But they didn't obey the food laws, and so they ended up participating in the very idolatry which the food laws were designed to psychologically preclude.

Lev 11:30 the gecko, and the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the sand lizard and the chameleon-
The animals listed were known in the land promised to Abraham. This is another proof that the Law of Moses was not intended for world-wide Gentile use but was the covenant between God and Israel during a specific time and in a specific location on the earth.

Lev 11:31 These are they which are unclean to you among all that creep. Whoever touches them when they are dead shall be unclean until the evening-
But the Hebrew could suggest that touching them dead or alive made unclean, hence GNB "Whoever touches them or their dead bodies will be unclean".

Lev 11:32 On whatever any of them falls when they are dead, it shall be unclean; whether it is any vessel of wood, or clothing, or skin, or sack, whatever vessel it is with which any work is done, it must be put into water, and it shall be unclean until the evening; then it will be clean-
This seems to suggest cases where things were inadvertently made unclean. The chance of harmful contamination being spread by a clean animal touching something was not less than that for an unclean animal. So these laws about washing the things with water were only partly for hygienic reasons; the teaching aspect was far greater.

Lev 11:33 Every earthen vessel, into which any of them falls, all that is in it shall be unclean, and you shall break it-
As noted on :32, if the reason was purely hygienic, then we would expect to read this about clean animals. We must ever recall that there is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14). The intention of these laws was to build up a culture of distaste and even fear of the unclean animals, because they were connected to idolatry. Even subliminal suggestions of idolatry were to be found distasteful. And this has huge relevance for us today. Why, then, would a Christian wish to read and view material which is full of subliminal suggestions and temptations to sin...

Lev 11:34 All food which may be eaten, that on which water comes, shall be unclean;

and all drink that may be drunk in every such vessel shall be unclean-
GNB "Any food which could normally be eaten, but on which water from such a pot has been poured, will be unclean, and anything drinkable in such a pot is unclean". This is not to be seen as supporting guilt by association, contamination by communion and other such unGodly extremism. As noted on :33, it was all part of a teaching mechanism, and the aim was to create a culture of distaste and even fear of the unclean animals, because they were connected to idolatry.

Lev 11:35 Everything whereupon part of their carcass falls shall be unclean; whether it be an oven, or a range for pots, it shall be broken in pieces: they are unclean, and shall be unclean to you-
"Range for pots" is GNB "a clay stove"; or the idea may be 'covered pots', i.e. pots with lids. The outcome of this legislation would have been to ensure that unclean animals such as mice and lizards were kept out of the kitchen. It all contributed toward a cultural attitude towards these unclean animals, just as those raised in a Muslim culture may vomit at the thought of eating pork. This was how Israel were to feel to all the unclean animals, and therefore to the religious associations they had.

Lev 11:36 Nevertheless a spring or a cistern in which water is gathered shall be clean; but that which touches their carcass shall be unclean-
It would be hard to legislate that a spring of water couldn't be used if an unclean animal fell into it. Clearly enough the hygienic reasons behind the legislation were only a minimal part of the thinking behind it. Otherwise the spring would have been declared unusable. Again we must recall that the chances of human contamination from many clean animals was about the same as from many unclean animals. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14).

Lev 11:37 If part of their carcass falls on any sowing seed which is to be sown, it is clean-
Again, the idea would be that barns and storehouses were best kept free of unclean animals like mice and lizards which were likely to cause this situation to come about. But we note that in this case, mere physical contact was not enough to make the seed unclean. Again, if the concerns were largely hygienic, then we would expect this. But it isn't the case, because they were being used as a teaching mechanism. Any hygienic benefit was in passing.

Lev 11:38 But if water is put on the seed, and part of their carcass falls on it, it is unclean to you-
GNB expresses the intent better: "But if the seed is soaking in water". There was indeed a higher chance of possible contamination due to the water, but again this is surely a

teaching point. For the crop which was to later be produced from that seed would not be markedly inferior even if a dead mouse had fallen into the bowl of water where the seed was being soaked.

Lev 11:39 If any animal of which you may eat, dies; he who touches its carcass shall be unclean until the evening-
An unclean animal would usually only be touched if it were being brought home to be eaten. It was possible to eat it, although doing so required washing clothes and being unclean (:40). Famine would only come if Israel were unfaithful to the covenant, but even in that case, God was considerate to their hunger and allowed the eating of unclean food- given the provisos of :40.

Lev 11:40 He who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. He also who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening-
See on :40. The structure of the law of Moses seemed to almost encourage the idea of serving God on different levels. After much study of it, the Rabbis concluded that there was within it "a distinction between holy and holy just as much as there is between holy and profane". Take the uncleanness laws. They basically said: 'Don't touch an unclean animal. If you do, there's a penalty. If you carry the carcass, there's a more serious penalty. And if you carry the carcass home and eat it, there's something more serious. The highest ideal was not to touch the unclean thing. But there were concessions to weakness for those who either couldn't or wouldn't make the effort to attain the highest level of response to the will of God.

Lev 11:41 Every creeping thing that creeps on the earth is an abomination. It shall not be eaten-
This appears to contrast with the allowance for eating unclean meats in :40, if the person washed their clothes and became unclean until evening. As discussed on :40, the two ideas are clearly, consciously juxtaposed. Because the idea is that God could be served on different levels; although choosing the lower level, of eating unclean meat, made one more liable to break Divine law. Because clothes had to be washed, and they had to be unclean until evening- which meant they were likely to make others unclean by contact with them. So the path of lower levels only makes obedience and conformity to the Spirit that much harder.

Lev 11:42 Whatever goes on its belly, and whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet, even all creeping things that creep on the earth, them you shall not eat; for they are an abomination-

They were not to associate themselves with animals which hugged the earth; just as we should not keep close to earthly things (Phil. 3:19) but seek the things which are above (Col. 3:1).

Lev 11:43 You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps, neither shall you make yourselves unclean with them, that you should be defiled thereby-

"Abomination" is the word also used for idolatry. Making oneself abominable with an animal seems to allude to sexual behaviour. Sex with any animal was wrong, but here sex with unclean animals is focused upon. So here we have another big clue as to why some animals were designated unclean. They were associated with idolatry and perverted sexual behaviour which accompanied the idolatry.

Lev 11:44 For I am Yahweh your God. Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy; neither shall you defile yourselves with any kind of creeping thing that moves on the earth-

The Hebrew words for sanctification and holiness include the ideas of both being negatively separated *from* and positively being separated *unto*. The whole legislation about clean and unclean animals was to try to teach Israel this principle. As such there was limited significance in the actual division of animals into clean and unclean- it was merely a teaching device.

Lev 11:45 For I am Yahweh who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy-

The great works of Yahweh which He showed at the time of their exodus from Egypt (cp. the world) and baptism at the Red Sea were in essence repeated throughout their wilderness journey (Dt. 7:19). Therefore whenever they faced discouragement and an apparent blockage to their way, they were to remember how God had redeemed them at their baptism, and to realize that in fact His work was still ongoing with them (Dt. 20:1). He told them in the desert that He was "Yahweh that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 11:45). Therefore the overcoming of Edom, Moab and the Canaanite tribes is described in language lifted from the Red Sea record (e.g. Ex. 15:15-17). Throughout their history, Israel were reminded that what God had done for them in their Red Sea deliverance He was continuing to do, and therefore all their enemies would likewise perish if they remained God's people (e.g. Is. 43:16). This didn't just happen at the Red Sea, just as it wasn't completed at our baptisms (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Our being brought out of Egypt and toward God is an ongoing process.

Lev 11:46 This is the law of the animal, and of the bird, and of every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth-
The earth or *eretz* is clearly the land promised to Abraham. For the 'every creature' in view refers to those in that territory. This is evidence enough that the law of Moses was indeed a mark of the covenant between God and Israel, and as such has never been applicable to the Gentile world. If it were e.g. applicable in the Australian outback or northern Siberia, the examples of animals given would have been different.

Lev 11:47 to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the living thing that may be eaten and the living thing that may not be eaten'-
This need to make a distinction between clean and unclean was exactly what Nadab and Abihu had failed to do, as explained in the previous chapter (Lev. 10:10). Indeed I suggest that it is in this context that we now have this list distinguishing between clean and unclean animals. It is our failure to divide light from darkness, to allow everything to become shades of gray, which is our most common weakness.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 12

Lev 12:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Most primitive societies had legislation similar to this about childbirth; some kind of offering and period of uncleanness, and then a period confined at home without contact with others. And usually the periods were longer for a female child than for a male child. So this would be an example of where the Mosaic law recognized the religious needs of the time, and sought to meet them in a way which glorified Yahweh. We marvel at God's concessions to human weakness, and His understanding of the situation and need of every generation.

Lev 12:2 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'If a woman conceives, and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her monthly period she shall be unclean-
The reference to conception before bearing a male child may allude to the incorrect but strongly held ideas of the time- that a woman who releases her egg or achieves orgasm before contact with the male sperm in orgasm will bear a male child. This is the explanation of this passage which the Rabbis tend to give. This would then be in line with the suggestion on :1, that the following legislation is a concession to human weakness of understanding at the time. If Israel had not been given this legislation, likely they would have used the pagan rituals concerning childbirth which involved idol worship.

Lev 12:3 In the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised-

I suggest this is added at this point because we read in :2 that the mother was to be unclean seven days after birth. The God who is apparently so far away could foresee human experience so accurately and sympathetically. For He knew that the circumcision would be an event to be celebrated. And so it would be nice for the mother to have had a week to recover from the childbirth, and to be in a ritually clean state so she could celebrate and mix freely with the others present. This is also noteworthy because it is the only time circumcision is commanded under the old covenant. It had already been commanded to Abraham, but within the series of promises which were to become the new covenant. We see here a tacit recognition of the difference between the two covenants. The command for circumcision had to be repeated rather than assumed as still binding.

Col. 2:12 presents baptism as the equivalent in our day if we wish to enter the new covenant, which is based upon the same promises to Abraham. But there is more to new covenant relationship than simply the ritual of baptism. Circumcision spoke of a cutting off of the flesh in the most private and intimate place. We always read of circumcision as being done to a person. Water baptism enables us to receive the birth of the Spirit, whereby the Lord will work through the Spirit to change our hearts, to cut off our flesh in the most private and personal recesses of human hearts. Cuttings of the flesh as a sign of tribal affiliation were common amongst the surrounding tribes, as they are to this day in less developed tribal areas of the world. The signs are always public and immediately evident- you can tell instantly that a person belongs to this or that tribe by a cut in the ear or nose or cheek, or the removal of certain teeth, or the painting of a certain symbol on a visible part of the body. But circumcision was not at all outwardly evident. It was not mere tribalism; it taught that God's demands were upon the most private part of human life. Women also could be in covenant, and they must have wondered what was required for them. They would've quickly figured that lack of physical cutting was not to say they weren't in covenant, and that therefore, the real token of the covenant was not circumcision in itself, but what circumcision represented- the cutting off of the flesh in our most personal areas.

Lev 12:4 She shall continue in the blood of purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any holy thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed-
A woman in this case was not unclean for 33 days after the birth of a son, but was still involved in the blood of purification. For after seven days she was ritually clean, but not allowed to enter the sanctuary. It can be no accident that the Lord lived for 33 years- in such close association with the purification of humanity that He was identified with our absolute human situation.

The command not to come into the sanctuary reminds us that women as well as men were allowed to enter the sanctuary. Relationship with Yahweh was not a mere male

hobby as it was in many religions. We must however remember that Leviticus is specifically the commands given to the Levites at their inauguration, so possibly the woman in view here is specifically a woman from the tribe of Levi who was accustomed to entering the sanctuary to eat the priestly portions.

Lev 12:5 But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her period; and she shall continue in the blood of purification sixty-six days-
This doesn't mean that females somehow need more purification than males. I suggest that the shorter period of purification for males was in order to demonstrate the great value of their circumcision, which was as it were worth 33 days of being "in the blood of purification".

The longer length of purification required for the woman is also found in many pagan religions. The reason was that it was believed that various demons and bad gods sought to kill female babies more than they sought male babies. And so for female babies there was a greater sense of gratitude for a live birth. Perhaps this legislation reflected how God was making concessions to the wrong or misinformed gut feelings of His people. Just as He often does to us. Likewise it may be a concession to the common but incorrect belief that bleeding and watery discharge continued longer after the birth of a girl than after that of a boy. Likewise the wrong ideas about 'demons' are as it were tolerated in the New Testament.

Lev 12:6 When the days of her purification are completed-
Let us note that the woman was unclean for a period, and *she* then needed purification- not her child. We cannot therefore reason from this that the Lord Jesus was unclean by reason of His birth. It is no sin to be born a human.

For a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the door of the Tent of Meeting, a year old lamb for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering-
This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

We note that the sin offering was of far lower value than the burnt offering in this case. Perhaps this was to reflect how whilst God does indeed want recognition of sin and the fact we are born into a sinful environment, far more significant to Him is our desire to dedicate life to Him, despite that background and environment which we have. We also note that this is about the only time when the order sin offering - burnt offering is reversed. Usually there was to be conviction of sin resulting in dedication, the burnt offering. But a newborn child is not sinful, there is no "sin" somehow buried physically in human flesh; for all we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus who fully shared that nature. So the idea was that the child was dedicated to Yahweh, that was the sense of the offering, along with an awareness that indeed we are all sinful in practice, and we recognize that the child is being born into a sinful family and environment.

Lev 12:7 and he shall offer it before Yahweh, and make atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the fountain of her blood. 'This is the law for her who bears, whether a male or a female-

It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 12:8 If she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons: the one for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean'-

The poverty of Mary the mother of Jesus is indicated by the fact she offered doves and not a lamb (Lk. 2:24). He knew poverty. Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year; whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 13

Lev 13:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
It's doubtful whether the skin disease referred to in Leviticus is what we now call leprosy, i.e. Hansen's disease. The descriptions of the disease or affliction in Lev. 13,14 don't sound at all like leprosy as we know it. And the idea of this disease actually being afflicted upon buildings and clothing doesn't sound like mere contamination. Leprosy had no cure in the ancient world. And yet the legislation in Lev. 13,14 sounds as if after a relatively short time, the affliction could be lifted- and then a sin offering had to be made. The decisions and diagnosis of the affliction was to be made by the priests, not physicians. I conclude therefore that we should pay more attention to the Hebrew word here translated "leprosy". It is the same word as used for the "stroke" of Divine judgment. This makes more sense throughout the legislation. God could smite sinners with this affliction, mistranslated as "leprosy". If the sinner repented sufficiently, it would be lifted. But the priest would judge that, and therefore sin offerings were required to complete the cleansing process. It is no sin to get sick with leprosy; but if we understand this affliction as a Divine stroke, then it all makes so much more sense.

Lev 13:2 When a man shall have a rising in his body's skin, or a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes in the skin of his body the plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest, or to one of his sons, the priests-
Leprosy was and is a common scourge in the Middle East. For each person with the possible symptoms to be brought to either the high priest or one of his sons would have been logistically too much. This confirms the suggestion on :1 that what is in view is not Hansen's disease, leprosy as we know it, but a specific stroke from God upon sinners.

Lev 13:3 and the priest shall examine the plague in the skin of the body; and if the hair in the plague has turned white, and the appearance of the plague is deeper than the body's skin, it is the plague of leprosy; and the priest shall examine him, and pronounce him unclean-
Leprosy is symbolic of sin. But a person can appear to have leprosy when in fact it's only a surface level appearance of it; but only the priest, representing Jesus, can declare this. We must of course be careful not to excuse our failings as merely surface level sin; but when it comes to judging others, we must accept that someone can appear sinful to us but it's only a surface appearance; we must not ultimately judge whether a person will be saved or not, quite simply because we cannot do so. Only the priest, the Lord Jesus, can do so.

Lev 13:4 If the bright spot is white in the skin of his body, and its appearance isn't deeper than the skin, and its hair hasn't turned white, then the priest shall isolate the infected

person for seven days-
The language is continually suggestive of spiritual repentance. See on :1. The hair had to be "turned" white, always the hint is at change. The same word is found in 1 Sam. 10:6, "turned into another man".

Lev 13:5 The priest shall examine him on the seventh day, and behold, if in his eyes the plague is arrested, and the plague hasn't spread in the skin, then the priest shall isolate him for seven more days-
The idea of plague or striking in judgment being arrested or stayed is found in Num. 16:48,50; 25:8; 2 Sam. 24:21,25; Ps. 106:30. In every case, the plague was a special striking from God in judgment; and it was arrested or stayed by repentance and / or intercession, even by third parties. If Hansen's disease ["leprosy" as we know it] was in view, such a quick diagnosis could not be made. Such leprosy would not break out and then be arrested after seven days. But if as suggested on :1 the "leprosy" was a stroke of Divine judgment which could be "arrested", then this is understandable. It was the duty of the Levites to teach Israel, so that they would not be smitten by such plague / striking in judgment (Num. 8:19). This is why these laws are given here to the Levites, in this book of Leviticus.

Lev 13:6 The priest shall examine him again on the seventh day; and behold, if the plague has faded, and the plague hasn't spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. It is a scab. He shall wash his clothes, and be clean-
Our life spent in Christ is represented by these periods of seven days; at the end, Christ as the true priest and judge will decide whether the sin which there is in our lives has remained at a surface, appearance level- or whether it has spread. Yeast likewise represents sin, in that it spreads its influence. Sin either spreads in our flesh or doesn't...

Lev 13:7 But if the scab spreads on the skin, after he has shown himself to the priest for his cleansing, he shall show himself to the priest again-
The spreading of plague in the sense of Divine judgment (see on :1) is found in Num. 16:46-48, and it was the intercession of Aaron which stopped it spreading further. We are therefore to understand this spreading of the plague in the person as a sign that they were continuing under Divine judgment.

Lev 13:8 The priest shall examine him; and behold, if the scab has spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is leprosy-
"Pronounce him unclean" is literally 'to make him unclean'. The uncleanness was therefore a moral issue, rather than being made unclean simply through having

contracted an illness. This confirms our suggestion on :1, that the "leprosy" was not Hansen's disease but a specific Divine judgment for sin. The temptation must have been to try to cover up the appearance of sin / leprosy rather than revealing oneself to the priest; just as we are tempted today.

Lev 13:9 When the plague of leprosy is in a man, then he shall be brought to the priest-
God's people were to avoid trying to judge the appearance of leprosy / sin in others. And this temptation remains an abiding issue for all time- to ourselves interpret appearances and judge them in others, rather than leaving this to the Lord's judgment.

Lev 13:10 and the priest shall examine him. Behold, if there is a white rising in the skin, and it has turned the hair white, and there is raw flesh in the rising-
GNB "If there is a white sore on your skin which turns the hairs white and is full of pus". "Raw flesh" is s.w. "life of the flesh" (Prov. 14:30). The idea is that living flesh was being actively contaminated and destroyed. The key issue was whether the disease was still spreading within the person. This speaks of whether or not we have as it were reigned in the spread of sin in our human lives. But the immediate reference was as to whether the Divine judgment was ongoing in the person.

Lev 13:11 it is a chronic leprosy in the skin of his body, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He shall isolate him, for he is unclean-
AV "It is an old leprosy". And that is indeed the sense of the Hebrew. The previous ["old"] judgments for sin had not been learned from, and continued. So the person was still unclean because they had not learned their lesson. Seeing leprosy was incurable at that time, an old leprosy is a contradiction in terms; as suggested on :1, the reference is to a specific stroke from God and not Hansen's disease.

Lev 13:12 If the leprosy breaks out all over the skin, and the leprosy covers all the skin of the infected person from his head even to his feet, as far as it appears to the priest-
This is again strong evidence that a stroke from God is in view and not leprosy as we know it; see on :1. For if this were leprosy, then the man would be completely unclean. The idea rather is that the stroke from God had now run its course, and the man had been completely rendered stricken.

Lev 13:13 then the priest shall examine him; and, behold, if the leprosy has covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean of the plague. It has all turned white: he is clean-
If a person has indulged in sin and recognizes it, although they carry in their lives the

evidence of it, yet the sin has as it were died and they are clean. At baptism into Christ we became “dead to sin” (Rom. 6:2).

Lev 13:14 But whenever raw flesh appears in him, he shall be unclean-
Whenever sin is actively dominating over virgin flesh, claiming new areas in a person's life, then they are "unclean". But the original idea would be that in this case, the judgment stroke of God was still actively at work in the person.

Lev 13:15 The priest shall examine the raw flesh, and pronounce him unclean: the raw flesh is unclean. It is leprosy-
AV "it is *a* leprosy" would suggest that this was not just a form of leprosy, but rather this was a stroke from God.

Lev 13:16 Or if the raw flesh turns again, and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest-
The critical issue is whether the condition was spreading. And this is the question in our lives- whether sin has run its course with us, even if we bear the results of it in our flesh; or whether it is ongoing and spreading.

Lev 13:17 and the priest shall examine him; and, behold, if the plague has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him clean of the plague. He is clean-
Turning white was the sign that the man was clean, whereas if Hansen's disease were in view, this would surely show that the man was obviously still infected. For lepers "white as snow" are described in the Biblical records. "Turned white" would suggest that the stroke for sin had now turned the person "white", they were acceptable, covered in imputed righteousness through repentance and acceptance of their previous judgment for sin.

Lev 13:18 When the body has a boil on its skin, and it has healed-
The idea is that there are external signs which might suggest a person to have been smitten of God, but we cannot judge that. Job's example comes to mind. Only the priest, the Lord Jesus, can judge this. "Boil" is the word used of the smiting of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:7) and Job (Job 2:7); also for ‘the botch (RV "boil") of Egypt’ (Dt. 28:17). In the cases of Job and Hezekiah, they were smitten by God; they didn't just contract the disease we now know as leprosy. And the end of that "boil" was an outcome of prayer and repentance. And the period of their affliction was far shorter than the natural course of leprosy as we know it. This again confirms the suggestion on :1 that "leprosy" here refers not to Hansen's disease but to some specific judgment from God upon a person.

Lev 13:19 and in the place of the boil there is a white rising, or a bright spot, reddish-white, then it shall be shown to the priest-
"Reddish" is the word *adam*. The idea may be that it is unclear in this case whether the man is "white" or not, for Adam, the natural man, is mixed with the whiteness. And we muse about so many folks, as to whether they are white in righteousness or still red with the ways of Adam. And again, it is not for us in fact to muse upon these things. We must leave it to the priest's judgment, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 13:20 and the priest shall examine it; and behold, if it appears beneath the skin, and its hair has turned white, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy. It has broken out in the boil-
I suggested on :19 that the red / *Adam* sin is appearing as white righteousness. The question is whether we have allowed sin to penetrate beneath the flesh- by implication, to the heart. There may be here a distinction being drawn between sin on a surface level and that sin which is deeper, which leads to exclusion from God's family.

Lev 13:21 But if the priest examines it, and behold, there are no white hairs in it, and it isn't deeper than the skin, but is dim, then the priest shall isolate him seven days-
Heb. 'become dim'. Even if it appears that sin is in retreat in human life, the question is whether it spreads or not. Or, whether the stroke of God is still ongoing.

Lev 13:22 If it spreads in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is a plague-
Clearly "it is a plague" suggests a stroke from God. And again, it is the spreading nature which showed whether the stroke was finished or not.

Lev 13:23 But if the bright spot stays in its place, and hasn't spread, it is the scar from the boil; and the priest shall pronounce him clean-
People carry the scars of their sins, but these don't mean we should treat them as sinful. There may be multiple children from a series of casual relationships, illnesses resulting from addictions; but we are not to judge people as unclean because of that.

Lev 13:24 Or when the body has a burn from fire on its skin, and the raw flesh of the burn becomes a bright spot, reddish-white, or white-
"A burn from fire" is literally "a fire of burning". The same word is used in Lev. 10:2 of how Yahweh sent out fire upon the flesh of Nadab and Abihu in judgment. There are similar usages of the word in Lev. 21:9; Num. 11:1; 16:35; 26:10; Dt. 4:24; 1 Kings 18:38; Job

1:16 etc. And as suggested on :1, I suggest that this is the context of this talk about Divine plague here.

Lev 13:25 then the priest shall examine it; and behold, if the hair in the bright spot has turned white, and its appearance is deeper than the skin; it is leprosy. It has broken out in the burning, and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy-
The idea would be that the person had not learned from being struck by the Lord. The judgment was still spreading, because they were still impenitent.

Lev 13:26 But if the priest examines it, and behold, there is no white hair in the bright spot, and it isn't lower than the skin, but is faded; then the priest shall isolate him seven days-
Even if the external appearance of the judgment of sin is apparently not lower than the flesh, and has apparently faded; this is not to say that a person is clean, or that their judgment from God had ended. The critical issue was not surface level appearance, but whether it has spread further (:27).

Lev 13:27 The priest shall examine him on the seventh day. If it has spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is the plague of leprosy-
Again the issue is whether sin spreads, or whether the judgment from God was still ongoing. Clearly the Jews in Acts 4:17 had the idea that 'leprosy' spreading represented sin spreading.

Lev 13:28 If the bright spot stays in its place, and hasn't spread in the skin, but is faded, it is the swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; for it is the scar from the burn-
I explained on :24 that "the burn" was a direct Divine judgment. The results of Divine judgment may be openly apparent in a person's life; but that is no reason to consider a person unclean in any ongoing sense.

Lev 13:29 When a man or woman has a plague on the head or on the beard-
Clearly the idea of leprosy only affecting the head or beard (:30) cannot apply to Hansen's disease, or leprosy as we now know it. The reference was clearly to some specific Divine judgment.

Lev 13:30 then the priest shall examine the plague; and behold, if its appearance is deeper than the skin, and the hair in it is yellow and thin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean: it is an itch, it is leprosy of the head or of the beard-
The argument that this language makes a difference between surface level sin and

deeper sin... is a slippery slope. Once we start justifying some failures as mere surface level sins, we are on the downward path. But it does remain a fact that in God's eyes- and it is the judgment of the Priest and not ours which is so critical in all this- there is a difference between surface level failure, and sin on a deeper heart level. There is a sin unto death, and a sin not unto death (1 Jn. 5:16). We do well to remember this when the sins of others obtrude upon us and require some level of response from us.

Lev 13:31 If the priest examines the plague of itching, and behold, its appearance isn't deeper than the skin, and there is no black hair in it, then the priest shall isolate the person infected with itching seven days-
The various periods of examination were not because the priest needed to see whether the plague was spreading or not. Rather they were periods of self examination for the stricken person, opportunities for repentance in order to change the outcomes and spread of the disease.

Lev 13:32 On the seventh day the priest shall examine the plague; and behold, if the itch hasn't spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and the appearance of the itch isn't deeper than the skin-
I suggested above that the requirement that these cases be brought either to the high priest or to his sons meant that, logistically, it couldn't be that whoever had an itchy beard or scurf would have to come to them. Clearly those in view are those individuals specifically smitten by God with a stroke of judgment.

Lev 13:33 then he shall be shaved, but he shall not shave the itch; and the priest shall shut up him who has the itch seven more days-
H.P. Mansfield suggests that "The ulcer shall not be shaved lest the place become irritated and inflamed, and the priest will not be able to form an accurate judgment". But I am approaching this legislation from the viewpoint that the "leprosy" is not leprosy as we know it, but a specific stroke of Divine judgment. The legislation and various periods of seven days isolation were not for the sake of the priest, so that he could diagnose the condition; but rather were to elicit repentance from the stricken person, so that the stroke might be removed. The word for "shaven" is consistently used in the Bible for being shamed or being in mourning. This mourning and shame for sin was being elicited from the stricken person, so that they might repent and the stroke be lifted. The legislation was for the sake of the stricken person, designed to elicit their repentance.

Lev 13:34 On the seventh day, the priest shall examine the itch; and behold, if the itch hasn't spread in the skin, and its appearance isn't deeper than the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean. He shall wash his clothes, and be clean-

Sin must not spread nor go deeper than the skin, surface level sin must not become a sin from the heart. This is the repeated lesson. And in practice, the lack of spreading of the plague would indicate that the Divine judgment had run its course.

Lev 13:35 But if the itch spreads in the skin after his cleansing-
If the person merely had the appearance of leprosy but was found not to have it, then there would have been no need for any process of cleansing nor washing of clothes (:34). But I suggest that even this "itch" was a stroke of Divine judgment and reflected the moral failure of the person; therefore cleansing from it was required.

Lev 13:36 then the priest shall examine him; and behold, if the itch has spread in the skin, the priest shall not look for the yellow hair, he is unclean-
This legislation highlights the issue of whether the condition has spread. This was a sign that the Divine judgment was still ongoing. And in spiritual terms, the question is whether or not sin is spreading in us. We are either on the upward spiral of the Holy Spirit, or the downward spiral of the flesh. We cannot be on both at the same time.

Lev 13:37 But if in his eyes the itch is arrested, and black hair has grown in it; the itch is healed, he is clean. The priest shall pronounce him clean-
The opinion, analysis and judgment of the priest, representing the Lord Jesus Christ, is all important. Many people in primitive societies consider they have a legitimate medical opinion, based on the kind of traditions and folk wisdom which abound in relation to skin diseases. Israel were to resist these, and leave the diagnosis and judgment solely in the hands of the priest. We have a serious tendency to judge others' sin, and we really must leave this to Christ.

Lev 13:38 When a man or a woman has bright spots in the skin of the body, even white bright spots-
I suggested above that the requirement that these cases be brought either to the high priest or to his sons meant that, logistically, it couldn't be that whoever had spots appear on their bodies would have to come to them. Clearly those in view are those individuals specifically smitten by God with a stroke of judgment.

Lev 13:39 then the priest shall examine them; and behold, if the bright spots on the skin of their body are a dull white, it is a harmless rash, it has broken out in the skin, he is clean-
"Harmless rash" is not at all the sense, because as explained on :38, these spots were still some form of Divine judgment. LXX then adds: "it burst forth in the skin of his flesh". The idea is that when the pustule had burst, the judgment was over. "He is clean"

should not be read as meaning "he's done nothing wrong, all a false alarm". The idea is that the person can now go through the process of cleansing- for there has been failure and judgment, and that requires cleansing.

Lev 13:40 If a man's hair has fallen from his head, he is bald, he is clean-
This sounds stating the obvious- until we read it as meaning that sudden baldness, removing the glory of a person's hair, was a Divine judgment. And as noted on :39, "he is clean" means he has been judged, the judgment is over, and he has to now go through the cleansing rituals of Lev. 14.

Lev 13:41 If his hair has fallen off from the front part of his head, he is forehead bald, he is clean-
GNB sums up the teaching of :40,41 as "If you lose your hair at the back or the front of your head, this does not make you unclean". Total sudden baldness was a stroke from God, and was not to be confused with the general receding of the hairline which comes with the ageing process.

Lev 13:42 But if there is in the bald head, or the bald forehead, a reddish-white plague; it is leprosy breaking out in his bald head, or his bald forehead-
There are five major types of leprosy, and only one of them involves hair loss, and the hair loss is mainly around the eyebrows. So as discussed on :1, we are not here reading of leprosy as we know it. The idea is that the man was stricken by God with sudden baldness, didn't repent, and so the plague broke out again on his now bald head. The scenario pictured here, of sudden baldness and then the appearance of leprosy on the bald head, is simply not appropriate to leprosy as we know it, i.e. Hansen's disease.

Lev 13:43 Then the priest shall examine him; and, behold, if the rising of the plague is reddish-white in his bald head, or in his bald forehead, like the appearance of leprosy in the skin of the flesh-
Leprosy as we know it doesn't begin in the head; see on :42. Sudden baldness is a specific Divine judgment, as in Is. 3:24; 15:2; Jer. 47:5; Am. 8:10.

Lev 13:44 he is a leprous man. He is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean. His plague is on his head-
The idea is that the stroke of judgment appearing on his head was one of the clearest signs of major Divine judgment. For sin is rooted in the mind, and the stroke of judgment was therefore manifest there in such a public manner. All because the person had refused to repent from the judgment of sudden baldness see on :43.

Lev 13:45 The leper in whom the plague is shall wear torn clothes, and the hair of his head shall hang loose. He shall cover his upper lip, and shall cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'-
Contrary to what is often thought, leprosy is not highly contagious. It is a bacterial disease, not a viral infection. A common cold is a viral infection, and is far more contagious than leprosy. So this apparently heavy handed exclusion of lepers was not primarily for the sake of the health of the community. Rather was it the equivalent of condemnation- having been stricken for sin and refusing to repent, despite multiple opportunities through the various seven days confinements, the person was effectively condemned. Living outside the community of God's people, with no path back, looked ahead to the awful condition of the rejected at the last judgment. For there is no legislation for the return of the leper from this situation. But see on :50.

Isaiah's vision of God's glory as it would be in His crucified Son convicted Isaiah of his sinfulness to a very fine degree. The vision occurred "in the year that King Uzziah died" (Is. 6:1)- and he died of leprosy, smitten of God for his sin. Isaiah would've known Uzziah, and prophesied against him. And yet now, after the vision of God's glory, Isaiah declares that *he* is a man "of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5). And it was lepers who had to cover their upper lips (Lev. 13:45). He felt no better than Uzziah, the well known smitten-by-God king of Isaiah's time. Likewise before the experience of God's glory as it was and is in Christ, we shouldn't feel that we are any better than the most famous sinner.

Lev 13:46 All the days in which the plague is in him he shall be unclean. He is unclean. He shall dwell alone. Outside of the camp shall be his dwelling-
The Lord Jesus Christ died for us "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:11,13); he was unashamed to associate with lepers, the condemned sinners (see on :45), and as it were died with them and for them. The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us. Do we struggle with some secret vice, in the grip of habitual sin? The cross convicts of sin, for we are impelled by it to follow Christ in going forth "without the camp" (Heb. 13:13), following the path of the leper who had to go forth without the camp.

Lev 13:47 The garment also that the plague of leprosy is in, whether it is a woollen garment, or a linen garment-
As explained on :1, the idea that "leprosy" can be in garments or houses (Lev. 14:55) means that the plague in view is not that of Hansen's disease or leprosy as we now know it. It was a specific judgment from God for specific sins.

Lev 13:48 whether it is in warp, or woof; of linen, or of wool; whether in a skin, or in anything made of skin-
The clothing of a man was significant, both in personal and economic terms. The idea may be that this legislation about clothing refers specifically to the clothing of the impenitent person who has been excluded outside the camp (:46)

Lev 13:49 if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, or in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything made of skin; it is the plague of leprosy, and shall be shown to the priest-
The person excluded permanently (see on :45,46) still had property, clothing and houses, as will be discussed in Lev. 14. The question was whether these things could be used by others, or should they be destroyed. If the "leprosy" in view was Hansen's disease, then surely the clothing of the leper had to be automatically destroyed. But as discussed on :1, this was not the case. The 'leper' was not a leper as we now think of a leper, but one smitten by God with some specific judgment. Whether or not his clothing and property could be taken by others.. was a question for God to pronounce upon.

Lev 13:50 The priest shall examine the plague, and isolate the plague seven days-
I argued on Lev. 13:45 that the final exclusion "outside the camp" was permanent. It looked forward to the final condemnation of the wicked at the last day. But in Num. 12:14,15 we have an example of Miriam being made a leper and being shut out of the camp for seven days. "Shut out" there is s.w. "isolate" in Lev. 13:50. But she repented, and was allowed back in. So I deduce that the implication is that the shut out person could still repent after seven days. The priest could not have contact with the excluded person. But their clothing and housing could be examined, and if the plague within it had not spread, then the person had repented and could be received back in. Leprosy as we know it is not cured in seven days; as explained on Lev. 13:1, 'leprosy' here means literally a striking from the Lord, and not the leprosy we know today as Hansen's disease.

Lev 13:51 He shall examine the plague on the seventh day. If the plague has spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in the skin, whatever use the skin is used for, the plague is a destructive leprosy. It is unclean-

"Whatever use" suggests that no matter how valuable the garment, this didn't somehow mean that the leprosy [cp. sin] was any less significant. Petty material advantage was not to cloud judgment in these matters. See on :50.

Lev 13:52 He shall burn the garment, whether the warp or the woof, in wool or in linen, or anything of skin, in which the plague is; for it is a destructive leprosy. It shall be burned in the fire-

As explained on :50, the shut out person had the chance to repent after seven days. But there was no contact between the priest and the condemned leper. So their clothing was examined. If the stroke of God was still spreading in it, then judgment was ongoing, and it could be deduced that the excluded person had not repented. So perhaps the implication was that they should be burned in fire, along with their garments. For destruction by fire is the repeated image of final condemnation from God.

Lev 13:53 If the priest examines it, and behold, the plague hasn't spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin-

As explained on :50, the condemned excluded sinner "outside the camp" had no contact with the priest. But after seven days there, they had a chance to repent. If the plague had not spread in their garments, it could be deduced that they had repented and Divine judgment had run its course.

Lev 13:54 then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which the plague is, and he shall isolate it seven more days-

The apparent repentance of the condemned person was not to be a passing matter; see on :50-53. Another seven days must be allowed after the partial cleansing by washing. For repentance of a person who has persistently refused to repent before has to be more than a passing feeling on their part.

Lev 13:55 Then the priest shall examine it, after the plague is washed; and behold, if the plague hasn't changed its colour, and the plague hasn't spread, it is unclean; you shall burn it in the fire. It is a mildewed spot, whether the rot is inside or outside-

The tendency would've been to think that if the rot was only on the inside of the garment and not visible to anyone else, then this didn't require attention or cleansing. Hence the emphasis- "whether the rot is inside or outside". Sin is still sin, whether or not it is visible to others or not. Some peoples' sins are more open to our view than others (1 Tim. 5:24). The condemned sinner had to change colour and not just repent on a surface level; see on :50-54.

Lev 13:56 If the priest looks, and behold, the plague has faded after it is washed, then he shall pluck it out of the garment, or out of the skin, or out of the warp, or out of the woof-
The plucking out was to stop the leprosy / sin spreading. Jesus uses the same phrase in teaching that we should 'pluck out' of our lives whatever is likely to lead us to stumble into sin (Mt. 5:29; 18:9). Repeatedly, the seriousness of the leprosy / sin is defined by whether it spreads, either in depth or distribution.

Lev 13:57 and if it appears again in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin, it is spreading. You shall burn with fire that in which the plague is-
This effort of the priest to stop the plague spreading in the garment reflected the Divine effort to lead the condemned sinner to repentance, and to isolate the spread of sin. If the efforts for the garment failed, then this reflected how the isolated, stricken sinner had still not repented, sin was still alive and spreading in him. And so he / she along with the garments must be burned in fire.

Lev 13:58 The garment, either the warp, or the woof, or whatever thing of skin it is, which you shall wash, if the plague has departed from them, then it shall be washed the second time, and it will be clean-
The two stages of washing reflect the cleansing of the excluded sinner whom the garment represented (see on :50). Perhaps there is a hint here of being born of water and Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5), also reflected in the two stage washing and healing of the blind man in Mk. 8:23-25.

Lev 13:59 This is the law of the plague of leprosy in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp, or the woof, or in anything of skin, to pronounce it clean, or to pronounce it unclean-
The final pronouncing of men clean or unclean will only be made by the Lord Jesus at the last day. As explained throughout this chapter, the various procedures were in order to by all means elicit repentance in the stricken person (see on :1), so that the plague might be lifted- even after their apparently final condemnation outside the camp. In this we see God's earnest desire to save, to isolate the spread of sin- rather than to condemn by burning in fire.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 14

Lev 14:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
It's doubtful whether the skin disease referred to in Leviticus is what we now call leprosy, i.e. Hansen's disease. The descriptions of the disease or affliction in Lev. 13,14

don't sound at all like leprosy as we know it. And the idea of this disease actually being afflicted upon buildings and clothing doesn't sound like mere contamination. Leprosy had no cure in the ancient world. And yet the legislation in Lev. 13,14 sounds as if after a relatively short time, the affliction could be lifted- and then a sin offering had to be made. The decisions and diagnosis of the affliction was to be made by the priests, not physicians. I conclude therefore that we should pay more attention to the Hebrew word here translated "leprosy". It is the same word as used for the "stroke" of Divine judgment. This makes more sense throughout the legislation. God could smite sinners with this affliction, mistranslated as "leprosy". If the sinner repented sufficiently, it would be lifted. But the priest would judge that, and therefore sin offerings were required to complete the cleansing process. It is no sin to get sick with leprosy; but if we understand this affliction as a Divine stroke, then it all makes so much more sense.

Lev 14:2 This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest-
There is a difference between the cleansing and the healing. If someone doesn't externally appear sinful (for leprosy represents sin), this doesn't mean he is therefore acceptable to God. There must still be the cleansing, which speaks of the Lord's work, through His Spirit and through His blood.

Lev 14:3 and the priest shall go forth out of the camp. The priest shall examine him, and behold, if the plague of leprosy is healed in the leper-
I suggested on Lev. 13 that the clothing of the stricken man was examined, and if the evidence from it was that the Lord's striking of the man had finished because of his repentance, then this procedure would be followed.

Lev 14:4 then the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two living clean birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop-
The Lord was intensely intellectually conscious throughout His sufferings. His mind was evidently full of the word, He would have seen the symbolism of everything far more than we can, from the thorns in His mock crown, to the hyssop being associated with Him at the very end (the hyssop was the fulfilment of types in Ex. 12:8,22; Lev. 14:4,6,49-52; Num. 19:6,18).

Lev 14:5 The priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water-
The enigmatic Jn. 7:38 alludes here: "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly ("innermost being", NIV) shall flow rivers of living (Gk. spring) water". What "scripture" did the Lord have in mind? Perhaps the references to spring water

being used to cleanse men from leprosy and death (Lev. 14:5; 15:13; Num. 19:16). Out of the innermost being of the true believer, the spring(ing) water of the Gospel will *naturally* spring up and go out to heal men, both now and more fully in the Kingdom, aided then by the Spirit gifts. The believer, *every* believer, *whoever* believes, will preach the word to others *from his innermost being*, both now and in the Kingdom - without the need for preaching committees or special efforts (not that in themselves I'm decrying them). The tendency is to delegate our responsibilities to these committees. There is no essential difference between faith and works. If we believe, we will do the works of witness, quite spontaneously. And note how the water that sprung out of the Lord's smitten side is to be compared with the bride that came out of the smitten side of Adam. We, the bride, are the water; thanks to the inspiration of the cross, we go forth in witness, the water of life to this hard land in which we walk.

Lev 14:6 As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water-
The running or springing water would have initially referred to the water from the rock which followed them at this time. The two birds, like the two goats on the day of atonement, could have spoken of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The similarity with the day of atonement suggests that atonement is in view here; because as suggested on :1, we are dealing here not simply with leprosy infection, but a specific stroke of Divine judgment in response to sin, which required repentance and atonement.

Lev 14:7 He shall sprinkle on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird go into the open field-
The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the bird and scapegoat into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins- all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

The two birds may foreshadow the death and resurrection of Jesus. The bird which flew away in joyful, thankful freedom symbolized Christ's resurrection and the freedom from sin which is enabled for us who were spiritual lepers; thanks to the death of Christ, represented by the death of the first bird.

Lev 14:8 He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and bathe himself in water; and he shall be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, but shall dwell outside his tent seven days-

This washing was because the stricken person had been involved in actual sin; see on :1. Washing the body was also what the priests had to do in order to begin their active service. So the idea was that the forgiven, cleansed person was now to give their lives to serving God in the spirit of priesthood. We see something of this in the command to Naaman: "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean" (2 Kings 5:10). Although this was not Christian baptism, it is perhaps analogous. Because humility was elicited by this request to dip in Jordan, as it is by the ritual of baptism. Elisha was aiming to convert Naaman, not simply heal him, so that he could continue as general of the forces who were marauding Israel. The fact there were plenty of lepers in Israel (Lk. 4:27) was evidence enough that the waters of Jordan contained no healing powers of themselves; Naaman was being taught faith in God's word, rather than supposed healing waters. The seven dippings recall the way Jericho was to be circled for six days before victory on the seventh (Josh. 6:3-5), the child sneezed seven times before resurrection (2 Kings 4:35) and the way Elijah was only answered at his seventh prayer (1 Kings 18:43). The intention was that through the six times performing something which had no immediate answer, faith, hope and humility were elicited. Lev. 14:8; 15:13 speak of the healed leper washing *after* the cure, in order to be then also ritually clean. And there were various sprinkling / cleansing rituals which had to be performed seven times upon the leper (Lev. 14:7,16,27). So Naaman was potentially cured of his leprosy, but what was necessary was that he become ritually clean, and therefore he had to take the step of faith in washing. Had he not done that, the potential cure would have remained an unrealized potential. He was bidden grasp that he had been cured by Elisha; but now he had to wash in order to become spiritually clean and acceptable within Israelite, and not Syrian, society (see on 2 Kings 5:1).

Lev 14:9 It shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his body in water, then he shall be clean-

The cleansed leper was to become as a baby, and be washed in water. This looked ahead to baptism by full immersion into Christ as the new birth (Jn. 3:3-5).

Lev 14:10 On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish, and three tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the

sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). So this looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 14:11 The priest who cleanses him shall set these things and the man who is to be cleansed before Yahweh, at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus. See on :15.

Lev 14:12 The priest shall take one of the male lambs, and offer him for a trespass offering, with the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 14:13 He shall kill the male lamb in the place where they kill the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the place of the sanctuary; for as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering. It is most holy-
Again we note that the cleansing of the leper was very much associated with cleansing from sin. This is not because it was sinful to get leprosy, or leprosy made a person sinful. Rather I suggested on :1 that we are not reading here of leprosy as we know it, but of being struck with Divine punishment for sin.

Lev 14:14 The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot-
The leper was to continually live under the impression of the fact he or she had been healed and cleansed, just as we should. The fact the blood of Christ was shed for us personally should affect how we hear (hence the blood was put on the ear), what we do with our hands (the right thumb) and where we go with our feet (the right big toe). The process was repeated with oil (:16), perhaps foreshadowing the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the lives of those in Christ. The ritual here is similar to that at the inauguration of the priests. The idea was that having been cleansed from sin (see on :1), the repentant sinner was to devote themselves to the service of others in the spirit of priesthood, whether or not he or she was a Levite.

Lev 14:15 The priest shall take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand-
A log of oil is about half a pint, a third of a litre. We note the personal association of the priest with the cleansed person. No vessel is used, only the palm and fingers of the priest. See on :11.

Lev 14:16 The priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle some of the oil with his finger seven times before Yahweh-
The rituals similar to this usually involved the sprinkling of blood in this way. But here it is the sprinkling of oil. The idea is clearly that the Spirit of God is involved here. The stricken sinner was worthy of death; see on :1. But they had been saved by grace. And that experience as it were anointed them for further service in response to the grace shown. See on :18.

Lev 14:17 The priest shall put some of the rest of the oil that is in his hand on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering-
The ritual here is similar to that at the inauguration of the priests. The idea was that having been cleansed from sin (see on :1), the repentant sinner was to devote themselves to the service of others in the spirit of priesthood, whether or not he or she was a Levite.

Lev 14:18 The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, and the priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh-
Were people really morally unclean before God because of bodily situations over which

they had no control? Surely not. Anointing the head and body with oil by a Divine representative was effectively an anointing, which implied a call to service. Those stricken for their sin but who then repented... were called not simply to utter thanks to God for His grace, but to respond in some specific way. And this is the consistent pattern with all God's servants. Their service was a response to grace received. And of course the ultimate anointed one was the Lord Jesus. We are to seek to be Him in this world in response to the gracious salvation and cleansing we receive, washed in water [cp. baptism] and then granted the washing of regeneration by the Spirit which the oil represented.

Lev 14:19 The priest shall offer the sin offering, and make atonement for him who is to be cleansed because of his uncleanness: and afterward he shall kill the burnt offering-
This repeats the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering [represented by the grain offering of :20), although in this case the equivalent of the peace offering was fire coming from Heaven in response to the sin and burnt offering. Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering. So the person was being convicted of his sin, so that their dedication to Yahweh's service was no mere ritual, but a from the heart desire to serve Him from gratitude for the forgiveness of sin.

Lev 14:20 and the priest shall offer the burnt offering and the grain offering on the altar. The priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be clean-
I suggested on :19 that this grain offering was a kind of peace offering. As discussed on :1, it was not that the disease of leprosy was removed by this act of cleansing. The person had been struck for sin and had now repented. So this was a specific statement of moral forgiveness.

Lev 14:21 If he is poor, and can't afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for a trespass offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, and one tenth of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil for a grain offering, and a log of oil-
We get the impression that God was very strict about the offerings. He was. But He made concession to the man who couldn't bring what he ought to: "If he be poor, and cannot get much... two young pigeons, such as he is able to get" (Lev. 14:22). If they were blemished in some way, and even though they were not the animal God desired, God would accept such as the man was able to get. However it could be argued that in this case, by all means the male lamb must be offered; or it can be read as if the two birds of :22 could replace that male lamb. Likewise the offerings had to involve the shedding of blood; but God was prepared to accept a food offering if a man really couldn't get an animal. The eagerness of God to accept what a man can do rather than

the insistence on legal principles really comes over. He recognized the Israelites would be living on different levels. Such an eagerness involved accepting a lower standard of adherence to God's ideal principles. In harmony with this, the Passover 'lamb' could be either a sheep, or if necessary, a goat (Ex. 12:5), even though the use of a goat would somewhat spoil the foreshadowing of Christ.

Lev 14:22 and two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to afford; and the one shall be a sin offering, and the other a burnt offering-
Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year; whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 14:23 On the eighth day he shall bring them for his cleansing to the priest, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, before Yahweh-
The following verses appear a repetition of what we have just read. There is huge emphasis upon this material. Because the grace of saving a condemned sinner was indeed remarkable. Therefore the commandments about what was to happen on the eighth day are repeated- this was indeed to be what happened.

Lev 14:24 The priest shall take the lamb of the trespass offering, and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Lev 14:25 He shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering. The priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering and put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot-

The stricken person was to continually live under the impression of the fact he or she had been healed and cleansed, just as we should. The fact the blood of Christ was shed for us personally should affect how we hear (hence the blood was put on the ear), what we do with our hands (the right thumb) and where we go with our feet (the right big toe). The process was repeated with oil (:16), perhaps foreshadowing the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the lives of those in Christ. The ritual here is similar to that at the inauguration of the priests. The idea was that having been cleansed from sin (see on :1), the repentant sinner was to devote themselves to the service of others in the spirit of priesthood, whether or not he or she was a Levite.

Lev 14:26 The priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand-
A log of oil is about half a pint, a third of a litre. We note the personal association of the priest with the cleansed person. No vessel is used, only the palm and fingers of the priest. See on :11.

Lev 14:27 and the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before Yahweh-
The rituals similar to this usually involved the sprinkling of blood in this way. But here it is the sprinkling of oil. The idea is clearly that the Spirit of God is involved here. The stricken sinner was worthy of death; see on :1. But they had been saved by grace. And that experience as it were anointed them for further service in response to the grace shown. See on :18.

Lev 14:28 Then the priest shall put some of the oil that is in his hand on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, and on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the place of the blood of the trespass offering-
The placing of the oil upon the blood was required along with the washing in water. The same three entities are found in the enigmatic 1 Jn. 5:8. These three are the witness made in earth to the saving work of God's Son. The connection is at best oblique, but the idea may be that we are all in the position of the condemned, stricken person who has been saved by grace through these things, all of them associated with the work of the Lord Jesus.

Lev 14:29 The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before Yahweh-
Were people really morally unclean before God because of bodily situations over which they had no control? Surely not. Anointing the head and body with oil by a Divine representative was effectively an anointing, which implied a call to service. Those stricken for their sin but who then repented... were called not simply to utter thanks to

God for His grace, but to respond in some specific way. And this is the consistent pattern with all God's servants. Their service was a response to grace received. And of course the ultimate anointed one was the Lord Jesus. We are to seek to be Him in this world in response to the gracious salvation and cleansing we receive, washed in water [cp. baptism] and then granted the washing of regeneration by the Spirit which the oil represented.

Lev 14:30 He shall offer one of the turtledoves, or of the young pigeons, such as he can lay his hand on-

Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year; whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 14:31 even such as he is able to afford, the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, with the grain offering. The priest shall make atonement for him who is to be cleansed before Yahweh-

The Mosaic Law countered the idea that only the rich can be generous. They all had to tithe. And it's possible to argue that they had to give around 27%, not just 10% (10% to the Levites, 10% of the rest to support the feasts; and 10% of the rest for the poor). The purification after childbirth and the cleansing of the leper allowed a lower grade of offering to be made by the very poor- to underline that *no one* is exempted from giving to the Lord, no matter how poor they are. Consider the emphasis: "Every man shall give *as he is able*... he shall offer *even such as he is able to get*... then the disciples (consciously motivated by these principles?) *every man according to his ability*, determined to send relief... let *every one of you* lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (Dt. 16:17; Lev. 14:30,31; Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2). God reckons a man's generosity according to what he has; if there is the desire to give, a generous spirit, then this is seen as generosity. This is exemplified by the Lord's high estimation of the widow's giving. The amount was not as important as the spirit behind it. "The Lord blesseth a cheerful giver, and will supply the deficiency of his works" (Prov. 22:8 LXX; although not in the Hebrew text, this passage is quoted in the NT as inspired).

Lev 14:32 This is the law for him in whom is the plague of leprosy, who is not able to

afford the sacrifice for his cleansing-
Lepers / stricken sinners (see on :1) had to live outside the camp of Israel and couldn't work, so they would've typically been very poor. But the concept of sacrifice was important; they weren't to assume 'I'm a leper, of course I have nothing, I don't have to sacrifice anything'. They had to lay their hand on at least some kind of animal- and the Hebrew could possibly carry the sense of '*whatever* he can lay his hand on' (:30). It was important that they gave at least something in recognition of their need for cleansing, and their receipt of it by God's grace. We shouldn't consider our poverty, in whatever area, to mean that we don't have to sacrifice anything to God.

Lev 14:33 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
I suggest that the following legislation about "leprosy" in a house is further evidence that we are not reading here about leprosy as we know it, i.e. Hansen's disease, but rather the specific striking of a person because of their sin (see on :1).

Lev 14:34 When you have come into the land of Canaan which I give to you for a possession, and I put a spreading leprosy in a house in the land of your possession-
Constantly Israel were reminded that God would indeed give them the promised Kingdom, even though at that time as they wandered in the wilderness it must've seemed merely a nice idea. He encourages us likewise.

I argued on Lev. 13:45 that the final exclusion "outside the camp" was permanent. It looked forward to the final condemnation of the wicked at the last day. But in Num. 12:14,15 we have an example of Miriam being made a leper and being shut out of the camp for seven days. "Shut out" there is s.w. "isolate" in Lev. 13:50. But she repented, and was allowed back in. So I deduce that the implication is that the shut out person could still repent after seven days. The priest could not have contact with the excluded person. But their clothing and housing could be examined, and if the plague within it had not spread, then the person had repented and could be received back in. Leprosy as we know it is not cured in seven days; as explained on Lev. 13:1, 'leprosy' here means literally a striking from the Lord, and not the leprosy we know today as Hansen's disease.

Lev 14:35 then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, saying, 'There seems to me to be some sort of plague in the house'-
It would've been tempting for the owner to just cover up the signs of disease within his house, rather than ask the priest to inspect it. We are to be open before God, freely confessing our sins and possible sins or liabilities to sin, in open dialogue before Him in prayer. When David invites God to search his heart and see if there be any wicked way in

him (Ps. 139:23), he was alluding to the language of the house owner inviting the priest to inspect his house for leprosy.

Lev 14:36 The priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest goes in to examine the plague, that all that is in the house not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to inspect the house-
If a literal contagious disease like leprosy were in view, then everything in the house would surely be unclean anyway. But here the reasoning is different; whatever was in the house would not be unclean even if the house were declared unclean- if it was removed before the priest entered it. Clearly "the plague" spoke of a specific judgment for sin upon someone. And as explained on :34, this was a condition brought upon the housing and clothing of the stricken person whilst the priest couldn't have contact with them. It was to reveal whether or not they were truly repentant, and Divine judgment had now run its course.

Lev 14:37 He shall examine the plague; and behold, if the plague is in the walls of the house with hollow streaks, greenish or reddish, and it appears to be deeper than the wall-
Just as leprosy / the Divine striking was defined by being deeper than the flesh, so the stroke upon housing was defined by being deeper than the surface. A person can appear to have the stroke of Divine judgment / leprosy when in fact it's only a surface level appearance of it; but only the priest, representing Jesus, can declare this. We must of course be careful not to excuse our failings as merely surface level sin; but when it comes to judging others, we must accept that someone can appear sinful to us but it's only a surface appearance; we must not ultimately judge whether a person will be saved or not, quite simply because we cannot do so. Only the priest, the Lord Jesus, can do so.

Lev 14:38 then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days-
The spreading of plague in the sense of Divine judgment (see on :1) is found in Num. 16:46-48, and it was repentance and the intercession of Aaron which stopped it spreading further. We are therefore to understand this spreading of the plague in the person as a sign that they were continuing under Divine judgment.

Lev 14:39 The priest shall come again on the seventh day, and look. If the plague has spread in the walls of the house-
This looks forward to Christ as the ultimate priest coming again on the final [seventh] day and inspecting the degree to which sin has spread within us, or remained merely on

the level of appearance. 1 Pet. 2:12 alludes here, by calling the day of Christ's return "the day of inspection" (Gk.).

Lev 14:40 then the priest shall command that they take out the stones in which is the plague, and cast them into an unclean place outside of the city-
This looks ahead to the casting of the rejected into Gehenna, the place of condemnation outside the city of Jerusalem. As explained on :34, the state of the person's clothing and property reflected whether Divine judgment was still ongoing, in reflection of whether or not the person had truly repented. The fate of their property or living place was therefore reflective of their own fate.

Lev 14:41 and he shall cause the inside of the house to be scraped all over, and they shall pour out the mortar that they scraped off outside of the city into an unclean place-
The removing and scraping of diseased stones is a figure alluded to later in the Bible. The stones of Tyre were to be removed and scraped (Ez. 26:4)- for it was a sinful city. Jesus makes the same allusion when He said that the stones of the temple were to be removed one by one, because the Jews refused to accept the day of Christ's inspection (Lk. 19:44 Gk.). When He entered the temple, looked around it and then walked out, He was acting as a priest inspecting a leprous house (Mk. 11:11). But the Jews refused to accept Him as priest and insisted that their hypocrisy was in fact holiness. The new stones which were to be brought in (:42) refer to the Christian believers, who were to be built up into a new temple (1 Pet. 2:5). It was a radical thing indeed for Jesus to liken the temple, the very symbol of human piety and the very quintessence of the Jewish religion, to a leprous house which needed to be pulled down. Established religion today likely has the same judgment from Him.

Lev 14:42 They shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house-
I explained on :41 that on a national level, these things looked ahead to the judgment and destruction of God's own temple, which He struck with judgment. The other stones brought in to replace them were therefore symbols of the Gentiles, who are built up as lively /healthy stones in the new sanctuary (1 Pet. 2:5).

Lev 14:43 If the plague comes again, and breaks out in the house, after he has taken out the stones, and after he has scraped the house, and after it was plastered-
As discussed on :41,42, the striking of God's house and replacing the stones with the Gentiles was still not guaranteed to bring about complete freedom from condemnation. For many of the Gentiles brought in were to likewise turn away and fall under Divine judgment. "Scraped" is s.w. "cut off", and it was sinners who brought shame upon their

own house to cut it off (s.w. Hab. 2:10). But Yahweh was to scrape or cut off the house of Israel (s.w. 2 Kings 10:32). We could see this plastering, scraping and removal of offending individuals as God's attempt to reform Israel- and it failed. For the language of plastering a house is used of how God tried to do this with His people, but it didn't work (Ez. 13:10-15; 22:28 s.w.).

Lev 14:44 then the priest shall come in and look; and behold, if the plague has spread in the house, it is a destructive mildew in the house. It is unclean-
"Mildew" is the word usually translated "leprosy" in this section, and as suggested on :1,34, it refers not to "leprosy" as we know it but to a specific Divine judgment for sin upon individuals. This legislation highlights the issue of whether the condition has spread. This was a sign that the Divine judgment was still ongoing. And in spiritual terms, the question is whether or not sin is spreading in us. We are either on the upward spiral of the Holy Spirit, or the downward spiral of the flesh. We cannot be on both at the same time.

Lev 14:45 He shall break down the house, its stones, and its timber, and all the mortar of the house. He shall carry them out of the city into an unclean place-
The language of breaking down the house of Israel is very often used in the prophets (s.w.) concerning what God did to Israel. It is also often used of the breaking down of idol shrines. Again we get the impression that the house was being destroyed not for practical reasons of stopping contamination, but rather in judgment for sin, especially idolatry. Ez. 13:10-15; 22:28 condemn Israel for shoddy building without proper mortar. And so it would fall down itself, and God's judgment was in confirmation of that.

Lev 14:46 Moreover he who goes into the house while it is shut up shall be unclean until the evening-
There was no excuse for doing so because everything in the house was to be removed before the inspection (:36). We wonder if the Lord had this in mind when urging His people in Jerusalem not to return back into their homes in the day of His coming (Lk. 17:31; Mk. 13:15). The day of judgment of the leprous house had begun, and there was to be no return into it.

Lev 14:47 He who lies down in the house shall wash his clothes; and he who eats in the house shall wash his clothes-
There was greater culpability the more consciously a person did things which he or she knew were unclean. Thus to lie down in the unclean house required a washing of clothes, whereas just going into it merited a lesser requirement for cleansing. Clearly knowledge is associated with responsibility.

Lev 14:48 If the priest shall come in, and examine it, and behold, the plague hasn't spread in the house, after the house was plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed-
If leprosy or a contagious disease were in view, then there would surely have been some legislation surely about the priest cleansing himself after entering a contaminated building. But there is none. Because this was not a contagious disease, but as explained on :1, a stroke of Divine judgment.

Lev 14:49 To cleanse the house he shall take two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop-
We note the association of hyssop with the Lord's death on the cross (Jn. 19:29), before which He had been clothed in scarlet. That hyssop had been dipped in red wine, representing blood, and the Lord surely saw the relevance to Himself. "I am that hyssop", He would have thought. On the cross, He was the door (Jn. 10:9), and He experienced hyssop with red wine (representing blood) brushed against Him. Just as the doors at Passover had blood brushed onto them using a hyssop plant, and this was the basis of Israel's salvation.

Lev 14:50 He shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water-
The Lord taught that He was the rock, and we like Israel drink of what came out of Him. The Law of Moses included several rituals which depended upon what is called " the running water" (Lev. 14:5,6,50-52; 15:18; Num. 19:17). "Running" translates a Hebrew word normally translated "living". This living water was what came out of the smitten rock. The Lord taught that the water that would come out of Him would only come after His glorification (Jn. 7:38)- an idea He seems to link with His death rather than His ascension (Jn. 12:28,41; 13:32; 17:1,5 cp. 21:19; Heb. 2:9). When He was glorified on the cross, then the water literally flowed from His side on His death. The rock was "smitten", and the water then came out. The Hebrew word used here is usually translated to slay, slaughter, murder. It occurs in two clearly Messianic passages: " ...they talk to the hurt of him [Christ] whom thou hast smitten" (Ps. 69:26); "we esteemed him [as He hung on the cross] smitten of God" (Is. 53:4). The living waters were representative of the Holy Spirit which is given to us- not the miraculous gifts, but the power of God within the human spirit, to bring us to have His Spirit and mind which was in Christ. It is this which now is the cleansing agent, making our sacrifices acceptable, cleansing our motives in a way in which we cannot do, at least not by any conscious intellectual process.

Lev 14:51 He shall take the cedar wood, and the hyssop, and the scarlet, and the living

bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird, and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times-
Wood, hyssop and scarlet clothing all featured in the final suffering and crucifixion of Christ. This is the basis for our cleansing from the leprosy of sin and condemnation.

Lev 14:52 He shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, and with the running water, with the living bird, with the cedar wood, with the hyssop, and with the scarlet-
It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement- looking ahead to the work of the Lord Jesus. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus. See on :15.

Lev 14:53 but he shall let the living bird go out of the city into the open field. So shall he make atonement for the house; and it shall be clean-
The running or springing water would have initially referred to the water from the rock which followed them at this time. The two birds, like the two goats on the day of atonement, could have spoken of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The similarity with the day of atonement suggests that atonement is in view here; because as suggested on :1, we are dealing here not simply with leprosy infection, but a specific stroke of Divine judgment in response to sin, which required repentance and atonement.

Lev 14:54 This is the law for any plague of leprosy, and for an itch-
The idea is that this is the way to distinguish between the stroke of God in Divine judgment (see on :1), and the appearance of it which was just an ordinary case of scurf ("itch"). The law was simply that the priest alone could discern the difference between that which appeared to be Divine judgment, and what was indeed Divine judgment.

Lev 14:55 and for the destructive leprosy of a garment, and for a house-
I suggested on :1,34 that the garment and house of a stricken person was also given a form of Divine judgment in order to demonstrate to the priest whether or not the condemned sinner had repented, during the period they were isolated from the community after having been stricken.

Lev 14:56 and for a rising, and for a scab, and for a bright spot-
The idea is that this is the way to distinguish between the stroke of God in Divine

judgment (see on :1), and the appearance of it which was just an ordinary case of a scab or spot on the skin. The law was simply that the priest alone could discern the difference between that which appeared to be Divine judgment, and what was indeed Divine judgment.

Lev 14:57 to teach when it is unclean, and when it is clean. This is the law of leprosy-
We note "when" and not "what" is clean or unclean. As explained on :1, the purpose of these regulations was not for the sake of hygiene; rather they were designed to reflect when and whether the person stricken with judgment had repented.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 15

Lev 15:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
These laws could be read as meaning that a person was made unclean by involuntary bodily discharges of a sexual nature. Or they can be read as referring to specific discharges related to sexually transmitted diseases; see on :3 LXX. The meaning would then be that they were made morally unclean by their sinful actions, and these were the consequences of those actions. Cleansing from them was therefore effectively representative of their cleansing from sin.

Lev 15:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When any man has a discharge from his body, because of his discharge he is unclean-
These laws taught that in essence, it is what comes from within a person which makes them unclean, rather than what enters us from outside (Mk. 7:15-23). The idea that demons, evil spirits or Satan can enter us and make us unclean must be rejected; Jesus emphasizes that sin comes from *within*, therefore it is totally our fault, and we must take responsibility rather than blaming it on cosmic forces outside of us. See on :1.

Lev 15:3 This shall be his uncleanness in his discharge: whether his body runs with his discharge, or if his body has stopped excreting his discharge, it is his uncleanness-
LXX "whoever has a gonorrhea out of his body, this is his uncleanness in him by reason of the issue, by which, his body is affected through the issue". As discussed on :1, the idea of this section may not be that people are unclean because of issues which are nothing to do with morality; but rather that these regulations cover the result of sexually transmitted diseases and therefore cleansing from those consequences was effectively parallel with forgiveness for the sins related to them. The fertility cults of Canaan involved the usage of temple prostitutes by the worshippers, and therefore sexually transmitted diseases were rife in Canaan. An Israelite who had one of them would have been suffering the result of such apostasy, either by themselves or by family members.

This would explain why the stricken person in view in this section is a male- who had slept with the temple / cult prostitutes.

Even if we are no longer sinning, we must remember that we still stand guilty for past sins unless we have received cleansing for them. The passage of time and the fading of human memory works only a pseudo-atonement for sin; it is the blood of Christ and our conscious identity with it which alone can eternally cleanse our conscience from sins both past and present.

Lev 15:4 Every bed whereon he who has the discharge lies shall be unclean; and everything he sits on shall be unclean-
We must note that this legislation follows on from that about 'leprosy' in Lev. 13,14. I suggested on Lev. 13:1 that leprosy in the form we know it was not in view, but rather a specific stroke of Divine judgment from God. And the commands we now read about men with discharges of a sexual nature, and their cleansing, may well refer to a similar being stricken with a judgment appropriate to sexual sin. This is why the bed of the stricken person is so emphasized. Effectively, the person was to be sexually isolated.

Lev 15:5 Whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-
The implication was that his wife would have to abstain from sexual relationships with him and he was to be effectively isolated from his family. The stress upon the stricken person's bed is reflected in the Psalms, where David speaks of being stricken and lying on his bed, isolated from family and society because of his running, oozing issue which oozed in the night (Ps. 38:11; 77:2). It seems he was stricken with a Divine stroke that led to him secreting unclean fluids from his reproductive organ, which is the situation in view here (Ps. 6:6; 41:3). Job likewise complained of how he is isolated upon an unclean bed / couch (Job 7:13; 33:19 "he is chastened with pain upon his bed"), as if he too was experiencing a stroke from God which corresponds to the situation envisaged here in Lev. 15.

Lev 15:6 He who sits on anything whereon the man who has the discharge sat shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-
The Hebrew for 'sitting' here is elsewhere used specifically in the context of urination or defecation, so the idea would be that the man was not to use a toilet shared by others.

Lev 15:7 He who touches the body of him who has the discharge shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-
This seems the equivalent of the leper of Lev. 13,14 being isolated from society. And I

suggested on Lev. 13:1 that what was in view there was not the disease of leprosy, but a specific stroke of Divine judgment. And I suggest the person with a discharge was likewise. In practice, with such extreme laws about contact with him or whatever he touched, he would be isolated from his family and society. We note that the stricken person in view is presented as male. There is no equivalent legislation about females. This would make sense if as suggested on :3, the person in view is one who had slept with the temple / cult prostitutes. The fertility cults of Canaan involved the usage of temple prostitutes by the worshippers, and therefore sexually transmitted diseases were rife in Canaan. An Israelite who had one of them would have been suffering the result of such apostasy, either by themselves or by family members.

Lev 15:8 If he who has the discharge spits on him who is clean, then he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-
This law was therefore aimed at ensuring that people kept away from this stricken person. In primitive society, every day's labour was valuable, and nobody wanted to run the risk of being made unclean for a whole day.

Lev 15:9 Whatever saddle he who has the discharge rides on shall be unclean-
If an involuntary discharge of semen at night is in view, then such extreme danger of contaminating others would not be in view. In terms of hygiene, nothing would be achieved by it anyway. For most sexually transmitted diseases are spread only at body temperature, and not through sitting on the same chair as an infected person. Therefore we conclude that a special state of uncleanness and illness is in view, the result of a Divine stroke. And in practice, if a man had an involuntary emission of semen at night, then who would know about it, unless he told them? So it seems more likely that the person in view is a sinner who has been struck with a Divine stroke.

Lev 15:10 Whoever touches anything that was under him shall be unclean until the evening. He who carries those things shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-
There was greater culpability the more consciously a person did things which he or she knew were unclean. Thus to purposefully carry something unclean required a washing of clothes, whereas just touching them merited a lesser requirement for cleansing.

Lev 15:11 Whoever he who has the discharge touches, without having rinsed his hands in water, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-
Those suffering with the "discharge" are parallel with 'lepers' in Num. 5:2 as needing to be put out of the camp. The dramatic laws about how they made everyone else unclean

effectively required they be put outside the camp. I suggested on Lev. 13:1 that "lepers" doesn't refer to those with Hansen's disease, but to those struck down by Divine judgment. Those with a "discharge", literally a 'flowing', were in the same category. In neither case is involuntary disease or human bodily situation a reason for moral uncleanness. Just as human nature of itself doesn't separate between God and man; for all we posit about human nature, we say about the undefiled Lord Jesus who fully had that same human nature.

Lev 15:12 The earthen vessel, which he who has the discharge touches, shall be broken; and every vessel of wood shall be rinsed in water-
As discussed on :11, the intention of these extreme laws were to effectively require that the person with such a discharge be put outside the camp. Otherwise they would render daily life impossible to live if they remained within it.

Lev 15:13 When he who has a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes; and he shall bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean-
In the dry wilderness, this would have been from the river of spring water which followed them from the smitten rock, which represented Christ who was smitten so that we might have the means of being cleansed (1 Cor. 10:4). The enigmatic Jn. 7:38 alludes here: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly ("innermost being", NIV) shall flow rivers of living (Gk. spring) water". What "scripture" did the Lord have in mind? Perhaps the references to spring water being used to cleanse men from uncleanness and death (Lev. 14:5; 15:13; Num. 19:16). Out of the innermost being of the true believer, the spring(ing) water of the Gospel will *naturally* spring up and go out to heal men, both now and more fully in the Kingdom, aided then by the Spirit gifts.

Lev. 14:8; 15:13 speak of the person healed of 'leprosy' [the Divine stroke] and a "discharge" washing *after* the cure, in order to be then also ritually clean. As discussed on :11, those with a discharge and the 'leper' were treated the same way; for as with the leper / stricken person, the man with a "discharge" was under Divine judgment, and had not simply experienced an involuntary emission.

Lev 15:14 On the eighth day he shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and come before Yahweh to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and give them to the priest-
Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year (Song 2:12; Jer. 8:7); whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The

very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Lev 15:15 and the priest shall offer them, the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering. The priest shall make atonement for him before Yahweh for his discharge-
It is no sin to be human, nor to go through the bodily functions which go along with being human. The atonement was required because the person had sinned and had been struck with Divine judgment. That ended when the person repented, hence the language of atonement.

Lev 15:16 If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the evening-
Like many of the commandments, there was a large element of personal choice in whether to obey this or not; intimate matters such as personal discharges were unknown to others. Under the new covenant, this is even more the case; attitudes of mind which make us unclean before God are known only to ourselves. The Law of Moses was the only legal code which had so many clauses which concerned matters which could never be publically demonstrated. God's intention even under the old covenant was to teach and inculcate personal relationship between God and His people. He did this by giving commandments whose keeping only He and the individual knew about.

Lev 15:17 Every garment, and every skin, whereon the semen is, shall be washed with water, and be unclean until the evening-
I suggest that the emission of semen in view is not a result of sex within marriage. For Paul appears to warn against any such extremist interpretation by teaching that the marital bed is "undefiled", unlike that of whores and adulterers (Heb. 13:4). There is nothing in that sense dirty about the sexual act. What is in view is the immorality which has given rise to the Divine stroke which now requires repentance and atonement.

Lev 15:18 If a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the evening-
I suggested on :17 that this doesn't refer to sex within marriage. For the marital bed is "undefiled" (Heb. 13:4). It could refer to sex outside marriage. The whole theme of this section which began in Lev. 13:1 is of Divine judgment for wrong behaviour, rather than normal bodily functions making a person unclean before God. If however it does refer to marital sex, then we reflect that the whole family would have known that 'mum and dad' or just mum was unclean. Personal matters like sex and menstruation thereby became

part of normal family awareness, rather than being hived off in quasi-secrecy and invested with an aura of mystery as they are in many modern cultures.

The Lord taught that He was the rock, and we like Israel drink of what came out of Him. The Law of Moses included several rituals which depended upon what is called " the running water" (Lev. 14:5,6,50-52; 15:18; Num. 19:17). "Running" translates a Hebrew word normally translated "living". This living water was what came out of the smitten rock. The Lord taught that the water that would come out of Him would only come after His glorification (Jn. 7:38)- an idea He seems to link with His death rather than His ascension (Jn. 12:28,41; 13:32; 17:1,5 cp. 21:19; Heb. 2:9). When He was glorified on the cross, then the water literally flowed from His side on His death. The rock was "smitten", and the water then came out. The Hebrew word used here is usually translated to slay, slaughter, murder. It occurs in two clearly Messianic passages: " ...they talk to the hurt of him [Christ] whom thou hast smitten" (Ps. 69:26); "we esteemed him [as He hung on the cross] smitten of God" (Is. 53:4). The living waters were representative of the Holy Spirit which is given to us- not the miraculous gifts, but the power of God within the human spirit, to bring us to have His Spirit and mind which was in Christ. It is this which now is the cleansing agent, making our sacrifices acceptable, cleansing our motives in a way in which we cannot do, at least not by any conscious intellectual process.

Lev 15:19 If a woman has a discharge, and her discharge in her flesh is blood, she shall be in her impurity seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening-

This is worded very strangely if in fact a normal period is in view. I have suggested earlier in this chapter that the "discharge" refers to a specific stroke of Divine judgment. It could involve a hemorrhage of blood. The language and grammar seems to imply that the "discharge" occurred at one time, and then after that point she was impure seven days. But period bleeding is not a one time event, lasting typically from three to eight days. If monthly periods are in view here, then the woman would be impure for up to 15 days / month. And whoever touched her would be unclean. This would have made family life just about impossible. So I don't think that monthly periods are in view, but rather a specific Divine judgment. "Be in her impurity" is s.w. "removed", "set apart", "put apart". It is the equivalent of being put outside the camp, which was the judgment for the leper and the man smitten with a "discharge" as Divine judgment (Num. 5:2). It is also found translated "filthy" in Ezra 9:11 "the filthiness of the people of the lands". But it is not an act of moral filth to have a period. What is in view is not period bleeding, but a specific Divine judgment for sin, the female equivalent of the judgment upon sinful males described in the first half of this chapter.

Lev 15:20 Everything that she lies on in her impurity shall be unclean. Everything also that she sits on shall be unclean-
The severity of the laws about not coming into contact with such a woman were designed to make it impossible to have her in society or the home. She therefore effectively had to be put out of the camp (see on :19).

Lev 15:21 Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-
Beds were typically shared in family homes, so this was designed to make the woman leave her home. This would be appropriate for someone stricken with Divine judgment for serious sin, but not for a woman having a period.

Lev 15:22 Whoever touches anything that she sits on shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-
This is the female equivalent of the male judgment of a "discharge". If involuntary period bleeding is in view, then such extreme danger of contaminating others would not be in view. In terms of hygiene, nothing would be achieved by it anyway. For most diseases are spread only at body temperature, and not through sitting on the same chair as a woman who is menstruating. Therefore we conclude that a special state of uncleanness and illness is in view, the result of a Divine stroke. And in practice, if a woman was menstruating, then who would know about it, unless she told others? So it seems more likely that the person in view is a sinner who has been struck with a Divine stroke.

Lev 15:23 If it is on the bed, or on anything whereon she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until the evening-
This was certainly not for hygienic reasons, for we would all be hopelessly infected if infection really spread by touching whatever a menstruating woman has touched. Again, the woman in view is clearly a sinner under the stroke of Divine judgment, and not simply a menstruating woman.

Lev 15:24 If any man lies with her, and her monthly flow is on him, he shall be unclean seven days; and every bed whereon he lies shall be unclean-
The "monthly flow" is apparently different to the "discharge". The discharge was, I suggest, a specific Divine judgment for sin. Lev. 20:18 says that if a man sleeps with a menstruating woman then they must both die. But Lev. 15:24 says that in this case the man must be unclean seven days. I suggest that the language of uncovering nakedness in Lev. 20:18 is talking about some form of illicit or perverted relationship. Menstrual blood was a times drunk or used in various cultic rituals.

Lev 15:25 If a woman has a discharge of her blood many days not in the time of her period, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her period; all the days of the discharge of her uncleanness shall be as in the days of her period: she is unclean-
The "discharge" and "her period" are grammatically separate. But perhaps her period is not in view here. LXX "And if a woman have an issue of blood many days, not in the time of her separation; if the blood should also flow after her separation, all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean". As the 'leper' / stricken person was shut up for periods of seven days, which could be extended if they were impenitent, so here too, the woman was given a "time" during which her judgment lasted; but it could be extended, if she were impenitent.

Lev 15:26 Every bed whereon she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her as the bed of her period: and everything whereon she sits shall be unclean, as the uncleanness of her period-
Her laying on a bed "all the days" could imply that she lay on her bed day and night. Which was impossible for an average Hebrew woman going about daily life, with so many responsibilities upon her in domestic life. But it makes more sense if we consider this to be talking about a specific period of Divine judgment which forced her to be confined to her bed, as happened to men like David. Again, "her period" may not be in view. LXX "And every bed on which she shall lie all the days of her flux shall be to her as the bed of her separation, and every seat whereon she shall sit shall be unclean according to the uncleanness of her separation"; GNB gives simply "Any bed on which she lies and anything on which she sits during this time is unclean".

Lev 15:27 Whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening-
There was greater culpability the more consciously a person did things which he or she knew were unclean. Thus to lie down in the unclean house required a washing of clothes, whereas just going into it merited a lesser requirement for cleansing. Clearly knowledge is associated with responsibility.

Lev 15:28 But if she is cleansed of her discharge, then she shall count to herself seven days, and after that she shall be clean-
This two stage cleansing process is common in the Mosaic rituals. She was clean, but in another sense not fully cleansed until the end of the seven days. We likewise are now cleansed in Christ, but in a full sense we will only be fully cleansed when He returns and our bodies are made like His, and the flesh no longer is a part of our condition of being.

Lev 15:29 On the eighth day she shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and bring them to the priest, to the door of the Tent of Meeting-
As discussed on :14, this was the female equivalent to the male rituals required for a man stricken down with Divine judgment. This is what is in view, and not menstruation. It can hardly be that every menstruating woman in all Israel was to come to the door of the Tent of Meeting every month. Clearly what is in view is a woman under specific Divine judgment for sin who has now repented, rather than every menstruating woman.

Lev 15:30 The priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her before Yahweh for the uncleanness of her discharge-
This repeats the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering (although that isn't specifically required here). Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering. So the woman was being convicted of sin, so that their dedication to Yahweh's service was no mere ritual, but a from the heart desire to serve Him from gratitude for the forgiveness of sin. Clearly a judgment for sin is in view; and not menstruation, which isn't sinful of itself.

Lev 15:31 Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, so they will not die in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is in their midst'-
It could be argued from this that these commandments may have had specific relevance to the Levites, who were the only ones who could enter the holy places- GNB "so that they would not defile the Tent of his presence, which was in the middle of the camp. If they did, they would be killed". This is language more relevant to Levites- for whom this book of Leviticus was specifically relevant.

The legislation here is very severe- it seems inappropriate for touching something which a menstruating woman had touched, seeing menstruation is not a moral sin. So again I suggest that what is in view is a woman or man struck by God with a 'flowing' of intimate body fluids from their private parts, and not involuntary emissions of semen or blood. The "uncleanness" of Israel refers elsewhere to their actual sins which required repentance and atonement (Lev. 16:16,19; Ezra 6:21; Ez. 36:17). It was this which had led to the woman being struck with a Divinely sent plague, and involuntary menstruation is not in view.

Lev 15:32 This is the law of him who has a discharge, and of him who has an emission of semen, so that he is unclean thereby-
"Thereby" is a translators' guess. The idea is simply "who is unclean", with the Hebrew

for "unclean" having the sense of moral sin, s.w. foul, polluted, defiled- always in the sense of having actually committed sin. It was this sin which led to the discharge or flow of personal body fluids from intimate private parts, and was a judgment from God- rather than an involuntary part of being human. The idea is not that these things rendered an innocent person "thereby" offensive to God and worthy of being separated from. It is no sin to be human.

Lev 15:33 and of her who has her period, and of a man or woman who has a discharge, and of him who lies with her who is unclean-
The Hebrew word for "period" isn't used here. AV quaintly gives "sick of her flowers", but the phrase is literally "sick from her rejection / filthiness / uncleanness". She had been stricken because of her sin, her moral filthiness. This seems a separate punishment to the "discharge". Israel in their sinfulness and separation from God are likened to a woman in this contaminated state (Ez. 36:17). But Israel, like this woman, were separated from God because of their actual sins, and not by reason of simply being human.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 16

Lev 16:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before Yahweh and died-
The High Priest had to cleanse himself meticulously before entering the Most Holy. Access was now limited to the Most Holy as a result of inadequate preparation by some in the past. The Lord's death reversed all this, it opened up the veil, for us to pass through with the utmost effort made by us in personal sanctification, in order to further God's glory in the salvation of others. We cannot simply refuse to enter, turn away from the torn veil. To do so is to turn away from what the cross has achieved, and to place ourselves outside its scope. We must go forward, go onwards into the presence of God to replicate in essence the Saviour's work, with the awed and humble spirit of the High Priest entering the Holiest on the day of atonement. He would surely have carefully analyzed his motives, as to why he was passing through that veil, and whether he was sufficiently personally sanctified for the work he was doing. He would have been comforted by knowing that his motives were solely for the glorification of his God in the redemption for his people which he was seeking to obtain. And our passing through the veil is likewise not a case of mere curiosity to get closer to the Divine, but in order to glory Him through what we may thereby do for others.

The Yom Kippur ritual has its context in the death of Aaron's sons for desecrating the tabernacle (Lev. 16:1). The cleansing of not only the sins of the people, but also the tabernacle, was therefore in the context of Israel's desecration of the tabernacle- and

not because physical bits of furniture somehow became unclean of themselves without human fault. This introductory verse, leading on as it does to the Day of Atonement ritual, raises the question of whether it was intended as an annual feast or rather an emergency ritual to be used when presumptuous sins had been committed and the tabernacle defiled. The only time in the Bible we read of the feast being called is in Num. 29, when the tabernacle had indeed just been defiled by Cozbi and Zimri and then by Phinehas bursting in to the most holy place to slay them. All the stress on "Aaron" rather than some more generic reference to 'the High Priest at the time' rather supports this view. Lev. 16:29 says that the fasting aspect was to indeed be observed on the 10th day of the 7th month, but this is *after* the commands about the scapegoat- which I suggest were for emergency use.

Lev 16:2 and Yahweh said to Moses, Tell Aaron your brother not to come at all times into the Most Holy Place within the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, in case he die; for I will appear in the cloud on the mercy seat-
This is one of a number of examples where the Law God gave Moses was changed by Him in consideration of human weakness. This shows that God's law isn't set in stone; those who argue that we must keep the Sabbath today must face the fact that God *can* change and abrogate His own laws. The wonderful thing in this case is that God meditated upon the sin of Aaron's sons, and didn't wish to put Aaron in the way of temptation which might be too much for him; because God never allows us to be tempted beyond our capabilities (1 Cor. 10:13). The way God here recognizes the extent of His own holiness and as it were seeks to protect humanity from being harmed by it is similar to how He warned Israel not to come too near to the burning mountain (Ex. 19:21), and how He urged Moses not to come too near to the burning bush (Ex. 3:5). This isn't God distancing Himself from us, but His seeking to establish understanding of His holiness whereby we can ultimately draw near to Him in Christ (Heb. 10:22). When we struggle with God's distance from us we must bear this in mind.

In the face of sin amongst His people, there are levels of God's withdrawal of His presence. The way the glory progressively departed from the temple as recounted in Ezekiel is a graphic illustration of this. Under the Law, Aaron initially could come at will within the Most Holy. But after the blasphemy of his sons, apparently for being drunk on duty, he was only allowed to come once per year, and only after an elaborate ritual emphasizing human sinfulness (Lev. 16:2 ff.). Likewise it seems that God's original intention was that the Angel of the presence should travel in the midst of Israel in the wilderness. But after the golden calf apostasy, God announced that He was still with Israel, but His Angel would "go before thee... for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiff-necked people: lest I consume thee in the way" (Ex. 33:2,3).

Lev 16:3 Herewith shall Aaron come into the sanctuary: with a young bull for a sin

offering, and a ram for a burnt offering-
We note the contrast with Moses, who lived in a tent outside the tabernacle with the cloud of glory ever nearby, and the radiance from the Angel within it shining off his face. Aaron was being warned not to assume that intimacy with God experienced by Moses was the right of every man or priest. Relationship with God must be built up. It is not for us to assume that the close relationship with God enjoyed by another can be ours without personal effort at building that relationship.

The rabbis have pointed out that the Day of Atonement ritual is exactly at the mid point of the Torah. As if here we have the central point of God's revelation in the Torah- salvation by grace through the future sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, regardless of the surrounding laws and accounts of Israel's historical failures. Hebrews 9 is clear that Yom Kippur points forward to the Lord's work on the cross- for the sake of our sins and salvation. Paul argues that the blood of bulls and goats couldn't take away sin, or otherwise there would be no need for Yom Kippur. That is of course true, but it is a nuanced statement. The sin offerings did achieve forgiveness- offer sacrifice X for sin Y and you will be forgiven. That was what was offered by God and it was true and legitimate; He wasn't lying nor playing with words. But what was unforgiveable according to the law of Moses was sin outside those specified situations, and particularly the sin of presumption. This is why the language of the day of Atonement is alluded to by David in his penitential psalms regarding Bathsheba. It is these sins which were outstanding. It's why in Num. 29 the Israelites were told to keep a makeshift Day of Atonement seeing they had sinned presumptuously. And it is these sins which are the sins of every man apart from the Lord. It is the total eternal redemption from all sin which is what the ritual spoke of. There is no Biblical record of Israel ever keeping the Day of Atonement with the release of the goats etc., and one wonders whether it was specifically intended for them in the wilderness- hence the release of the scapegoat into the desert to symbolize their freedom from sin now in that same desert. Paul does however imply that the High Priest often did the ritual- whereas the Lord did it only once. And there is historical evidence they did *at times* keep it. But the Biblical record of Israel's negligence to annually keep the feast as commanded suggests their failure to humbly accept the significance of their sins of presumption.

Lev 16:4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches on his body, and shall put on the linen sash, and he shall be clothed with the linen turban. They are the holy garments. He shall bathe his body in water, and put them on-
The ideas of washing in water and being clothed in white linen are interpreted in the New Testament as applying to Christian baptism, and the imputation of righteousness, as clean as the white linen clothes of the priests (Rev. 19:8). This means that the work of even the high priest himself is to be aspired to by every Christian. The veil was rent at the Lord's death so that the way into the holiest was open to every believer. They were to

follow the High Priest into the holiest- but what did he do there? He obtained forgiveness for others. And it is our mission likewise to do this, through bringing others to the saving experience of the Lord's work. This was a high, challenging call for Jews in the first century, who assumed the priesthood did all their religious work for them, and they were effectively just spectators at a show.

The High Priest was not to wear his holiest clothes but rather to dress as a standard priest. This was to show that the atonement was not due to ritual garments, but due to the work of the High Priest relating to the blood of atonement. This points up the significance of the Lord's work on the cross.

Lev 16:5 He shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering-
This repeats the usual progression from sin offering to burnt offering to peace offering (although that isn't specifically required here- the experience of forgiveness was the equivalent). Conviction of sin leads to a desire to make complete dedication to God, which results in the peace with God celebrated in the peace offering. We note that both goats including the live one were together one sin offering. We are saved by the Lord's death and also "by His life". They spoke of His death and resurrection.

Lev 16:6 Aaron shall offer the bull of the sin offering which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house-
This has been wrongly interpreted to mean that the Lord Jesus likewise offered for Himself, as if He were alienated from God by His nature. Whatever we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus who fully had our nature. And He was undefiled and perfect before God. He showed us what is possible within human nature. See on :11.

Lev 16:7 He shall take the two goats, and set them before Yahweh at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
This looks ahead to the death of the Lord Jesus "before Yahweh"; His special presence was at Golgotha. The freedom of Barabbas appears to in some way reflect the language of the scapegoat.

Lev 16:8 Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for Yahweh, and the other lot for the scapegoat-
The two goats represent the death and resurrection of Christ. The scapegoat bounding away in relieved, joyful freedom symbolizes the genuine freedom and joy of forgiven sin which we can experience in Christ. It’s clear that human beings are eager for a

scapegoat, we seem wired with a psychological need for one, someone upon whom we can place our sins and thereby feel free from them personally. The scapegoat has been provided for us in Christ, and therefore we shouldn't seek to scapegoat others.

The Hebrew for "scapegoat" is *azazel*, and there has been much misunderstanding of the term. It simply means the removed or separated one, and although the word doesn't occur elsewhere, the idea connects with what we have been reading in the last three chapters of Leviticus, where condemned sinners were to separated or removed from the community. The Lord Jesus was associated with the condemned, and died for them; and yet He is also represented by the goat which ran free into the wilderness in resurrection life. The scapegoat was a goat, and Azazel means 'removal'. It simply spoke of the removal of sin as shown by the goat running free into the desert. The atonement achieved in private by the High Priest was now made visible to all, as they saw the goat disappearing further and further into the distance until it, like their sins, was no longer visible nor on their horizon. In the wilderness journey to the promised land, we likewise run free of sin. As the goat was "let go" into the desert, so Israel had been "let go" from Egypt into the desert, speaking of our release from sin through baptism into the Lord Jesus. This is the truth that the Lord says makes free- freedom from sin, our own sins, our own unforgiveable sins, our fears about them, and freedom to serve Him in response. But the scapegoat was the sin offering and in that sense also represented the Lord Jesus as well as our sins now removed. Perhaps Paul has this in mind when he writes of the Lord on the cross becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) or being "made sin" (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3). He is the place of propitiation, the *hilasterion*, the mercy seat, the lid of the ark where the blood of the day of Atonement was sprinkled; and this is the propitiation, *hilasmos*, for sins (1 Jn. 2:22; 4:1). Exiled from the sanctuary and religious structures of his day by Saul's persecution, David felt he was dwelling beneath the cherubim wings- over that sprinkled blood with the glory of Yahweh around him.

The Jewish apocryphal Book of Enoch was instrumental in forging the Jewish misunderstanding of Satan as a personal being. This book shifts the blame for sin from humanity to a Satan-figure called Azazel, whose name is taken from the scapegoat: "The whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: to him ascribe all sin" (1 Enoch 9:6; 10:8). There is a subtle but significant difference between this and the Biblical record in Gen. 6:11- which states that the earth became corrupt before God because of *human sin*. The Biblical record makes no attempt to pass the blame for this onto any other being- humanity was punished because *they* sinned. It would in any case be surely unethical for God to punish humanity because of what 'Azazel' supposedly did.

But the two goats were in a sense one "for Yahweh" and the other "for Azazel". It could be that there is indeed an allusion to wrong understandings about an 'Azazel' being who supposedly lurked out in the uninhabited desert, the supposed haunt of demons and

evil. The allusion was in order to deconstruct this wrong idea. The real issue was not Azazel; it was human sin which needed atonement for. The real 'Azazel' was not a Satan like being out in the desert. It was human sin, which had now been dealt with. Just as 'Satan' is not a real cosmic being, but is defined in the New Testament as human sin, which has been dealt with and its power negated by the Lord's death on the cross. It was to that death which the day of Atonement pointed ahead to. Hence even the *azazel* goat was offered before Yahweh (:10) before its release- and not offered to any Satan like being.

Lev 16:9 Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for Yahweh, and offer him for a sin offering-
This is the language used in Is. 53:4,6 about the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, upon whom God laid the iniquity of us all. The Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra refers to a tradition that at the age of 33, a man would understand the meaning of this. It can be no coincidence that the Lord Jesus was sacrificed at age 33. The thoughtful Jews would have perceived that He was indeed the sin offering.

Lev 16:10 But the goat on which the lot fell for the scapegoat shall be presented alive before Yahweh to make atonement for him, and then sent away as the scapegoat into the wilderness-

ESV: “But the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel”. Atonement was made "over it"; the sending away free was part of the atonement. Presented alive [Heb. 'stood up'] before Yahweh clearly looks ahead to the Lord's resurrection (Acts 1:3). The description of the believer as a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1) alludes to the scapegoat, the only living sacrifice, which was a type of the risen Lord (Lev. 16:10 LXX = Acts 1:3). As the Lord ran free in His resurrection, bearing away the sins of men, so we who are in Him and preach that salvation can do the same. As Christ bore away our iniquities (Is. 53:11), so “we then that are strong ought to bear the iniquities of the weak” (Rom. 15:1).

The cycle of revenge and paying back has to be resolved in sacrifice- many societies have shown that. I was a few times in far northern Russia, and it was fascinating to hear the traditions of the Chukchi people. In the past, they say, when a big crime was committed and the criminal convicted, an *innocent* person had to be sacrificed. The study of primitive societies reveals this basic human need for a scapegoat. There was a psychological value to the Mosaic rite of the scapegoat (Lev. 16:10). All the sins, all the grudges that called for revenge, were to be placed upon that animal, and it was released into the desert. They could watch it scampering away into the bush. This is how we are to understand the placing of human sin- yes, the sins committed against you this day by

others- upon the Lord as He hung on the cross. And we must remember that "Vengeance is mine [not ours, not the state's], and requital" (Dt. 32:35). That taking of vengeance, that requital, was worked out by God on the cross.

Lev 16:11 Aaron shall present the bull of the sin offering which is for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull of the sin offering which is for himself-
Aaron was a sinful mortal, and had to offer for himself. This has been misread to mean that the Lord Jesus, the great high priest, had to offer as it were for the sin of being human. But I suggest this is a careless reading of the type, driven by a desire to prove a theological point. The New Testament commentary is at Heb. 5:3; 7:27: "And because of it, he is required to offer sacrifices both for his sins and also for the sins of the people". The "weakness" of the high priest included moral weakness, which required him to offer also for his own sins. But the Lord Jesus had none of this. The references to the High Priest are to present the Lord Jesus by way of both similarity and contrast. Thus the way the high priest served standing is contrasted with the way the Lord serves sitting (Heb. 10:11); and the contrast here at this point is that the Lord had no sins to offer for. The Lord indeed was subject to weakness (Heb. 5:2), but without the need to offer sin offerings for his own sins.

Heb. 7:27 must be given its full weight in what it says about the Lord Jesus: "Who needs not to offer up sacrifices daily, like those high priests, first for his own sins and then for those of the people. For this he did once for all, when he offered up himself". "This he did once" is a contrast with how the old High Priest offered ["this"] daily [Jesus did it only "once"]. The reference to "first for his own sins, then for the people's" is as it were in parenthesis, a throw away comment, to indicate again the inferiority of the old High Priests who themselves were sinners and therefore needed to offer for their own sins as well as those of God's people. My own suspicion that Paul was the author of Hebrews is based upon the style of writing we have there which we see in Paul elsewhere- so often, a comment is made in passing like this example of commenting that the old Priests had to offer for their own sins too. This kind of style is typical of Paul, Ephesians and Colossians are full of this kind of thing- making an argument, but throwing in a comment in the midst of it, a kind of aside, which often phases the reader. It is not the day of atonement which is in view here, because the contrast is with the "daily" offerings of the priests. A sincere priest would have offered daily sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. The Lord Jesus didn't need to do this; the parallels with the Levitical priesthood are by way of both contrast and similarity. They stood; He sits. They offered animals, He offered "Himself". But as He offered for "the people" so too did the mortal priests; but He did so once, whereas they did so daily. They offered for their own wins too; He did not. If the Lord in any sense had needed to offer for His own "sins", He would have had to do so daily. But He offered only one offering, for us. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures is the clear emphasis of the entire Biblical revelation.

"This He did" refers to His offering for the people, for us; and not for His own 'sins'. This point is underlined in the next verse, which notes that the priests were morally weak, whereas the Son of God is perfect and shall be forever, unable to sin.

Lev 16:12 He shall take a censer full of coals of fire from off the altar before Yahweh, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil-
Incense represents prayer offered by Christ (Rev. 8:3,4); the way it was taken beyond the veil into the Most Holy Place reflected how prayer, be it the 'mere' words of a woman waiting at a bus stop, enters into Heaven itself. The people were outside confessing their sins; their prayers for forgiveness were represented by this incense. The fire of the altar was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

Lev 16:13 and he shall put the incense on the fire before Yahweh, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the testimony, so that he will not die-
For "the fire", see on :12. Incense smoke in the surrounding religions was supposed to drive away demons; but the image is used to represent prayer and Yahweh's glory (Lev. 16:3,13; Rev. 5:8). And thereby fear of demons was to be replaced by fear of God's holiness and human sin.

Lev 16:14 He shall take some of the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times-
The High Priest sprinkled the blood eastwards, on the mercy seat. He would therefore have had to walk round to God's side of the mercy seat and sprinkle the blood back the way he had come. This would have given the picture of the blood coming out from the presence of God Himself; as if *He* was the sacrifice. Acts 20:28 seems to teach (in the AV) that God purchased the church with *His* own blood. His manifestation in His Son was especially intense.

Lev 16:15 Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with his blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat-

The idea of entering within the veil is clearly in view when Paul speaks of the work of the Lord Jesus resulting in a hope which "enters into that within the veil" (Heb. 6:19; 9:3,7). The typical meaning of this was therefore that finally, all Israel, the true people of God however defined, would enter within the veil, thanks to the blood of the ultimate sin offering. Those identified with the blood would, like the blood, enter within the veil, and remain there in fellowship with God, in His very presence. We show that identity with the Lord's blood through baptism, the breaking of bread and a life lived in Him.

Paul surely has the Day of Atonement in mind when he writes of the blood set forth on the mercy seat, the lid of the ark, which was done annually at the Day of Atonement: "[We] are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God set forth to be a propitiation [mercy seat], through faith in his blood, to show His righteousness in the passing over of the sins done previously, in the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:24,25). Israel's faith in the sprinkled blood [which they themselves never saw] was faith that their past sins had been forgiven. We too never saw the physical blood of the Lord, but we believe likewise that our past is now passed. The way God "set forth" the Lord's blood invites us to see God Himself working on the Day of Atonement as the priest for us, using the blood of His Son.

The implication of Lev. 16:14,15 is that the High Priest went beyond the veil twice during this ritual- once to atone for his own sins, and once for the sins of the people. But Heb. 9:12 labours that the Lord did this only once, and thus entered Heaven itself- for *us*, for our sins. Because the point of contrast is that He had no personal sins to atone for. So the idea that the Lord offered for Himself and then for us is actually the opposite of what Heb. 9:12 is teaching. The "type" was by way of contrast and not similarity. Those who have failed to appreciate this have gone further after this wrong turning, and ended up constructing theories of 'atonement for human nature' which are foreign to the scriptures.

Lev 16:16 and he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, even all their sins; and so he shall do for the Tent of Meeting that is situated amongst them, in the midst of their uncleanness-

Clearly the atonement was not made for the inanimate structure of the Holy Place. Rather was it for the sins of Israel. The idea would be that nobody is perfectly pure, and therefore the priests had indeed entered the Holy Place whilst impure; and this was being atoned for. The wonder was that God met with sinful man "in the midst of the uncleanness"- and this was to be recognized through these rituals.

Lev 16:17 No one shall be in the Tent of Meeting when he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, and has made atonement for himself and for his

household, and for all the assembly of Israel-
This means no priest was allowed into the holy place nor the tabernacle. This atonement was not to be achieved by the priesthood but by the High Priest alone with the blood- all looking forward to the Lord's work. Apart from the release of the live goat, the work of the High Priest was done unobserved by anyone else, as it were in secret. Just as the inner struggles of the Lord in achieving our atonement are to some extent hidden from us; we experience and witness only the atonement and freedom achieved. The people saw only the result of it. They did nothing really, and the Day of Atonement differed from the other feasts and sacrifices in that the people did nothing- apart from fast and repent. Just as we can "do" nothing for our own atonement. Any confession of personal sin was done in their heart- there was no mechanism whereby they told the High Priest their specific sins, and he then placed them somehow on the goat. The people trusted in the work of the High Priest and waited for him to emerge and pronounce that the atonement was indeed achieved. He has in one sense already appeared in the resurrection of the Lord, and in another sense we await His appearing "without sin unto salvation". This means that His second coming equates with the appearance of the High Priest to pronounce forgiveness and the release of the goat. His work of atonement is therefore going on also right now, in Heaven, for our sakes- with us largely ignorant of what He is doing invisible to our eyes. But what He is doing there now is what in essence He did on the cross, again effectively invisible to human eyes. The proclamation of forgiveness and release of the goat then equates with the great commission to spread the news of it to everyone.

This perhaps helps us to understand the ultimate loneliness of the Lord Jesus in making His offering. These rituals have been misunderstood, in my opinion, to mean that the Lord Jesus offered for Himself, for His family [the believers] and for the world. That is indeed what the mortal, sinful High Priest did, but the type works by way of difference rather than exact correspondence. The New Testament therefore emphasizes that the Lord Jesus, unlike the Mosaic High Priests, offered only *one* sacrifice to achieve atonement- and that was "for us" (Heb. 10:14). The idea that the Lord atoned for the world as well as "for us" would imply some kind of universal salvation, of which the Bible is silent. Christ died for our sins, the sins of His people- that is the Biblical emphasis. See on :11.

The Lord Jesus in Hebrews 9 is presented as the fulfilment of what was typed and foreshadowed in the day of Atonement rituals. But the majority of the 'fulfilment' was in the dissimilarity rather than the similarity. The High Priest entered and offered many times, the Lord only once; He sits mediating, the High Priest stands; the High Priest entered with the blood of another, but the Lord with His own blood. One other such point is that the Day of Atonement achieved "atonement" and "cleansing from iniquity", the Hebrew word meaning far more than 'covering' but also being used about appeasement of anger [e.g. of Esau's anger with Jacob being appeased]. Yes, God's

wrath was turned away by the blood representing His Son's future sacrifice. But this is contrasted with the way the Lord's work achieved "eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). Not simply turning away of Divine wrath and purification from our dirt, but a wonderful and eternal redemption into the eternity of God's Kingdom, eternal in that there is no further let alone annual facing of our sin.

Lev 16:18 He shall go out to the altar that is before Yahweh and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the bull's blood, and some of the goat's blood, and put it around it, on the horns of the altar-
The New Testament observes that the blood of this bull and goat could not take away sins- even though the live goat apparently carried the sins away into the wilderness. If sin had really been carried away, there would have been no need for this annual day of atonement ceremony (Heb. 10:3,4). The conclusion is therefore drawn that God only operated this system of atonement on the basis that the blood of the sacrifices pointed forward to the blood of Christ, and on the basis of His faith and knowledge that Christ would make the perfect sacrifice, God accepted the animal blood on the basis that it was symbolic of Christ's blood.

Verse 17 has spoken of the High Priest's exit into the court, so the altar in view is not the altar of incense but the altar of burnt offering.

Lev 16:19 He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and make it holy from the uncleanness of the children of Israel-
Inanimate objects didn't need atonement. The cleansing was a recognition of the fact that the Israelites were unclean morally, and they had approached the altar and tabernacle furniture only technically clean when they were unclean morally.

Lev 16:20 When he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, he shall present the live goat-
As explained on :19, this is not to imply that the furniture itself was somehow morally unclean; this atonement was because of "the uncleanness of the children of Israel" who had approached into God's presence whilst still sinners.

Lev 16:21 Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them on the head of the goat, and shall send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness to do this-
We note "both his hands", whereas in all the other purification offerings in Lev. 3 and 4,

only one hand was laid upon the sacrifice. This heightens the sense of total identity with the live goat, who would now run free, speaking of the Lord's resurrection.

All Israel's "transgressions" were forgiven by the day of Atonement, or we could instead say that the fact they had been forgiven them by grace already was celebrated then. The word "transgressions" in the Day of Atonement ritual in Lev. 16:21 etc. translates *pehshah*, a rather uncommon word in the Mosaic law. We read in Ex. 23:21 that Israel should not rebel against their guardian Angel because He would not pardon their *pehshah* (Ex. 23:21), even though God was capable of forgiving *pehshah* (Ex. 34:7 "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving... transgression"). That capability was due to His extreme grace, and this was celebrated by the forgiveness of transgression achieved and memorialized on the day of atonement. The word is often used by David about his sin with Bathsheba, which was the presumptuous sin for which there was no forgiveness under the Mosaic rituals. But such transgression was dealt with by the Day of Atonement just as it was by the grace shown to David (Ps. 25:7; 32:1,5; 39:8; 51:1,3). David defines "the sin of presumption" as "the great transgression" (Ps. 19:13), and yet from such apparently unforgiveable "transgression" the blood of the day of Atonement could cleanse; or celebrate that the impossible to forgive had actually been forgiven. No wonder the joyful feast of tabernacles followed right after Yom Kippur. The same word is used in Is. 53:5,8 of how the Lord's death was "for our transgressions... for the transgressions of My people was He stricken". Thus when the modified day of Atonement was kept in Num. 29 before Israel entered Canaan and after their shameless transgression with Midian, they were being reminded that all their transgressions / rebellions had been forgiven on account of the Atonement blood- which was looking forward to that of the Lord who died for the transgressions of His people.

Time and again, the difference between Moses' account of history and the surrounding myths is seen in the fact that Moses emphasizes human sin. There was a common ancient Near East belief in Azazel as a desert demon who looked like a goat. Perhaps Moses wished to address this idea when he called the scapegoat of the day of Atonement ritual "Azazel" and sent the goat into the desert (Lev. 16:21)- as if to say 'Now for you, Israel, no belief in that Azazel- the Azazel for us is simply a literal goat, bearing our sins in symbol, which we let loose into the desert'. Again and again, Moses sought to refocus his people on the practical, the literal, the concrete, and away from the myths which surrounded them. And yet he does this by alluding to those myths, so as to alert Israel to the fact that the new, inspired record which he was writing was fully aware of the myths God's people were being assailed with.

Praise is related to the realization that sin has been forgiven. Hezekiah's praise on realizing God's mercy to him was expressed in a desire to walk in quiet fellowship with God for the rest of his life. There is no suggestion that praise was some kind of ecstatic exuberance of emotion. The normal Hebrew word translated "praise" is also translated

"confess" in the context of confessing sin (Lev. 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num. 5:7). Contrition of heart because of appreciating our own failures is therefore one way of praising Yahweh's Name. So often does the word "praise" occur in the context of praising the *Name* of Yahweh, or the praising of "the God of Israel", i.e. Yahweh.

Lev 16:22 The goat shall carry all their iniquities on himself to a solitary land, and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness-
Is. 53:8 alludes here in saying that on the cross, the Lord Jesus was cut off from the land of the living. The experience of both goats was found in His sacrifice. "Solitary land" is Heb. 'a land cut off', 'a land not inhabited,' as A.V., or a land from which return was cut off. Our sins are sent to a land of no return. Atonement means they will never return to our account. Just as we may take comfort in this with regard to our own sins, we are to understand that God treats the sins of our brethren the same way. And we therefore are not to keep grinding away about them. There are many references to the Day of Atonement in Is. 53: "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all... he shall bear their iniquities... he bore the sin of many", interpreted by Peter in 1 Pet. 2:24 as "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree". But the living goat was a symbol of both the Lord, and us. For we are to be and feel a "living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1). And the scapegoat was the only sacrifice which was an "offering" but stayed alive. Possibly Rom. 6:13 likewise alludes to the 'presentation' of the live goat before Yahweh (Lev. 16:10), and applies it to all baptized into the Lord Jesus: "No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life"; indeed we are "alive to God" (Rom. 6:10). "Let us go forth with Him without the camp" (Heb. 13:12) may also be an allusion.

The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the bird and scapegoat into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins- all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

"All their iniquities" needs some reflection. All unforgiven sin, all undealt with issues, every kind of sin, including apparently unforgiveable rebellion and presumption, all was now dealt with. Including we can assume those sins for which there was no ritual prescribed, and for sins of presumption. This was exactly the situation of Israel that seventh month, as they prepared to enter the Kingdom by grace alone, despite all their presumptuous sins. The RSV translation suggests that atonement was made upon the goat so that it may then be sent into the wilderness: "But the goat on which the lot fell

for Azazel shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel". This of course admirably fits with the Lord's work- it was the atonement achieved which enabled both He and His Israel to be set free, free in the glorious liberty of God's dear children. And thinking it through, if this translation is correct, the atonement was complete before the goat was released. Confession and placing the sins on the goat was enough for the freedom to be experienced, on the basis of the blood and death of the sin offering goat. And yet after this was done, there had to be the burnt offering of :24- for faith without works is dead. On the basis of what the goat rituals had achieved, there had to be dedication to Yahweh- which is what the burnt offering spoke of. Another obvious response to it was that the years of Jubilee began on the day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27; 25:9). Grace was to be shown to others because of the grace received.

The wages of sin is death, but Israel had not died for their sins. So we must not think that they were unforgiven until the day of Atonement, and then the blood magically made the sins of no account. As Israel stood there, they were forgiven. They were not dead. The atonement ritual was therefore a reminder to them that they had been saved by grace, on account of the blood and the work of the High Priest. The enquiring mind would have perceived that they had not been slain because of something or someone which that blood and High Priest represented- the future Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

John's Gospel has several Day of Atonement allusions, starting with "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn. 1:29). The sin of the Jewish world was "taken away" by the scapegoat bearing that sin off into the desert. It seems to me that it is the "sin bearing" of the Day of Atonement, rather than only the Passover lamb, which is in view. But in a kaleidoscope of images, the Passover *lamb* has the image of the scape*goat* superimposed upon it. Jn. 17 has the Lord praying that He might be sanctified so that He might sanctify "them", His people- very much the spirit of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

Lev 16:23 Aaron shall come into the Tent of Meeting, and shall take off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there-

The Lord was buried in linen garments after His death; so as noted on :11, the typical meaning of these things is often by way of contrast rather than equivalent similarity.

Lev 16:24 Then he shall bathe himself in water in a holy place, and put on his garments, and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people-

As discussed on :11, the Lord Jesus didn't need to do this; the parallels with the Levitical priesthood are by way of both contrast and similarity. They stood; He sits. They offered

animals, He offered "Himself". But as He offered for "the people" so too did the mortal priests; but He did so once, whereas they did so daily. They offered for their own sins too; He did not. If the Lord in any sense had needed to offer for His own "sins", He would have had to do so daily. But He offered only one offering, for us. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures is the clear emphasis of the entire Biblical revelation.

Lev 16:25 The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar-
Some manuscripts have :23 after this verse :25. The altar in view is that of burnt offering and not the incense offering (Ex. 30:9). There is special emphasis upon the fat, which was perceived as the best part of the animal, and the most covered inward parts. After recognizing our sin, we must be prepared to offer these to God. David understood the spirit of the trespass offering when after his sin with Bathsheba he offered to God his inward parts (Ps. 51:6). Elsewhere the idea is as in LXX "the fact [even] the fat tail" (as Lev. 3:9). There were species of sheep with a large fatty tail, which was considered in their culture to be a great delicacy. We see here how the law of Moses was limited in application to an immediate context, and was simply not intended to be a global law for all time. But the take away lesson is that we are to give to God whatever is for us, in our culture and worldview, the best and most desirous.

Lev 16:26 He who lets the goat go for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp-
Throughout the rituals there is the idea that those involved in making this atonement were themselves "compassed with infirmity" (Heb. 5:2). The thoughtful Israelite would have perceived that there was something lacking in all this; sinners were making atonement for sinners. There was thereby presented the need and longing for a righteous priest who was morally sinless although able to understand and relate to the weakness of men. And that need was met in the Lord Jesus.

Lev 16:27 The bull for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried forth outside the camp; and they shall burn their skins, their flesh, and their dung with fire-
The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorosa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9).

"Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 16:28 He who burns them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp-
As discussed on :26, in all these rituals there is the idea that those involved in making this atonement were themselves unclean. The thoughtful Israelite would have perceived that there was something lacking in all this; sinners were making atonement for sinners. And thus the desire was prepared for the perfect priest, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 16:29 It shall be a statute to you forever: in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and shall do no kind of work, the native-born, or the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you-
This was to help them understand that no works could produce atonement. It was all of grace. "Afflict your souls" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing.

Lev 16:30 for on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before Yahweh-
Every kind of sin was atoned for (:21). Sins of ignorance, of omission rather than commission, were all met in this atonement. And likewise even moreso with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. There should therefore never now be any sense that some sins are dealt with, but others aren't.

The Hebrew here and especially in Lev. 23:28 definitely reads as if it is the day of atonement which made atonement. This verse has been clung on to by Judaism at times when the temple was not standing and the sacrifices associated with the day of atonement were not offered. Their argument was and is that it is the day of atonement which makes atonement, because the atonement is from God's sovereign grace. And indeed there is some truth in this. For it was ever impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, and Paul's argument in Hebrews is based upon the implications of the day of Atonement. It indeed looks ahead to another and more ultimate atonement, by God's grace through His pronouncement. And that pronouncement was made regardless of the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices; it was made over the blood of His crucified Son.

Lev 16:31 It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict your souls; it is a statute forever-
They were to "do no kind of work" (:29). Because this was the day of atonement (:30). The point was that *God* was providing atonement by His grace and on account of the blood which represented Christ's blood- and not on the basis of our works.

Lev 16:32 The priest who is anointed and who is consecrated to be priest in his father's place shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments-
The language here is pregnant with allusion to the future Lord Jesus, the "Christ" or anointed priest, who operated in the name and place of His Father, God Himself.

Lev 16:33 Then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary; and he shall make atonement for the Tent of Meeting and for the altar; and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly-
It is clarified in :19 that this cleansing of the furniture was to make them "holy from the uncleanness of the children of Israel". Inanimate objects didn't need atonement. The cleansing was a recognition of the fact that the Israelites were unclean morally, and they had approached the altar and tabernacle furniture only technically clean when they were unclean morally.

Lev 16:34 This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel once in the year because of all their sins. It was done as Yahweh commanded Moses-
The Sabbath is described as a perpetual, eternal ordinance between God and His people (Ex. 31:16). Yet in the New Testament we read that the Old Covenant has been done away; and the Old Covenant clearly included the ten commandments (Dt. 4:13), one of which was concerning the Sabbath. For this reason the New Testament is at pains to explain that Sabbath keeping is not now required of God's people (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-3). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting covenant" evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase

“everlasting covenant” is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David’s throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated “eternal”, “perpetual”, “everlasting” in the Old Testament? James Strong defines olahm as literally meaning “the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity”. It was God’s purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn’t grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of “practically eternity”. For all of us, the specter of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God’s eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 17

Lev 17:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
These regulations which follow reflect the concept of sacred space which was central to the old covenant. Stephen's speech in Acts 7 demonstrates how even within the Old Testament, there were many hints that God operated well beyond the confines of this concept. And finally all notions of sacred space were collapsed beneath the wonderful idea that God dwells in the hearts of those who are His.

Lev 17:2 Speak to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded-
As discussed on :3,5, the commandment of Yahweh in this passage was limited to Israel in the wilderness. Because later, sacrifice to Yahweh was acceptably offered by men like Gideon, Manoah, David and Samuel in places other than the sanctuary. Likewise the command that Gentiles could not eat Passover was only true for the first Passover, and later legislation allowed them to eat it. A failure to appreciate this has led to many mistaken turns in Biblical exposition; thus Adventists think that any law of Yahweh is eternal, whereas clearly the laws within 'the law of Moses' were often time and place limited. And 'closed table' enthusiasts build an argument on the laws surrounding the first Passover instead of realizing that those laws were only for a limited place and time.

Lev 17:3 Whatever man there is of the house of Israel, who kills a bull, or lamb, or goat, in the camp, or who kills it outside the camp-
This legislation was clearly only intended for Israel during the wilderness years. For "the

camp" no longer existed once the land had been settled. It could be argued that the animals listed are not simply sacrifices, but refer to any animal. In this case, it was not God's intention that the people should eat animal meat during the wilderness journey; the manna was intended to be all sufficient. In this case they would have returned to the situation after creation and before the flood, when animal meat was not eaten. It was therefore an attempt to help Israel rise above the effects of the flood and to return towards Eden, as they were on their way to the promised land, which was presented as an Eden to some extent restored.

Lev 17:4 and hasn't brought it to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to offer it as an offering to Yahweh before the tabernacle of Yahweh: blood shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people-
The animal represented the offerer, and therefore to slay a sacrificial animal was as if a person had been slain. Hence the language of bloodshed. The Law foresaw that there would be the tendency to worship God away from the rest of the congregation. Those who did so were condemned in the strongest terms: their sacrifice of an animal was seen as the murder of their brother, whereas they would have seen it as an expression of their righteousness. "He that kills an ox is as if he slew a man" (Is. 66:3) refers back to this, making it parallel with idolatry and proudly refusing to let God's word dwell in the heart.

Lev 17:5 This is to the end that the children of Israel may bring to Yahweh their sacrifices which they sacrifice in the open field, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to the priest, and sacrifice them for sacrifices of peace offerings to Yahweh-
This was to help the Israelites not to follow the example of the Egyptians and desert dwellers through whom they travelled, who offered religious sacrifices to satyrs and other supposed demons of the desert (:7). Sacrifice was only to be offered at the tent of meeting. This was later impractical when Israel were no longer just dwelling around the tent of meeting; so this law was temporary. See on :2.

Lev 17:6 The priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of Yahweh at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain

upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

And burn the fat for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 17:7 They shall no more sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat idols-
See on :5. LXX calls the idols "vanities". Do we feel that life is just pointless, an endless round of childcare, working all day doing in essence the same job for 30 years, a trudging through an endless tunnel until our mortality catches up on us? We were redeemed by the precious blood of Christ from the "vain way of life handed down from the fathers" (1 Pet. 1:18), from the frustration of this present life . The word used for "vain" is that used by the LXX for the 'vanity' of life as described in Ecclesiastes, and for idol worship in Lev. 17:7 and Jer. 8:19. We have been redeemed from it all! Not for us the life of endlessly chasing the rainbow's end, slavishly worshipping the idols of ever bigger homes, smarter technology...we were redeemed from the vanity of life "under the sun" by the precious blood of Christ. We were bought out of this slavery, even if in the flesh we go through its motions.

After which they play the prostitute. This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations'-
Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous

for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

Lev 17:8 You shall say to them, 'Any man there is of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice-
Dt. 12:20,21 says that when God enlarged the land, this law of only eating at the sanctuary was to be changed. There was never any signal from God that He had now enlarged the land and therefore this change of the law was allowed. We note that the law of Moses was flexible and open to change. That it should later be abrogated is therefore no surprise. The argument that each Mosaic law was eternal is therefore lacking in careful attention to the text of the law itself.

Lev 17:9 and doesn't bring it to the door of the Tent of Meeting to sacrifice it to Yahweh; that man shall be cut off from his people-
Sacrifice couldn't be offered anywhere, although see on :8. It wasn't the case that the fact someone had a desire to do something for God thereby made them acceptable to Him. He had to be approached in the way He stipulated; and Jesus said "I am the door" (Jn. 10:9). It's not therefore true that all spiritual roads lead to the same place. We can only come to God in His way. Later we read that God did accept sacrifice in local sanctuaries; we think of acceptable offerings made in other places, by Gideon, Manoah, David and others. We see reflected here God's willingness to accept less than ideal sacrifices, so desirous is He of relationship with His people.

Lev 17:10 Any man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who eats any kind of blood, I will set my face against that soul who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people-
The peoples' behaviour in 1 Sam. 14:32 is portrayed as breaking every principle of the commands here about eating blood in Lev. 17:10-14. They ate blood, and also killed calves and mothers on the same day (disobeying Lev. 22:28). All because they were more obedient to their oath to Saul not to eat anything until sundown, rather than to God's covenant. For all this, they were to have God against them and be cut off from God's people. The essence of this has been seen so many times in church history. An insistence upon petty legalism leads people to commit major sin. They are more obedient to the party line and the barked orders of their leadership, than to God. And the legalistic demands of their elders lead them to make utter shipwreck of their faith, breaking the most elemental principles of their covenant with God. Once sundown came and they were free from the oath to Saul, the people were totally disobedient to the covenant.

Blood represents life; to take life to ourselves rather than recognize it is God's results in us losing our lives (:14). Just as simply as the blood was to be given to God, so we are to give our lives to God. To take the blood to themselves is in fact spoken of as being as bad as murder (:4). This seems extreme language, but it underlines how important to God is this principle- that life is His and we are to give it to Him rather than live or take it to ourselves.

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life'-

The symbolism of blood in the Bible is difficult. At times it seems to mean simply 'life', at others, it appears to be used for 'death'. We are saved by the blood of Christ- His life, outgiven in death, and His resurrection life lives in us today through the Spirit. God did not demand the death of animals because He simply is pleased by death. What He wants from us is our lives, not that we accept Christ and kill ourselves. 1 Cor. 10 speaks of how we have fellowship with the blood of Christ through the memorial drinking of wine, but in practice this surely refers to our physical symbolism of how we are sharing in His life; His life becomes ours. Life is not ours to take, we are to give it to God- that's the whole idea of the repeated Old Testament emphasis upon not drinking blood but pouring it out to God. The Lord Jesus alludes to all this by urging us to drink *His* blood, *His* life- the life we live in the flesh we are to live by, or 'on account of', Jesus (Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 4:11).

When the psalmist says, 'What profit is there in my blood?' he means, 'What profit is there in my death?' (Ps. 30:9). The idiom of 'blood upon him' means that a person bears the guilt for another's death. "His blood be on us" (Mt. 27:25) clearly means they accepted guilt for the death of Jesus. Babylon is a woman "drunken with the blood of the saints"- guilty of their death (Rev. 17:6; 18:24). "Innocent blood" is brought upon a person by allowing the death of an innocent person (Jer. 26:15 RV). The blood of the innocent cries out to God- in the sense that their *death* cries out to Him for vengeance (Gen. 4:10). The Leviticus passages state that "the life is in the blood", meaning that once the life is taken out of a person or animal, then they are dead [this is an oblique evidence against the notion of an 'immortal soul']. In this sense, blood refers to death as well as life. We have no right to shed blood because all life is God's; and likewise we have no right to think that our life is our own. It is God's. Even animal life was seen as belonging to God- the blood of animals had to be poured out to Him in acknowledgment of this. Our thanks to God for meat is gratitude that He has allowed us to kill and eat animals, to take their lives. "The blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20) clearly means the death of the cross, rather than the blood of Jesus which was smeared on the cross as opposed to His blood generally.

The command not to murder has as its basis the fact that human life is not for us to use as we will (Ex. 20:13; Lev. 17:11; Gen. 9:6). It is God's life and is His- and this applies to our view of others lives as well as our own. Others, therefore, are not for us to use as we will. Gentleness and sensitivity to the life of others, in family life, the workplace, on the road... is therefore an outcome of our belief that the 'other' person likewise has been created by God and has life from Him. To drive in an unkind way, to act in a thoughtless way to others detriment, is therefore the same basic error as taking human life in murder.

Lev 17:12 Therefore I have said to the children of Israel, No person among you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger who lives as a foreigner among you eat blood-
The blood was understood as representing life (Dt. 12:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves. The Lord Jesus specifically alluded to the major Jewish principle of not eating blood- when He taught that unless His blood was drunk, then they had no life in them. This alludes to another reason for not eating blood, given in Lev. 17:11: "I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life". The blood looked ahead to the blood which God would give which would make atonement. The blood of animals couldn't take away sins (Heb. 10:4). So the blood only 'made atonement' because it pointed forward to that of the Lord Jesus. The whole structure of the laws about blood required some blood of atonement which had to be shed in future, a blood sacrifice of a representative human who was not an animal. That blood was to be given to God, and not to man. Hence the stress upon not eating blood.

Lev 17:13 Whatever man there is of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners among them, who takes in hunting any animal or bird that may be eaten; he shall pour out its blood, and cover it with dust-
Burying the life, as it were. In baptism, we give our lives to God and figuratively die and are buried with Christ (Rom. 6:1-10). We are to live life in this spirit that life is not ours but to be given to God. This frees us from all the manic human concern to live life to the full for ourselves. We no longer have this concern if we continually accept the principle that life is not ours, but God's.

Lev 17:14 For as to the life of all flesh, its blood is its life; therefore I said to the children of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any kind of flesh; for the life of all flesh is its blood-
It is very often stated in the New Testament that our justification and salvation is

through the blood of Jesus (e.g. 1 John 1:7; Rev. 5:9; 12:11; Rom. 5:9). To appreciate the significance of Christ's blood, we must understand that it is a Biblical principle that "the life of every creature is its blood" (Lev. 17:14 NIV). Without blood a body cannot live; it is therefore symbolic of life. This explains the aptness of Christ's words, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53). Sin results in death (Rom. 6:23),i.e. a pouring out of the blood, which carries the life. For this reason the Israelites were expected to pour out blood each time they sinned, to remind them that sin resulted in death. "According to the law (of Moses) almost all things are purged (cleansed) with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission (forgiveness)" (Heb. 9:22). Because of this, Adam and Eve's covering of themselves with fig leaves was unacceptable; instead, God killed a lamb to provide skins to cover their sin (Gen. 3:7,21). Similarly, Abel's sacrifice of animals was accepted rather than Cain's offering of vegetables, because he appreciated this principle that without shedding blood there could be no forgiveness and acceptable approach to God (Gen. 4:3-5). Not only did he appreciate it, he *had faith* in that blood, and on this basis God accepted his offering (Heb. 11:4). These incidents point forward to the supreme importance of the blood of Christ.

Whoever eats it shall be cut off-
Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from

among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Lev 17:15 Every person that eats what dies of itself, or that which is torn by animals, whether he is native-born or a foreigner, he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the evening: then he shall be clean-
The more conscious was the association with uncleanness, the greater was the effort which made to be made to achieve cleansing. Thus if someone knowingly carried a carcass, they had to was their clothes in addition to being unclean. And it's the same principle here. There is definitely a principle connection between knowledge and responsibility, and conscious defilement requires greater cleansing.

Lev 17:16 But if he doesn't wash them, nor bathe his flesh, then he shall bear his iniquity-
The Lord Jesus Christ knew from Isaiah 53 that He was to bear Israel's sins, that the judgments for their sins were to fall upon Him. Israel 'bore their iniquities' by being condemned for them (Num. 14:34,35; Lev. 5:17; 20:17); to be a sin bearer was therefore to be one condemned. To die in punishment for your sin was to bear you sin. There is a difference between sin, and sin being laid upon a person. Num. 12:11 brings this out: "Lay not the sin upon us... wherein we have sinned". The idea of sin being laid upon a person therefore refers to condemnation for sin. Our sin being laid upon Jesus therefore means that He was treated *as if* He were a condemned sinner. He briefly endured within Him the torment of soul which the condemned will feel.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 18

Lev 18:1 Yahweh said to Moses-
So far in Leviticus the text has dealt with uncleanness and sin in an abstract sense. Now Lev. 18-20 exemplify this by talking of sin in more concrete, actual terms.

Lev 18:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, 'I am Yahweh your God-
The following commandments relate to matters of intimate relationships. If Yahweh is our God, then His commandments and principles extent to every part of our lives, especially the most personal and intimate.

Lev 18:3 You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived; and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you; neither shall you walk according to their statutes-
The contrast is presented between the word of God and that of man (:4). And this is the

abiding conflict in our lives. The chapter will go on to outlaw various immoral relationships and sexual bonding. But these are all prefaced by this commandment not to do according to the laws of the Gentiles. These outlawed sexual behaviours were therefore part of the laws of the various fertility cults. These things were done in the belief they would thereby please the gods and result in abundant harvests. And the idea was the more attractive because it appealed to the lust of the flesh.

Lev 18:4 You shall do My ordinances, and you shall keep My statutes, and walk in them: I am Yahweh your God-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Lev 18:5 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances; which if a man does, he shall live in them: I am Yahweh-

Rom. 7:10 “unto life” presumably implies that perfect keeping of the law would have resulted in a person living the life of God, the kind of life which will be lived in the eternal life (which might also be implied in Lev. 18:5 cp. Rom. 10:5; Ps. 19:7-10; Ez. 20:11; Lk. 20:28). Death for such a person would therefore be necessary because of their relation with Adam, but would in another sense be unjust, in that they had not sinned. The perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus therefore required His resurrection. His eternal life wasn’t given to Him by grace, but He was entitled to it by obedience. He had no pre-existent eternal life; He was given eternal life because of His obedience. And His life is counted to us who are “in Him” by grace. See on Rom. 7:12.

"If a man does, he shall live in them" is quoted in Gal. 3:12 to prove that life with God was possible by complete obedience to the Law of Moses. The Law could not give life in practice only in that people broke it (Gal. 3:21). Paul’s point in Galatians is that eternal life therefore cannot be given on the basis of doing the Law- because we all break it. But Jesus completely kept the Law, and therefore deserved to have eternal life; but He died

for us. Because of His perfect obedience to it, it wasn't therefore possible for Him to remain dead, He had to be raised from the dead (Acts 2:24). The principle that life was possible for those who lived in perfect obedience to the Law would have driven every humble, sensitive, Godly minded person to wonder how he or she could attain to eternal life; they would've so wished to find a person who was completely obedient to the Law whose righteousness could as it were be counted to them. In this sense, the Law was a household servant which led people to perceive their need for Christ (Gal. 3:24).

The life of serious obedience will lead to more obedience. Likewise the man who is obedient to God's commands will live in them, i.e. they will become an integral part of his way of life (Lev. 18:5; Neh. 9:29; Ez. 20:13,21 etc.). The further we go in God's way, the clearer and more obvious it all becomes, and the fewer agonies we face over decisions, as perhaps we did in our early days of believing. The way of wisdom is "plain to him that understands" (Prov. 8:9). Some seek for wisdom but can never find it; for others, "knowledge is easy unto him that understands" (Prov. 14:6).

Lev 18:6 None of you shall approach anyone who are his close relatives, to uncover their nakedness: I am Yahweh-
Who God is becomes the motive for obedience; our core desire to be like Him, rather than a legalistic, literalistic desire to keep commandments, is what will help us in practice to be like Him.

Lev 18:7 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, nor the nakedness of your mother: she is your mother. You shall not uncover her nakedness-
Uncovering nakedness alludes to the result of the first sin in Eden. The idea therefore is not that it is a sin to simply see a parent naked. Rather is it that such sins are sins because you are leading your sexual partner into sin and they will receive the same judgment as Adam and Eve- their nakedness will be uncovered. And so the Lord Jesus likewise reasons that the problem with sexual sin is that it leads other parties into sin (Mt. 5:32).

Lev 18:8 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife: it is your father's nakedness-
In a polygamous society, this is not the same as "your mother", which has been addressed in :7. We learned in :3 that this kind of thing happened amongst the Gentiles, but was not to happen amongst God's people. Paul makes some kind of allusion to this by complaining that this was happening in the church at Corinth, but it didn't happen amongst the Gentiles (1 Cor. 5:1). His idea may be that there had been some moral progression amongst the Gentiles in this area- but sadly not amongst God's people.

Lev 18:9 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home, or born abroad-
These laws teach that nakedness should only be uncovered before your wife or husband. Uncovering nakedness is an idiom for the sexual act. The allusion is to Adam and Eve having their nakedness uncovered; we have to accept the situation we are in as a result of the curse, rather than having sexual relations with who we like, as if uncovering nakedness is nothing shameful. Our hope is for the curse put on us in Eden to be lifted at Christ's return; we can't lift it in this life, as our own ever insistent mortality reminds us.

Lev 18:10 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter, or of your daughter's daughter, even their nakedness: for theirs is your own nakedness-
The idea is that such sexual sin is effectively a sin against ourselves, a shaming of self. Paul sees this as an abiding principle, when he warns the Corinthian Christians to quit using temple prostitutes because they were thereby sinning against their own bodies (1 Cor. 6:18). Sin is its own judgment, and to be made naked is the language of the shame of condemnation (Rev. 16:15). By being naked with inappropriate partners, the sinner was effectively living out their own condemnation. Sin is its own judgment, the condemned are essentially self condemned, and in this sense judgment day is now.

Lev 18:11 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, conceived by your father, since she is your sister-
It is no mere coincidence that so many of these forbidden relationships were seen in the patriarchal family. Abraham and Sarah were half brother and sister. So we see that Israel were being reminded that their whole national basis was rooted in moral weakness from the start. They were God's people by grace alone.

Lev 18:12 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister: she is your father's near kinswoman-
We note that Moses' father Amram had married his father's sister (Ex. 6:20). It could be that uncovering the nakedness therefore refers specifically to perversions practiced in the name of idolatry, which is the context here. Or the idea may be that the founding fathers of Israel broke these very principles, showing how the whole nation was built upon Divine grace rather than obedience.

Lev 18:13 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister: for she is your mother's near kinswoman-
These awful things listed here were clearly real temptations for Israel; for they are

repeated in the list of what Judah actually did in their idol worship (Ez. 22:11).

Lev 18:14 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, you shall not approach his wife: she is your aunt-
We note the distinction between uncovering nakedness and 'approaching' the woman. The word for "approach" is the standard word used in Leviticus, and very often, for 'offering' in a religious sense. This confirms that what is in view here is illicit sexual activity performed as part of idol cult worship.

Lev 18:15 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law: she is your son's wife. You shall not uncover her nakedness-
This was exactly what Judah did (Gen. 38:11,16,24). The founding fathers of Israel broke these very principles, showing how the whole nation was built upon Divine grace rather than obedience.

Uncovering nakedness was what would happen to Israel in the shame of their condemnation at the hands of their one time lovers (Is. 47:3; Ez. 16:36,37; 23:10). But this was because they had themselves inappropriately revealed their nakedness to those lovers when they were still lovers (Ez. 22:10; 23:18). Sin is therefore its own judgment. In this sense it is man who condemns himself, rather than being condemned by the Lord Jesus (Jn. 8:15).

Lev 18:16 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife: it is your brother's nakedness-
Herod was condemned by John the Baptist for doing this (Mt. 14:3). This raises the issue as to whether we have a duty to point out to people in the world that they are living in sin. Although it could be argued that Herod claimed to be some kind of Jew, and therefore was under these laws. The laws of Levirate marriage allowed such marriage (Dt. 25:5), so it seems to me that uncovering nakedness doesn't refer to marriage but to illicit sexual activity, probably in the context of idol worship.

Lev 18:17 You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter. You shall not take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness: they are near kinswomen: it is wickedness-
David took the wives of Saul and also Saul's daughter- and his breaking of the Law in this didn't lead to happiness, even though he remained God's man. But I suggest that it is not marriage which is in view here by 'uncovering the nakedness'. Rather is it some sexual ritual involving sleeping with a mother and her daughter at the same time as part

of idol worship. Am. 2:7 condemns a man and his son for sleeping with the same girl, again in the context of idolatry.

Lev 18:18 You shall not marry your wife's sister, to be a rival, to uncover her nakedness, while her sister is yet alive-

Jacob broke this principle by taking Rachel and Leah, and his sad family life afterwards was recorded as a testimony to how if we break God's principles, we may remain His people as Jacob did, but we will suffer the consequences. Many aspects of the Mosaic Law were already in place before it was pronounced to Moses; the prohibition on marrying a second wife who was the sister of the first wife could well have been known among God's people in Jacob's time, seeing that it was a precept based on the principles of Eden (Lev. 18:17,18). "It is wickedness" was God's comment to Moses, and there is no reason to think that His essential moral judgment on this kind of thing has ever changed much. Yet Jacob thought nothing of breaching this command, and committing this "wickedness". And yet through this, God worked to create the house of Israel.

Lev 18:19 You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is impure by her uncleanness-

This verse seems to have stuck in David's mind, in that he lay with Bathsheba "because" she was "purified from her uncleanness". This is typical of so much spiritual dysfunction- to focus on a few Divine words and be strictly obedient to them, whilst ignoring the far larger principles. We think of the Jews being so careful to keep the Passover, whilst crucifying God's Son.

However I suggested on Lev. 15:24 that the woman in view was not simply menstruating but suffering a specific Divine stroke or plague which involved bleeding. To sleep with such a woman was therefore particularly defiant of God's judgments and therefore is so strongly condemned (Ez. 18:6; 22:10).

Lev 18:20 You shall not lie carnally with your neighbour's wife, and defile yourself with her-

This may indeed be a condemnation of adultery, but I suggest that the specific reference is not to having an affair, but to sleeping with women as part of the Moloch cult- and the woman slept with might well be their neighbour's wife. "And defile yourself with her" makes better sense if read as referring to defilement with idols, you along with her. "Defile" is often used in the context of idolatry.

Lev 18:21 You shall not give any of your children to sacrifice to Molech; neither shall you profane the name of your God: I am Yahweh-

We carry God's Name too, in that we are baptized into the Name. Our behaviour must therefore be appropriate to the Name we bear (James 2:7). Children born within the covenant were intended to bear Yahweh's Name; to sacrifice them to Molech was therefore to profane Yahweh's Name. "I am Yahweh" means that He is real and His Name is real, and we are not to profane it through devoting our children to idols. And we can devote them to the idols of career and secular success just as much as Israelites gave their children to Molech. The Hebrew phrase is literally "to pass over to Molech". "Pass [through the fire]" [AV] is an interpretation not a translation. "Pass over" translates *abar*, the root of the word 'Hebrew', those who passed over. By letting their children pass over to Molech, the parents were denying their calling as Hebrews, to pass over from this world to the things of the Kingdom. "Profane" is the word for prostitution or defilement. This is what we do to God's wonderful Name if we as His people pass over to other gods.

Lev 18:22 You shall not lie with a man, as with a woman. That is detestable-
Or, "an abomination". The related passage in Lev. 20:13 also says that the two men have committed "abomination". "Abomination" is a word distinctly and specifically associated with idol worship. The context of these commands is an appeal not to follow the ways of Moloch worshippers (also in Lev. 20:2-5). As was the case in Corinth centuries later, idol worshippers slept with both male and female prostitutes; and that is what is primarily in view here.

Lev 18:23 You shall not lie with any animal to defile yourself with it; neither shall any woman give herself to an animal, to lie down with it: it is a perversion-
Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the message for us is that we are to respect ourselves as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level.

"Perversion" is AV "confusion", and is the word also used of God's condemnation of men in "confusion" unto destruction (Gen. 11:7,9). Again we see that sin is its own judgment; people condemn themselves by their behaviour, living out condemnation in their sins. Israel are condemned for having 'mixed themselves' amongst the Gentiles (s.w. Hos. 7:8).

Lev 18:24 Don't defile yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations which I am casting out before you were defiled-
I suggested on Lev. 1:1 that Leviticus was given at the beginning of the wilderness wanderings. At that point, God was casting out the nations from Canaan. Their refusal to enter the land was therefore a waste of so much potential. And a reflection of their

disbelief in words like these which were spoken to them. Israel were eventually cast out of the land as the Canaanites were intended to be; and yet God's patience with them was remarkable. We note that God's plan was to cast out the nations before Israel so that they could enter the land immediately after leaving Egypt. But there is no evidence this happened- because the people chose not to enter the land. And when they did, they themselves didn't cast out the nations but rather coexisted with them in the land, and worshipped their gods. Again we see how so much potential was wasted; just as many have the path to entrance into the Kingdom made clear for them, but they reject it.

Lev 18:25 The land was defiled; therefore I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out her inhabitants-
The period for gathering iniquity was fulfilled, and so the land was intended to vomit out the Canaanites (Gen. 15:16). But we see here the flexibility and open ended nature of God's ways of working. For one thing, that period was extended by around 40 years; for Israel didn't enter the land when they were intended to, and so the local inhabitants remained there. And the vomiting out of the inhabitants was to be fulfilled through human agency, i.e. the Israelites were to cast them out with God's help. But they generally didn't do this, and chose to coexist with those inhabitants within the land, and to serve their gods.

Lev 18:26 You therefore shall keep my statutes and my ordinances, and shall not do any of these abominations; neither the native-born, nor the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you-
The idea was that the perversions listed above were not to be found within the land. The original inhabitants who did these things were to be vomited out; and Israel and any Gentiles remaining in the land were to not do these things, lest they be vomited out of the land. This was the Divine intention. But as noted on :24,25, the reality was different. Israel chose not to enter the land, so these abominations were done in the land for another 40 years longer than ideally anticipated. Israel then entered the land, didn't cast the nations who did these things out of the land; and Israel did the same abominations because they worshipped the gods of the local inhabitants.

Lev 18:27 (for all these abominations have the men of the land done that were before you, and the land became defiled)-
"Defiled" is the word used for being ritually "unclean". The land was to be "clean" because Yahweh lived as it were in the land (Num. 35:34). As soon as Israel entered the land, they defiled it by their abominations / idolatry (Jer. 2:7 s.w.). Clearly Joshua was not representative of the people generally, and the generation who entered the land were hardly strongly committed to Yahweh. They had after all carried the tabernacle of

Moloch and the star of Remphan all through the wilderness, and Joshua himself told them that he considered that they were so far gone in idolatry that they ought not to sign up to a covenant of loyalty to Yahweh. We can therefore assume that seeing the land was instantly defiled by Israel when they entered it, they therefore did in fact commit the abominations of the Canaanites which are listed in this chapter.

Lev 18:28 that the land not vomit you out also, when you defile it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you-

"When you defile it" shows God's premonition that they would do all these abominations and defile it; and indeed that is what happened (s.w. Jer. 2:7). The figure of vomiting suggests that their rejection from the land was going to happen as an immediate gut reaction if they did these abominations. They did them, but God's response was so patient. It was as if He did not vomit them out immediately as planned, but remained feeling nauseous at their behaviour for centuries, until He finally did so.

Lev 18:29 For whoever shall do any of these abominations, even the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people-

As noted on :29, this didn't happen immediately, because of God's love and patient, pitiful hopefulness that it wouldn't continue. But they defiled the land when they entered it by their idolatry (Jer. 2:7 s.w.), and they repeatedly defiled the land by their abominations, i.e. their idolatry and the associated perverted practices listed in this chapter (s.w. Ez. 22:4; 33:26; 36:18).

Lev 18:30 Therefore you shall keep My requirements, that you do not practice any of these abominable customs, which were practiced before you, and that you do not defile yourselves with them: I am Yahweh your God'-

The word so often used for "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling

with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24)

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 19

Lev 19:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
This section develops the theme of holiness and what it means in practice. Holiness means both separation *from* and also separation *unto*. We are separated from the things of the flesh and this world, but that is not a negative, onerous burden. For thereby are we separated unto the positive things of God's service.

Lev 19:2 Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and tell them, 'You shall be holy; for I Yahweh your God am holy-
The inclusiveness of Yahweh of His people, the nature of who His Name reveals Him to be, should of itself have led Israel to not discriminate against other races: "For I am Yahweh your God" (Lev. 24:22). Because Yahweh *is* who He is, therefore we must be like Him; His very existence and being demands it of us (Lev. 20:7 cp. 19:2,10). If we really know the characteristics implicit in His Name, we will put our trust in Him (Ps. 9:10; 124:8). If we see / know God in the experiential sense, we will do no evil (3 Jn. 11).

Holiness in the sense of separation from the unclean had been a major theme in the Mosaic Law, and it figured largely in the theology of the Pharisees. But the Lord quoted "Be holy because I, Yahweh your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2) as "Be you therefore merciful, even as your father in heaven is merciful" (Lk. 6:36). To be merciful to those who sin is now the true holiness- not merely separation from them and condemnation of their ways. Note, too, how He invites us to interpret the Yahweh as "father", rather than transliterating the Name.

Lev 19:3 Each one of you shall respect his mother and his father-
We have to read this in the context of the preceding chapter which has forbidden idolatrous rites involving sexual activity with parents and siblings. The contemporary Near Eastern legal codes prescribed the most severe penalties for crimes against the wealthy and their property. Rich people were given lesser punishments than poor people for the same crime. The value of persons reflected in Yahweh's law meant that all people were judged equally before the law, and truly there was no respect of persons with the true God. Both father and mother are placed together as worthy of equal honour (Lev. 19:3; Ex. 20:12)- whereas the contemporary laws were oriented towards respect of the male rather than females.

The Lord Jesus saw as parallel the commands to honour parents and also not to curse them. These two separate commands (from Ex. 20:12 and 21:17) He spoke of as only

one: "*the* commandment" (Mk. 7:9). He therefore saw that not to honour parents was effectively to curse them (Mk. 7:10). *Omitting* to honour parents, even if it involved appearing to give one's labour to God's temple, was therefore the same as *committing* the sin of cursing them. Sins of omission are perhaps our greatest weakness.

You shall keep My Sabbaths. I am Yahweh your God-
The two laws repeated here, about honouring parents and keeping the Sabbath, are the only two positive commandments in the ten commandments. The others are all "You shall not…". So this confirms the impression that now having read so much negative, about separation from sin, we are being encouraged to focus upon what we are separated unto, positively.

Lev 19:4 Don't turn to idols, nor make molten gods for yourselves. I am Yahweh your God-
This clearly alludes to the golden calf which they had made. They were not to ever do this again. And yet we know from Ez. 20:7,8 that they took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea, and carried the tabernacle and star of their idols throughout the wilderness journey. Even by Joshua's time, he had to urge them to cast away the idols of Egypt. Perhaps they justified them by arguing that they had not cast them themselves. Our flesh is so able to justify sin. And we must beware of that.

Lev 19:5 When you offer a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh, you shall offer it voluntarily-
The Mosaic law was in fact geared against mere legalism and symbolic offerings for the sake of discharging religious conscience. Voluntary offerings must indeed be just that- from the heart. Freewill offerings such as the peace offering must really be of our free will. We mustn't feel any sense of obligation to others, doing voluntary things to be seen of them, but any act of freewill devotion must be genuine, motivated by our personal desire to devote our time or resources to God.

Lev 19:6 It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day: and if anything remains until the third day-
The law of the peace offerings was designed so as to encourage the person who decided to make such a freewill offering to execute it immediately- they were to eat it the same day they offered it, and the sacrifice would be totally unacceptable if it was killed but left for some days (Lev. 19:5-7). If we have an impulse to respond to the Lord, we should respond to it immediately. This isn't mere impetuosity. It's a spirit of always having an immediacy of response, which empowers us to overcome the procrastination which holds us back so much.

It shall be burned with fire-
"With fire" is literally "with the fire". The fire of the altar was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

Lev 19:7 If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It will not be accepted-
We cannot be passive on receiving the opportunity to serve God. We will urgently seek to do something with what we have been enabled to do for the Lord: “The servant who got five bags *went quickly* to invest the money and earned five more bags” (Mt. 25:16 NCV). The law of the peace offerings was designed so as to encourage the person who decided to make such a freewill offering to execute immediately- they were to eat it the same day they offered it, and the sacrifice would be totally unacceptable if it was killed but left for some days (Lev. 19:5-7). If we have an impulse to respond to the Lord, we should respond to it immediately. This isn’t mere impetuosity. It’s a spirit of always having an immediacy of response, which empowers us to overcome the procrastination which holds us back so much.

If we think our freewill devotions to be God can be done as we wish without regard for His principles, then what we do is obnoxious to Him. The Hebrew word translated “abomination” is often used about idol worship; we will not be worshipping Him, but the idols of our own image and standing in the eyes of people.

Lev 19:8 but everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the holy thing of Yahweh, and that soul shall be cut off from his people-
This was a very stern warning. It was designed to guard against the temptation to spin out eating the peace offerings over several days, so that you personally benefitted from the meat. We are not to offer that which costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Lev 19:9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest-
This doesn't make allowing gleaning a binding law upon landowners. The text simply states that "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow" (Dt. 24:19). By allowing gleaners to come and pick up dropped grain, Boaz's

grace was going far beyond the letter of the law. This was taking that law way beyond what it said, in a spirit of grace. This would account for the hint in Ruth 2:22 that not every landowner allowed such gleaning in their fields. Likewise he extrapolates from the law of Levirate marriage to marry Ruth. So we see that the law of Moses was not a chain, a leash binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; for Israel is God's partner, not His dog. But rather was it designed as a springboard towards a culture of grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice.

Lev 19:10 You shall not glean your vineyard, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and for the foreigner. I am Yahweh your God-

If all Israel were obedient to the Law of Moses, there wouldn't have been any poor in Israelite society (Dt. 15:4). But the same Law of Moses repeatedly instructed Israel to be generous and sensitive to the poor; it tacitly recognized, as did Jesus, that there would always be poor within Israel, for the Law would never be fully kept (Mt. 26:11). We see in the structure of the Law the recognition of human failure in a way which no other law has ever equaled. There's a tendency to assume that the poor are poor because of their own poor decision making and therefore we have no responsibility to help them- although we are all poor decision makers in various ways, especially in spiritual matters. The Law taught a principle we need to learn also- that even if folk have dug a whole and fallen into it, we are still to assist them and be sensitive to their situation.

Lev 19:11 You shall not steal, nor lie, nor shall you deceive one another-

The command not to steal is associated with not deceiving others nor lying to them. Dishonesty, even if it's unrelated to material gain at another's expense, is a form of theft; we are taking from another wrongfully. The Hebrew indeed means to steal, but also carries the idea of deceit. For to deceive another is to effectively steal from them, to take away and misuse their belief and trust in you and your integrity. And all deceit is ultimately in order to gain something wrongly, even the thing gained isn't anything material.

Lev 19:12 You shall not swear by My name falsely, and profane the name of your God. I am Yahweh-

Ex. 20:7 phrases this in terms of not taking God's Name in vain. But the idea of not taking Yahweh's Name "in vain", 'vanity', is often associated with idolatry. Israel never formerly rejected Yahweh, and never became atheists. They mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry on the basis that they claimed that they worshipped Yahweh through worshipping the idols. This is what emboldened them to later place idols in Yahweh's

temple. They were taking Yahweh's Name as a form of vanity, "in vain", a kind of idol. Thus their relationship with Yahweh was not to be a "vain thing" (Dt. 32:47).

The vulnerability and sensitivity of God is reflected in the way that He is concerned that His covenant people, His wife, who bears His Name, might profane His Name (Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11). His repeated concern that His Name be taken in vain doesn't simply refer to the casual use of the word "God" as an expression of exasperation. God is concerned about His people taking His Name upon themselves (Num. 6:27) in vain- i.e., marrying Him, entering covenant relationship with Him, taking on His Name (which we do through baptism)- but not being serious about that relationship, taking it on as a vain thing, like a woman who casually marries a man who loves her at the very core of his being, when for her, it's just a casual thing and she lives a profligate and adulterous life as his wife. When God revealed His Name to His people, opening up the very essence of His character to them, He was making Himself vulnerable. We reveal ourselves intimately to another because we wish for them to make a response to us, to love us for what we revealed to them. God revealed Himself to Israel, He sought for intimacy in the covenant relationship, and therefore was and is all the more hurt when His people turn away from Him, after having revealed to them all the wonders of His word (Hos. 8:12). See on Lev. 5:16.

Lev 19:13 You shall not oppress your neighbour, nor rob him-
The oppression in view is things like not paying him his hire every day (Dt. 24:14,15; Lev. 19:13). The ethnic background of the man was irrelevant; he was to be treated as a person and not in any way abused because of his weak economic position. "Oppress" is the same word translated "deceive"; to not oppress others through deceiving them would elicit the heaviest judgment from God, when the person realized the deception and cried to God because of it (Dt. 24:15). Deceiving / oppressing a neighbour was a sin against Yahweh (Lev. 6:2 s.w.), because He has a special interest in the poor. And His law reflects that.

The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning-
Dt. 24:15 adds: "Each day you must give him his hire. The sun must not go down on it for he is poor and sets his heart on it, lest he cry against you to Yahweh and it be sin to you". This is one of many examples of the utter inversion of values to be found in the sphere of God's dealings with men: The rich are to almost fear the landless poor labourer, in case he feels hard done by and prays to God against the rich. The power, in ultimate and spiritual terms, is with the poor- and the balance of power is against the wealthy. James 5:4 specifically alludes to this command, and says that the cry of those we have been insensitive to will enter the ears of Yahweh of Hosts, a title typically associated with His active judgment. The cries of those we hurt are effectively a calling out to Yahweh of Hosts to enter into judgment with us. Whilst we may not have hired labourers, there are

many ways in which we can make our less privileged brethren cry out in pain to God; particularly through refusing them fellowship at the Lord's table.

Lev 19:14 You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind; but you shall fear your God. I am Yahweh'-
As if God is especially sensitive to our abusing others' disadvantages in whatever form, and His wrath about this is to be feared. Dt. 27:18 has "Cursed is he who makes the blind wander out of the way'". It was Aaron, their revered leader, who had made Israel wander "out of the way" through the golden calf apostacy (Ex. 32:8). The people surely could not have repeated these words without thinking of Aaron. It was intended, therefore, as a reminder to them of how their very standing with God was by grace alone; and they were not from any wonderful spiritual pedigree, but instead were God's people by grace through faith. Paul repeats the essence of this teaching in warning against making our brother stumble, even if he is spiritually blind. And he applies this therefore to what we eat and the things our own conscience may allow us to do.

Lev 19:15 'You shall do no injustice in judgment: you shall not be partial to the poor, nor show favouritism to the great; but you shall judge your neighbour in righteousness-
We are not to judge in the sense of condemn others, but it's inevitable in daily life that we have to form opinions. But we must always remember that the person we are judging is in fact our neighbour, our brother, our equal; our judgment shouldn't be rooted in any sense of feeling inherently superior over him or her, spiritually or otherwise. We are warned in Ex. 23:3,6 against bias in any way- feeling pity for a poor man who has done wrong is as bad as bias toward the wealthy. Economic status is of no matter, compared to human behaviour and the human person.

Lev 19:16 You shall not go up and down as a slanderer among your people. You shall not endanger the life of your neighbour. I am Yahweh-
Unless we talk frankly to our brother about issues (:17) between us *alone*, then we will end up hating him in our heart (even though it may not feel like that) and we will gossip about him. The frank raising of the issue with our brother is associated with loving our neighbour as ourselves. This is actually the opposite to what we would think; we would imagine that it would be more 'loving' to say nothing to our brother. But in this case, we will inevitably gossip about him and be bitter against him. The practice of true love will result in an open community in which we can frankly discuss with each other the issues which concern us, with love and not hatred in our hearts. This is the teaching of Lev. 19:16-18. No wonder the Proverbs expand upon it so much. And no wonder the Lord appropriated it as a ground rule for His ecclesia- there must be no gossip in the church (Mt. 18:15).

Lev 19:17 You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbour, and not bear sin because of him-
The implication is that if we don't have transparency with our neighbour, if we don't rebuke them openly and specifically, then we will end up hating them. Just saying nothing about those situations calling for rebuke will only drive you to hate the person in the end. "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbour" (Lev. 19:17,18). Unless there is direct, one on one dialogue, the hatred born of misunderstanding will develop. But reasoning together is something only possible if we perceive the value of persons. By not rebuking our brother, by saying nothing and not engaging with the issues when we need to, we are likely to breed anger in our hearts against him or her. Again we note that the law of God is unlike secular legal codes in that it speaks so much about attitudes of the heart, which are unseen by others and can never be formally judged by any human legal apparatus.

Lev 19:18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people; but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am Yahweh-
One reason we fail to love others as ourselves is because we may in fact not love ourselves in the sense of perceiving our own value before God. Unless there is direct, one on one dialogue, the hatred born of misunderstanding will develop. But reasoning together is something only possible if we perceive the value of persons.

The structure of the law of Moses seemed to almost encourage the idea of serving God on different levels. After much study of it, the Rabbis concluded that there was within it "a distinction between holy and holy just as much as there is between holy and profane". They were not to avenge (Lev. 19:18). But they *could* avenge, and provisions were made for their human desire to do so (Num. 35:12; Dt. 19:6). These provisions must also be seen as a modification of the command not to murder. The highest level was *not* to avenge; but for the harshness of men's hearts, a concession was made *in some cases*, and on *God's* prerogative. *We* have no right to assume that prerogative.

Proverbs is often a commentary upon the Law. The many passages there about gossiping are based upon this passage, in Lev. 19:16-18. The fact this passage is expanded upon so many times in Proverbs would indicate that gossip was as major a problem among the old Israel as it is among the new. But notice the fine psychology of the Spirit here: gossip in the church is related to having a grudge, to hating your neighbour in your heart, to not loving your neighbour as you love yourself (and we are very conservative about our own failings). When the Lord spoke about hating your brother being the same as murdering him (Mt. 5:22; 1 Jn. 3:15), he may well have been thinking of this passage in Leviticus. To hate your brother in your heart, to gossip about him, was and is as bad as murdering him. And this same connection between gossip

and murder is made in the prophets (Ez. 22:9 cp. Prov. 26:22). But the Law provided a way out. If you had something against your brother, frankly tell him about his failure, so that you would not hate him in your heart. If we don't do this, or try to get someone else to do it, we will end up hating our brother in our heart and we will gossip about him.

Lev 19:19 You shall keep my statutes-
It could be argued that the following commandments in this verse were hedges around the law to assist obedience- rather than addressing issues which were immoral in themselves.

You shall not crossbreed different kinds of animals-
The first mention of mules in the Bible is when Absalom murders his brother Amnon (2 Sam. 13:29). They were cross bred in disobedience to this command. We get the impression that a generally slack attitude to what might have been considered minor matters of the law was associated with the major sin of murder. This is the problem when we start to think that some parts of God's laws can just be ignored.

You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed-
The commandments about not inappropriately mixing things in Dt. 22 are sandwiched between commandments about avoiding sexual perversion and inappropriate bonding, such as adultery, sex with a father's wife (Dt. 22:30), and the perversion of Dt. 22:5, which is also about inappropriate mixture of sexual behaviours. There is a similar sexual context here in :20. The idea of these commands about not mixing seed and animals may be as it were a fence around these laws. The fear was that this was going to be a subliminal temptation towards sin. Rather like the command not to plant trees near an altar of Yahweh, lest this lead to the subliminal temptation to worship the trees like an asherah grove.

Neither shall there come upon you a garment made of two kinds of material-
Again, as discussed above, there is nothing intrinsically sinful about this. Rather the idea was that in daily life, there was to be the lesson of separation and avoidance of inappropriate bonding. Dt. 22:11 speaks specifically of not mixing linen and wool. It could be argued that "linen" came from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28; Prov. 7:16; Ez. 27:7), whilst wool was the classic produce of Israel.

Mal. 2:11-15 shows that the sin of marriage out of the faith is because it is a denial of God's principles regarding children; He instituted marriage to create “a Godly seed". It stands to reason that marrying an unbeliever (or an uncommitted believer, for that matter) cannot very easily produce a Godly seed. Israel were not to sow "mingled seed" in their fields, or make clothes of "mingled" materials (Lev. 19:19). The materials would, as the Lord Himself mentioned, tear apart. The garment wouldn't last. And sowing different seeds together likewise would bring no fruit to perfection. But the LXX in these passages is quoted in one place only in the NT: "Be not unequally yoked together with

unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14). If we are, *the relationship can't work*. So don't think that if we marry out of the Faith, it will all work out OK. Unless there is serious repentance (and even then, not always), *it won't work*. It will be a garment patched up with two different materials.

Lev 19:20 If a man lies carnally with a woman who is a slave girl, pledged to be married to another man, and not ransomed, or given her freedom; they shall be punished. They shall not be put to death, because she was not free-
See on :19. The Mosaic law appears to take into account that slavery is indeed slavery, and this does make a difference (also Ex. 21:20,21). The toleration of slavery was a concession to their weakness, but having made the concession, God shows integrity in to some extent accepting the status of the slave and the diminished rights which go with that.

Lev 19:21 He shall bring his trespass offering to Yahweh, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, even a ram for a trespass offering-
Nothing is said about payment of recompense to the intended bridegroom of the woman, perhaps because the idea is that he was also a slave and didn't have full rights; see on :20.

Lev 19:22 The priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before Yahweh for his sin which he has committed; and the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him-
It is commonly stated in the Mosaic law that the priest made atonement. Any thoughtful person would have soon concluded that indeed the blood of bulls and goats could not of itself atone for sin (Heb. 10:4). The role of the priest in bringing about the atonement was therefore critical. And yet they too were flawed. So this invited the spiritually minded to look forward to the coming of an ideal priest, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 19:23 When you come into the land, and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count their fruit as forbidden. Three years shall they be forbidden to you. It shall not be eaten-
Forbidden fruit naturally recalls the forbidden fruit on the tree in Eden. To grab as much as we can immediately without working for it nor recognizing that the firstfruits of all human endeavour must be given to the Lord- is all very human and common. But to do so is painted as being as bad as taking the forbidden fruit of Eden, with all the long term suffering which came as a result of short-termism.

Lev 19:24 But in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, for giving a praise offering to Yahweh-

This was all designed to teach self control. For three years the fruit couldn't be eaten, on the fourth year the fruit must be offered to God, and only on the fifth year could the fruit be eaten (:25). Self control, delayed gratification, looking to the long term rather than the short term, is what spiritual life is all about. And such things are increasingly in deficit in secular society.

Lev 19:25 In the fifth year you shall eat its fruit, that it may yield its increase to you. I am Yahweh your God-

The implication could be that if the required self control discussed on :24 was not followed, then the tree would not "yield its increase"- a phrase often used about how God would make the plants of the land yield their increase abundantly to an obedient Israel.

Lev 19:26 You shall not eat any meat with the blood still in it; neither shall you use enchantments, nor practise sorcery-

These two commandments are put together because drinking blood was part of many idol worshipping rituals. Hence LXX speaks of eating blood "upon the mountains". One practical consequence of this was that obedience would have meant social separation from the Canaanites; for none of them observed these positions on blood, indeed eating blood or meat with much blood in it was a delicacy. Blood represents life; to take life to ourselves rather than recognize it is God's results in us losing our lives (Lev. 17:14). Just as simply as the blood was to be given to God, so we are to give our lives to God. To take the blood to themselves is in fact spoken of as being as bad as murder (Lev. 17:4). This seems extreme language, but it underlines how important to God is this principle- that life is His and we are to give it to Him rather than live or take it to ourselves. In baptism, we give our lives to God and figuratively die and are buried with Christ (Rom. 6:1-10). We are to live life in this spirit that life is not ours but to be given to God. This frees us from all the manic human concern to live life to the full for ourselves. We no longer have this concern if we continually accept the principle that life is not ours, but God's.

AV "observe times" is literally "exercise the evil eye". They were to reject pagan notions of a cosmic Satan and demons, and believe instead that good and evil come from God, not the evil eye (Is. 45:5-7).

Lev 19:27 You shall not cut the hair on the sides of your heads, neither shall you clip off the edge of your beard-

This was the style of mourning in the surrounding world. And it had some hints of

idolatry. We could take this as meaning 'Don't follow the fashions of the world when they are allusive to idolatry and sinful ways'. And that has abiding relevance. The spiritual way of life seeks to cut off all opportunities for the flesh; all subliminal encouragements to sin are to be rooted out of our lives, rather than seeing how close we can sail to the wind.

Lev 19:28 You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you. I am Yahweh-
The context refers to such marks as showed loyalty to an idol or to the dead who were thought to be still alive. Whereas the Bible teaches that death is unconsciousness. Whilst there is nothing morally wrong with cutting the skin, the idea was that Israel weren't to even appear associated with pagan rituals for the dead. We likewise should naturally not want to even appear like worshippers of any other god (of whatever kind) when Yahweh is our only God.

Lev 19:29 Don't profane your daughter, to make her a prostitute; lest the land fall to prostitution, and the land become full of wickedness-
Sexual misbehaviour sets an example which spreads so easily. Thus if a very poor man discreetly prostituted his daughter out of financial desperation, the whole land would fall to whoredom and sexual abandon. But the idea behind making a daughter a prostitute likely refers to making her serve as a cult prostitute in the idol rituals. The serious nature of sexual sin is that it leads others into sin, by its very nature. The Lord Jesus reasoned likewise (Mt. 5:32).

Lev 19:30 You shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am Yahweh-
The stress may be upon the word "*My*". The systems of idol worships also required days to be kept as holy to them, and *their* sanctuaries to be reverenced. For the context here is all about avoiding idolatry. Yahweh's claims upon His people are supreme. There is no way we can worship both Yahweh and idols; the Sabbath was to kept exclusively for Him rather than also to the other gods who also demanded that a Sabbath be kept to them. Perhaps this was one reason for the Sabbath legislation at this time- to preclude keeping Sabbath to any other god. But Israel as so many today sought to worship Yahweh through idol worship. The church at Corinth made the same mistake.

Lev 19:31 Don't turn to those who are mediums, nor to the wizards-
The Bible is written in terms which the surrounding people would have understood; therefore it sometimes speaks of how things appear to be *as if* this really is the case. God warns against dabbling with "them that *have* familiar spirits" (Lev. 19:31 AV); not 'those who think they've got access to the supposed spirit world which, of course,

doesn't exist'. This is the same approach the New Testament adopts to the demons issue.

Don't seek them out, to be defiled by them. I am Yahweh your God-
This is exactly what Saul did in seeking out the witch of Endor. He thereby showed that Yahweh was not his God, and yet he went to the witch because he wanted to find connection with Yahweh.

Lev 19:32 You shall rise up before the gray head, and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God. I am Yahweh-
"Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in the greater maturity of Deuteronomy, the second law (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word ekklesia eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

Lev 19:33 If a stranger lives as a foreigner with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong-
Israel were to be motivated in kindness to others by the recollection that they had been redeemed from Egypt; the memory of our redemption through the waters of baptism [cp. the Red Sea] should have the same effect upon us. Deceiving / oppressing a neighbour was a sin against Yahweh (Dt. 24:14; Lev. 6:2 s.w.), because He has a special interest in the poor. And His law reflects that.

Lev 19:34 The stranger who lives as a foreigner with you shall be to you as the native-born among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God-
Try to see the historical events which occurred to Israel as relevant to you personally. They were "types of us". Note how 1 Cor. 10:1 speaks of "*our* fathers"- even when Paul is writing to Gentiles. He intended them to see in the Jewish fathers a type of themselves.

Israel's keeping of the Passover implied that each subsequent Israelite had personally been redeemed that night. All down the years, they were to treat the stranger fairly: "for you know the heart of an alien" (Ex. 23:9). The body of believers, the body of Christ, is not only world-wide geographically at this point in time; it stretches back over time as well as distance, to include all those who have truly believed. This is why David found such inspiration from the history of Israel in his own crises (e.g. Ps. 77).

The law of Moses often seems to allude back to the weaknesses of the patriarchs. Lev. 19:34 warns about mistreating the *hagger* living amongst God's people- the stranger, refugee, foreigner. This is a related word to 'Hagar'- it has the same consonants. Clearly the message to Israel was to not treat foreigners as Sarah had treated Hagar.

Lev 19:35 You shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measures of length, of weight, or of quantity-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "judgment", s.w. "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Lev 19:36 You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin. I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt-
Israel's deliverance from Egypt was by grace, not justice. They worshipped idols there and took them with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:7,8). Their salvation was by grace and not by justice, for their just desert was to be abandoned there. Our salvation is likewise only "just" because we are in Christ, on a personal level we are saved despite our unworthiness. One response to this is to seek to be just in all our dealings.

Deuteronomy, the second law, stresses these things. Dt. 25:13 says that "You must not have in your bag different weights, a great and a small". Deceitful traders still use balancing weights (Heb. "stones") of different weights, the lighter to sell with, the heavier to buy with. But the reference to the bag suggests that this command strikes at the forethought before the action. Don't go to market having prepared such weights in

your bag. Any human legal code would focus just upon the act of using deceitful weights, whereas God foresees the planning and thought process behind the act of sin. Dt. 25:14 goes further: "You must not have in your house different measures, a great and a small". To avoid temptation it's best to not even possess things which we may be tempted to misuse. See on :13. The act of deceiving at the market was analyzed by God as beginning in the home, and it was there and to that thought that the Divine law struck. Even possessing such "different measures" was a temptation to misuse them, and we take the lesson that we are to remove sources of temptation.

Dt. 25:16 adds: "For all who do such things, all who do unrighteously, are an abomination to Yahweh your God". The 'doing' in view is not deceiving customers in the marketplace but the forethought which preceded it- having unjust weights and measures in your bag when you set out to market, or even having them in your home (Dt. 25:13,14). The Lord Jesus rightly interpreted this teaching as meaning that the thought is counted as the action, the doing. These forethoughts, planning deceit in order to gain a petty amount of material advantage, were seen by Yahweh as "abomination", the word for idol worship. And such things are our temptation constantly.

Lev 19:37 You shall observe all my statutes, and all my ordinances, and do them. I am Yahweh'-

The word so often used for "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 20

Lev 20:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The theme of this section appears to be of capital offences against God, which were to be punished by execution, or by God cutting the person off in His own way and time.

Lev 20:2 Moreover, you shall tell the children of Israel, 'Anyone of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who live as foreigners in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech; he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones-
Despite this very clear statement, made right at the beginning of the wilderness journey (see on Lev. 1:1), the Israelites carried the tabernacle of Moloch through the wilderness (Am. 5:26; Acts 7:43). They heard these words, but refused to let them really take lodgment within them. And neither did the Levites, to whom they were originally addressed. We must ask ourselves whether we are really allowing God's words to truly register with us. "The people of the land" may refer to the Gentiles living in Israel; see on :4.

Lev 20:3 I also will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people-
The Hebrew word translated 'to cut a covenant' is also translated 'cut off' in the sense of death (Gen. 9:11; Lev. 20:2,3; Is. 48:9; Prov. 2:21). Death and blood shedding are essential parts of covenant making, and in this sense the covenant was ended too by death / cutting off. This means that God would pay special attention to this individual, setting His face against them, and remove them from His covenant people- whether or not He slew them immediately.

Because he has given of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary, and to profane My holy name-
Our attitude to our children is our attitude to God's Name. We need to ask ourselves how in our context we might be giving our children to Molech? 'Giving' children to Molech may not only have referred to child sacrifices but also dedicating children to the service of Molech. Our children are to be dedicated to God and nobody and nothing else.

Lev 20:4 If the people of the land all hide their eyes from that person, when he gives of his seed to Molech, and don't put him to death-
Acting as if we didn't notice something is a sin of omission just as bad as a sin of commission. "The people of the land" is literally 'the people of the *eretz*', a phrase which usually refers to the non-Israelite peoples within the land promised to Abraham (Gen. 23:7; 42:6; Num. 13:18,28; 14:9; Dt. 28:10; Josh. 4:24; 1 Kings 8:43,53; 1 Chron.

5:25 etc.). This would be the likely understanding of the phrase here (and in Lev. 4:27).

Lev 20:5 then I will set My face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all who play the prostitute after him, to play the prostitute with Molech, from among their people-
Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

The seriousness of sin is partly in the influence it has upon others. To give children to Molech encouraged others to sin by the example set. The power of our example upon others is far greater than we realize. Verse 14 likewise teaches that sexual perversion in one case could easily lead to wickedness being practiced amongst the whole congregation. Israel were told to destroy any of their number who worshipped idols; but if they failed to do this, God said that He Himself would remove that man from the community. He doesn't say that the whole nation of Israel would become personally guilty by association and therefore the whole nation would be treated by Him as the one man who was idolatrous.

Lev 20:6 The person that turns to those who are mediums, and to the wizards, to play the prostitute after them, I will even set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people-
Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off

of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Lev 20:7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am Yahweh your God-
The inclusiveness of Yahweh of His people, the nature of who His Name reveals Him to be, should of itself have led Israel to not discriminate against other races: “For I am Yahweh your God”. Because Yahweh *is* who He is, therefore we must be like Him; His very existence and being demands it of us (Lev. 20:7 cp. 19:2, 10). If we really know the characteristics implicit in His Name, we will put our trust in Him (Ps. 9:10; 124:8). If we see / know God in the experiential sense, we will do no evil (3 Jn. 11).

Lev 20:8 You shall keep My statutes, and do them. I am Yahweh who sanctifies you-
Note the logic of Lev. 20:8 and indeed the whole spirit of the Law given at Sinai: Because it is Yahweh who sanctifies / counts righteous His people, therefore, in thankful response, "you shall keep My statutes and do them". As they stood and sat before Yahweh and Moses, He sanctified them, or in Ezekiel's terms, picked up a sickly baby and turned her in His eyes into a beautiful woman. And their response to that imputed righteousness was to keep the laws they were given.

The word so often used for "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where

alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Lev 20:9 For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death: he has cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him'-
Note how blood is a symbol of both life and also death (Gen. 37:26; Num. 35:19,33; Lev. 20:9). Both the Lord's death and His life form a covenant / testament / will for us to obey- in both baptism and then in living out the death and life in our daily experience. We cannot be passive to it. Gal. 3:15; Heb. 9:16 and other passages liken the blood of Christ to a covenant; and yet the Greek word used means definitely the last will and testament of a dead man. His blood is therefore an imperative to us to do something; it is His will to us, which we must execute. Thus His death, His blood, which is also a symbol of His life, becomes the imperative to us for our lives and living in this world.

In the immediate context here, cursing parents may be equivalent to sleeping with them or sexually misusing them as part of Moloch worship (:2-5). In the very similar passage in Lev. 18, at this point there is the prohibition of sex with parents; here we read of not cursing them. The idea may be that sexual misbehaviour involves leading others into sin. If parents agreed to participate, then they would be cursed by God, and so effectively the child who tried to sleep with their parents as part of Moloch worship was cursing them, by bringing a Divine curse upon them.

Lev 20:10 'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, even he who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death-
"Another man's wife, even... his neighbour's wife" is a definition which suggests that every man in the community was to be treated as one's neighbour. Hence in the New Testament, loving our neighbour is interpreted as meaning loving all others within the community of God's people (Gal. 5:13,14). We shouldn't think that because someone is unknown to us or distant from us in whatever sense, that we can act differently to them than we would to the one living next door to us.

Lev 20:11 The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death: their blood shall be upon them-
In a polygamous society, this is not the same as "your mother". We learned in :2-5 that this kind of thing happened amongst the Gentile Moloch worshippers, but was not to happen amongst God's people. Paul makes some kind of allusion to this by complaining that this was happening in the church at Corinth, but it didn't happen amongst the Gentiles (1 Cor. 5:1). His idea may be that there had been some moral progression

amongst the Gentiles in this area- but sadly not amongst God's people.

Lev 20:12 If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have committed a perversion-
"Perversion" is AV "confusion", and is the word also used of God's condemnation of men in "confusion" unto destruction (Gen. 11:7,9). Again we see that sin is its own judgment; people condemn themselves by their behaviour, living out condemnation in their sins. Israel are condemned for having 'mixed themselves' amongst the Gentiles (s.w. Hos. 7:8).

Their blood shall be upon them-
Blood being upon them seems a variation of "they shall bear their iniquity"; the guilt for their own blood or life was upon them. The Lord Jesus Christ knew from Isaiah 53 that He was to bear Israel's sins, that the judgments for their sins were to fall upon Him. Israel 'bore their iniquities' by being condemned for them (Num. 14:34,35; Lev. 5:17; 20:17); to be a sin bearer was therefore to be one condemned. To die in punishment for your sin was to bear you sin. There is a difference between sin, and sin being laid upon a person. Num. 12:11 brings this out: "Lay not the sin upon us... wherein we have sinned". The idea of sin being laid upon a person therefore refers to condemnation for sin. Our sin being laid upon Jesus therefore means that He was treated *as if* He were a condemned sinner. He briefly endured within Him the torment of soul which the condemned will feel.

Lev 20:13 If a man lies with a male, as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them-
"Abomination" is a word distinctly and specifically associated with idol worship. The context of these commands is an appeal not to follow the ways of Moloch worshippers (:2-5). As was the case in Corinth centuries later, idol worshippers slept with both male and female prostitutes; and that is what is primarily in view here.

Lev 20:14 If a man takes a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burned with fire, both he and they; that there may be no wickedness among you-
"They shall be burnt with fire" makes this punishment appears different to that stipulated in the other legislation, where we read simply that the sinners "shall surely be put to death". However, the idea isn't that in this case of a man taking a wife and her mother, they were to be burnt to death. Rather does it mean that the corpses were to be burnt with fire. Achan likewise was stoned to death, and then his corpse burnt with fire (Josh. 7:25). The idea seems to be that the sin was so gross that there was to be a public lesson made out of it. We read of the smoke arising from the burning of Babylon and other enemies of the Lord's people (e.g. Rev. 18:9,18). The idea was that there was to be a warning to others from this; and that surely was the intention here in Lev. 20:14.

Lev 20:15 If a man lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death; and you shall kill the animal-
Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the message for us is that we are to respect ourselves as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level.

Lev 20:16 If a woman approaches any animal, and lies down with it, you shall kill the woman, and the animal: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them-
See on :15. Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the message for us is that we are to respect ourselves as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level. "Their blood" requires an ellipsis to be read in- 'the guilt for their blood / loss of life'. This behaviour was likely in the context of idolatry, and was particularly an Egyptian religious rite which the people had taken with them.

Lev 20:17 If a man takes his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness; it is a shameful thing; and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people: he has uncovered his sister's nakedness; he shall bear his iniquity-
It is no mere coincidence that so many of these forbidden relationships were seen in the patriarchal family. Abraham and Sarah were half brother and sister (Gen. 20:17). So we see that Israel were being reminded that their whole national basis was rooted in moral weakness from the start. They were God's people by grace alone.

Lev 20:18 If a man lies with a woman having her monthly period, and uncovers her nakedness; he has made naked her fountain, and she has uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people-
Lev. 20:18 says that if a man sleeps with a menstruating woman then they must both die. But Lev. 15:24 says that in this case the man must be unclean seven days. I suggest that the language of uncovering nakedness in Lev. 20:18 is talking about some form of illicit or perverted relationship, perhaps with a woman under the stroke of Divine judgment. But here we are reading of menstruation. Menstrual blood was a times drunk or used in various cultic rituals.

Lev 20:19 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, nor of your father's sister; for he has made naked his close relative: they shall bear their iniquity-
Uncovering nakedness alludes to the result of the first sin in Eden. The idea therefore is not that it is a sin to simply see a parent naked. Rather is it that such sins are sins

because you are leading your sexual partner into sin and they will receive the same judgment as Adam and Eve- their nakedness will be uncovered. And so the Lord Jesus likewise reasons that the problem with sexual sin is that it leads other parties into sin (Mt. 5:32).

Lev 20:20 If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness: they shall bear their sin: they shall die childless-
The implication of dying childless is that they had slept with each other in order to have children- perhaps not specifically with each other, but because this was part of a fertility ritual. But it would not work- in fact the opposite. They would both be unable to have children. And perhaps dying childless could mean that their existing children would die before they died.

Lev 20:21 If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an impurity: he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless-
See on :20 for 'dying childless'. "Impurity" is the Hebrew word for rejection, especially at the last day (2 Sam. 23:6; Job 18:18; Hos. 9:17). Sin is its own judgment; in this sense, man condemns himself rather than being condemned by God. We stand before His judgment in daily life; we make the answer now.

Lev 20:22 You shall therefore keep all My statutes, and all My ordinances, and do them; that the land, where I am bringing you to dwell, may not vomit you out-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word mishpat, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Lev 20:23 You shall not walk in the customs of the nation, which I am casting out before you: for they did all these things, and therefore I abhorred them-
I suggested on Lev. 1:1 that Leviticus was given at the beginning of the wilderness wanderings. At that point, God was casting out the nations from Canaan. Their refusal to enter the land was therefore a waste of so much potential. And a reflection of their

disbelief in words like these which were spoken to them. Israel were eventually cast out of the land as the Canaanites were intended to be; and yet God's patience with them was remarkable. We note that God's plan was to cast out the nations before Israel so that they could enter the land immediately after leaving Egypt. But there is no evidence this happened- because the people chose not to enter the land. And when they did, they themselves didn't cast out the nations but rather coexisted with them in the land, and worshipped their gods. Again we see how so much potential was wasted; just as many have the path to entrance into the Kingdom made clear for them, but they reject it.

The period for gathering iniquity was fulfilled, and so the land was intended to vomit out the Canaanites (Gen. 15:16). But we see here the flexibility and open ended nature of God's ways of working. For one thing, that period was extended by around 40 years; for Israel didn't enter the land when they were intended to, and so the local inhabitants remained there. And the vomiting out of the inhabitants was to be fulfilled through human agency, i.e. the Israelites were to cast them out with God's help. But they generally didn't do this, and chose to coexist with those inhabitants within the land, and to serve their gods.

Lev 20:24 But I have said to you, You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am Yahweh your God, Who has separated you from the peoples-
Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Lev 20:25 You shall therefore make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves abominable by animal, or by bird, or by anything with which the ground teems, which I have separated from you as unclean for you-
The fact God had separated His people from this world (:24) was the reason for the commandments about them making a distinction between clean and unclean. There is nothing unclean of itself, the commands were given as a mechanism for teaching and reminding Israel in their daily lives of their separation from uncleanness. Those animals designated by God as “unclean” were “unclean *for you*”- not that they were in themselves.

As Israel were to "detest" idols and idolatry as "abomination" (Dt. 7:26), so they were to "abhor" and treat as "abomination" unclean animals (Lev. 11:11,13,43), lest they "make

yourselves abominable [s.w. "detestable"] with any creeping thing" (Lev. 20:25). I suggest this is the reason why God designated some animals as 'abominable'; because of their association with idol worship. The idols of Egypt were often in the form of animals, and sex with animals was part of the rites. Just as in primitive societies today. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14); no animal is morally more or less clean than another. The commandments about unclean animals were clearly intended just for Israel living within a culture of idolatry / abomination involving those kinds of animals.

Lev 20:26 You shall be holy to me; for I, Yahweh, am holy-
Peter quotes these words to his Jewish converts (1 Pet. 1:15,16)*: "*But like He who called you is holy, be you yourselves holy in all manner of living. Because it is written: You shall be holy, for I am holy". Orthodox Jews such as they once were would have been obsessed with holiness in the sense of ritual separation. But this was to be extended to "all manner of living". By being holy / separate over a few things, they were tempted to think that vast areas of life in other areas could be lived as they wished. This was and is the problem with legalistic obedience. Hence the focus on all manner of living.

These words are quoting from the Levitical code of conduct for priests (Lev. 11:44,45). But those same words were spoke to all the congregation (Lev. 19:2)- for it was God's intention that all Israel should develop into a nation of priests. And this very idea is applied by Peter to the entire church (1 Pet. 2:5,9). We likewise cannot assume that others shall take care of our spirituality; we are in fact called to be Levites for others. All of us have this calling.

And have set you apart from the peoples, that you should be Mine-
But in reality, Israel mixed with the peoples and were not set apart from them. Although God potentially enabled this. We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they would be His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His “peculiar treasure” by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that “the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people [s.w.]... that thou shouldest keep all his commandments” (Dt. 26:18). See what’s happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

Lev 20:27 A man or a woman that is a medium, or is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them'-
AV "a familiar spirit" is misleading, and many of the modern versions give something like "witch" or [ESV, GNB] "a medium". LXX has "a divining spirit". It doesn't mean she did actually have any such spirit; but that she was considered as having this. Such people were thought to be able to be possessed by the spirit of dead people, and to therefore speak in their name. But the Bible clearly teaches that the "spirit returns to God" (Ps. 146:4; Ecc. 12:7), and that death is unconsciousness. The spirit of dead persons don't enter other people. I would go so far as to say that the record of the witch at Endor, who supposedly had a "familiar spirit", is deconstructing this belief. For Samuel himself appears, and speaks directly to Saul, and not through the "medium". The woman therefore screamed in shock when Samuel actually appeared. He was resurrected, briefly, in order to give God's final message to Saul. The people claiming to have "familiar spirits" lay on the ground and mumbled hard to understand words in a voice seeking to imitate the dead person (Is. 29:4) but Samuel appeared in person and spoke clearly to Saul, directly. We also note that Samuel appeared to Saul standing upright, because Saul bowed before him: "Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and showed respect" (1 Sam. 28:14). This was quite different to how the mediums lay on the ground and mumbled words into the dust.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 21

Lev 21:1 Yahweh said to Moses, Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: 'A priest shall not defile himself for the dead among his people-
Mourning the deceased was not of itself defiling. What is in view is the custom of touching the corpse, which would make them unclean. Touching a corpse made a person unclean seven days (Num. 19:11), and if the priests were on duty then this would have caused a disruption in their service. And they were being asked to put God's service before the desire to touch the corpse of their loved ones. They were not being forbidden to mourn their loss, but rather were being asked not to become defiled by touching the corpse.

Lev 21:2 except for his relatives that are near to him: for his mother, for his father, for his son, for his daughter, for his brother-
We wonder whether Paul's command not to weep for the dead who die in the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13) may have this in mind. The idea may be that this allusion is one of many which encourages the Christian believers to see themselves as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5).

Lev 21:3 and for his virgin sister who is near to him, who has had no husband; for her he may defile himself-

The list in :2,3 includes only direct blood relatives; his wife is omitted. See on :4. But it could be assumed that his wife was included amongst the "relatives near to him" of :2. Ezekiel was a priest, and when his wife died and he didn't mourn her, the people were surprised as to why he didn't (Ez. 24:16,19).

Lev 21:4 He shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself-
The Hebrew uses the word '*baal*' in the sense of master or husband. So some interpret this as meaning 'He shall not defile himself as an husband (i.e. for his wife) among his people'. But we wonder why, when he was allowed to do so for his other close relatives (:2,3). But LXX has "He shall not defile himself suddenly among his people to profane himself"- as if without self control, sudden expressions of grief could lead a person into uncleanness.

Lev 21:5 They shall not shave their heads, neither shall they shave off the corners of their beards-
This was the style of mourning in the surrounding world. And it had some hints of idolatry. We could take this as meaning 'Don't follow the fashions of the world when they are allusive to idolatry and sinful ways'. And that has abiding relevance. The spiritual way of life seeks to cut off all opportunities for the flesh; all subliminal encouragements to sin are to be rooted out of our lives, rather than seeing how close we can sail to the wind.

Nor make any cuttings in their flesh-
This refers to such marks as showed loyalty to an idol or to the dead who were thought to be still alive. Whereas the Bible teaches that death is unconsciousness. Whilst there is nothing morally wrong with cutting the skin, the idea was that Israel weren't to even appear associated with pagan rituals for the dead. We likewise should naturally not want to even appear like worshippers of any other god (of whatever kind) when Yahweh is our only God.

Lev 21:6 They shall be holy to their God, and not profane the name of their God-
Whatever carries God's Name is Him; and we bear that Name by baptism into it. We are to be aware of this and not profane it by inappropriate contact with that which is unclean.

For they offer the offerings of Yahweh made by fire, the food of their God; therefore they shall be holy-
God invited Israel to eat with Him at the altar, which became His table with their sacrifices as God's food, eaten by Him. The equivalent for us is eating with God at the

Lord's table, the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 10:21). Eating together was understood in Semitic culture as a sign of religious acceptance and fellowship.

Lev 21:7 They shall not marry a woman who is a prostitute, or profane; neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God-
Reference to the possibility of prostitutes who were not punished with death is another tacit recognition within the Law that it would not be fully kept; for prostitution was outlawed. Thus in the very structure of the Law we see God's sensitive recognition of the fact it would not be fully kept. His sensitivity to and provision for our failures in advance, both individually and collectively, shouldn't lead us to think that therefore we needn't take His principles seriously; His foreknowledge of our weakness shouldn't be perceived by us as a safety net for our sinfulness. We recall how Solomon when confronted by two prostitutes did not order them to be slain as the law required; and his judgment was that of Divine wisdom, which is of grace.

Lev 21:8 You shall sanctify him therefore; for he offers the bread of your God: he shall be holy to you; for I Yahweh, who sanctify you, am holy-
Paul saw the sacrifices of Israel as having some relevance to the Christian communion meal. He comments: "Are those who eat the victims not in communion with the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18); and the altar is clearly the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10). Eating of the communion meal was and is, therefore, fundamentally a statement of our fellowship with the altar, the Lord Jesus, rather than with others who are eating of Him. The bread and wine which we consume thus become antitypical of the Old Testament sacrifices; and they were repeatedly described as "Yahweh's food", laid upon the altar as "the table of Yahweh" (Lev. 21:6,8; 22:25; Num. 28:2; Ez. 44:7,16; Mal. 1:7,12). And it has been commented: "Current translations are inaccurate; *lehem panim* is the 'personal bread' of Yahweh, just as *sulhan panim* (Num. 4:7) is the 'personal table' of Yahweh". This deeply personal relationship between Yahweh and the offerer is continued in the breaking of bread; and again, the focus is upon the worshipper's relationship with Yahweh rather than a warning against fellowshipping the errors of fellow worshippers through this action. What *is* criticized in later Israel is the tendency to worship Yahweh through these offerings at the same time as offering sacrifice to other gods.

Lev 21:9 The daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by playing the prostitute, she profanes her father: she shall be burned with fire-
The prostitution in view was likely not for economic reasons, but was rather being a cult prostitute at an idol shrine. This mixture of Yahweh worship and idolatry was especially obnoxious to God. The woman would have profaned not only her earthly father but also her Heavenly Father. This is why this kind of prostitute was to be punished whereas as noted on :7 there were others who were apparently tolerated.

Lev 21:10 He who is the high priest among his brothers, upon whose head the anointing oil is poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not let the hair of his head hang loose, nor tear his clothes;-
LXX "he having been consecrated to put on the garments, shall not take the mitre off his head, and shall not rend his garments". If he was on duty, especially at the day of atonement, then this was to be of paramount importance, reflecting the Lord's absolute focus upon His work on the cross. There seems to have been something unusual about the Lord's outer garment. The same Greek word *chiton* used in Jn. 19:23,24 is that used in the LXX of Gen. 37:3 to describe Joseph's coat of many pieces. Josephus (*Antiquities* 3.7.4,161) uses the word for the tunic of the High Priest, which was likewise not to be rent (Lev. 21:10). The Lord in His time of dying is thus set up as High Priest, gaining forgiveness for His people, to 'come out' of the grave as on the day of Atonement, pronouncing the forgiveness gained, and bidding His people spread that good news world-wide.

This is not to say that long hair is wrong in itself for a male. The pagan priests of Egypt, from where Israel had just been brought out, were noted for their long hair, which stood out from the rest of the male population in Egypt who generally had shaved heads at that time. The principle is that we shouldn't perceive our religion as merely just one of many other religions; there is something utterly unique about our way to God through Christ, who is our only mediator, the only way, "the truth". Whilst on one hand God doesn't judge the outward appearance but the heart, we should also be careful not to have externalities which make us appear to be 'pagan' and not the unique people of God.

Lev 21:11 neither shall he go in to any dead body, nor defile himself for his father, or for his mother-
He would have been unclean for seven days if he did (Num. 19:11), and this would have meant that his ministrations for the people, especially at the day of atonement, would have been interrupted. He like the Lord Jesus was to focus upon the work of saving the people more than anything else.

The Lord's comment: "Let the dead bury their dead" (Mt. 8:22) reveals how He had a way of so radically challenging the positions held by normal people of the world, to a depth quite unheard of- and He did it in so few words. Lev. 21:11 forbad the High Priest to be polluted by touching the corpse of his parents, which would've precluded him from the usual Jewish manner of burying the dead in the first century. By asking His followers to act as if under the same regulation, the Lord was inviting His followers to see themselves, each one, as the High Priest. We may merely raise our eyebrows at this point, as a matter of mere expositional interest. But to those guys back then, this was

major and radical, a man would have to sum up every ounce of spiritual ambition in order to rise up to this invitation. And psychologically, we could say that those first century illiterate Jews were subject to a very powerful systemic spiritual abuse. By this I mean that they were so emotionally hammered into the ground by the oppressive synagogue system that they felt themselves unworthy, no good, not up to much, awful sinners, woefully ignorant of God's law, betrayers of Moses and their nation... and the Lord addresses these people and realistically asks them to feel and act like the High Priest! No wonder people just 'didn't get' His real message, and those who did were so slow to rise up to the heights of its real implications. And we today likewise toil under a more insidious systemic abuse than we likely appreciate, with the same sense of not being ultimately worth much... until the Lord's love and high calling bursts in upon our lives, releasing us from the mire of middle class [or aspired-to middle class] mediocrity into a brave new life.

Lev 21:12 neither shall he go out of the sanctuary, nor profane the sanctuary of his God; for the crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him. I am Yahweh-
The calling to priesthood was not to be taken lightly. There was the death penalty for not remaining on duty during the seven days of their inauguration (Lev. 8:35), and it could be that Lev. 21:12 implies the same as a general principle. We cannot just resign our responsibilities; for we are called to the priesthood, our baptism and clothing in the righteousness of Christ was our calling and inauguration (see on Lev. 8:6,7). It is not for us to walk away from our calling. We are in this for life, serving until death, and then eternally in God's Kingdom.

Lev 21:13 He shall take a wife in her virginity-
LXX "He shall take for a wife a virgin of his own tribe". Perhaps this is therefore one of the passages alluded to by Paul in 1 Cor. 7:39 when he taught that marriage was to be "only in the Lord". See on :15. He was also alluding back to the command to Zelophehad's daughters to marry "whom they think best", but only "in" their tribe, otherwise they would lose the inheritance (Num. 36:6,7). The implication is that those who do not marry "in the Lord" will likewise lose their promised inheritance. And this rather strange allusion indicates one more thing: the extent of the seriousness of marriage out of the Faith is only evident to those who search Scripture deeply.

Lev 21:14 A widow, or one divorced-
Divorce was clearly possible under the Mosaic system. If a man's wife committed adultery he could have her killed; *or* he could put her through the trial of jealousy of Num. 5, with the result that she would become barren; or he could divorce her (Dt. 22:19; 24:1 RV; Lev. 21:14; 22:13). Within a Law that was holy, just and good (Rom.

7:12), unsurpassed in it's righteousness (Dt. 4:8; and let us not overlook these estimations), there were these different levels of response possible. But there was a higher level: he could simply forgive her. This was what God did with His fickle Israel, time and again (Hos. 3:1-3). And so the Israelite faced with an unfaithful wife could respond on at least four levels. This view would explain how divorce seems outlawed in passages like Dt. 22:19,29, and yet there are other parts of the OT which seem to imply that it was permitted. It should be noted that there were some concessions to weakness under the Law which the Lord was not so willing to make to His followers (e.g., outside the marriage context, Dt. 20:5-8 cp. Lk. 9:59-62; 14:18,19). He ever held before us the Biblical ideal of marriage.

Or a woman who has been defiled, or a prostitute, these he shall not marry; but a virgin of his own people shall he take as a wife-
Prostitutes were envisaged as not always being put to death. See on :7. By not doing so, Solomon showed his wisdom. "His own people" may refer to 'from his own tribe', as in :13 LXX.

Lev 21:15 He shall not profane his seed among his people; for I am Yahweh who sanctifies him'-
GNB "Otherwise, his children, who ought to be holy, will be ritually unclean. I am the LORD and I have set him apart as the High Priest". The idea of children being clean or unclean is alluded to by Paul when he says that "The unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother. Else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Cor. 7:14). We noted on Lev. 21:13 another allusion to this section in 1 Cor. 7. Principles relevant to the High Priest are now applied to every believer; willful marriage to the unclean would not produce holy / clean children. Just as the tearing down of the veil into the most holy was a signal that all in Christ, and not just the High Priest, should now go in there just as the High Priest had done- and do his work, in essence. This was a high calling for those used to the Judaist system doing everything for them. In Christ they were called not just to priesthood, but to participate with and in Him who does the work of the High Priest.

Lev 21:16 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The demands we will now read for unblemished Levites to serve Yahweh recall the requirements for unblemished sacrifices. But the thoughtful Israelite would have reflected that no man nor animal is without blemish. These commandments were to elicit a desire for perfection which was not possible. And this desire was only realizable in the change of human nature which was to be possible only through the appearance of an unblemished priest and sacrifice, the Lord Jesus. We too are brought up against our blemishes, in order to make us long for this final change which has to be brought about by God's action rather than our own efforts at perfection.

Lev 21:17 Say to Aaron, 'None of your seed throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the food of his God-
"Of your seed" is LXX "of thy tribe". See on :16. God invited Israel to eat with Him at the altar, which became His table with their sacrifices as God's food, eaten by Him. The equivalent for us is eating with God at the Lord's table, the breaking of bread (1 Cor. 10:21). Eating together was understood in Semitic culture as a sign of religious acceptance and fellowship. As we sit to eat at the Lord's table, quite naturally the very experience elicits self examination. And we realize that we are blemished; but by grace we are urged to eat at the Lord's table.

Lev 21:18 For whatever man he is that has a blemish, he shall not draw near: a blind man, or a lame, or he who has a flat nose, or any deformity-
A person who feels they are somehow a nice guy and worthy of invitation will be the one who tends to consider others as unworthy of invitation to the Kingdom. He or she who perceives their own desperation will eagerly invite even those they consider to be in the very pits of human society. The lame, blind etc. were not allowed to serve God under the law (Lev. 21:18), nor be offered as sacrifices (Dt. 15:21), nor come within the holy city (2 Sam. 5:6-8). The Lord purposefully healed multitudes of lame and blind (Mt. 15:30), and allowed them to come to Him in the temple (Mt. 21:14). His acted out message was clearly that those who were despised as unfit for God's service were now being welcomed by Him into that service. The lame and blind were despised because they couldn't work. They had to rely on the grace of others. Here again is a crucial teaching: those called are those who can't do the works, but depend upon grace.

Yahweh describes His servant Israel, both natural and spiritual, as a blind servant: "Who is blind but my servant?... who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?" (Is. 42:19). There is a real paradox here: a blind servant, or slave. What master would keep a blind servant? Only a master who truly loved him, and kept him on as his servant by pure grace. Yet this useless blind servant was God's servant and messenger- even though the blind were not acceptable as servants or sacrifices of God under the Law (Lev. 21:18,22)! God uses His spiritually blind servant people to proclaim His message to the world. The disciples, still blind to the call of the Gentiles, were sent out to preach to the whole world! And we too, blind as we are in many ways, are turning men from blindness to light.

Lev 21:19 or a man who has an injured foot, or an injured hand-
LXX gives "broken" for "injured". Perhaps this was to make a connection with how not a bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken. And this was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, of whom not a bone was broken (Jn. 19:36). The priests were to be as living sacrifices.

Lev 21:20 or hunchbacked, or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye, or an itching disease, or scabs, or who has damaged testicles-
LXX "or hump-backed, or blear-eyed, or that has lost his eye-lashes, or a man who has a malignant ulcer, or tetter, or one that has lost a testicle". The reference to the "itching disease" may refer to those who had received a specific Divine stroke of judgment, as discussed on Lev. 13,14. Eye lashes are particularly affected by leprosy, so this and the itch and scabs would sound like the stroke of Divine judgment which was similar to what we know as leprosy, although I suggested on Lev. 13:1 that it was not leprosy as we now know it.

Lev 21:21 no man of the seed of Aaron the priest who has a blemish shall come near to offer the offerings of Yahweh made by fire. Since he has a blemish, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God-
The idea of eating the bread of God, the sacrifice which represents His son, and thereby having fellowship with Him, should send our minds forward to John 6. "The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven", i.e. our Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:33). Not for nothing do some Rabbis speak of 'eating Messiah' as an expression of the fellowship they hope to have with Him at His coming. The sacrificial animals are spoken of as "the bread of your God" (Lev. 21:6,8,21; 22:25; Ez. 44:7 etc.), pointing forward to Christ. In addition to alluding to the manna, Christ must have been consciously making this connection when He spoke about himself as the bread of God. The only time "the bread of God" could be eaten by the Israelite was at the peace offering. When in this context Christ invites us to eat the bread of God, to eat His flesh and drink His blood (Jn. 6:51,52), He is looking back to the peace offering. But this is also an evident prophecy of the breaking of bread service. Many of the Jews just could not cope with what Christ was offering them when He said this. They turned back, physically and intellectually. They just could not grapple with the idea that Christ was that peace offering sacrifice, and He was inviting them to sit down with God, as it were, and in fellowship with the Almighty, partake of the sacrificed body of His Son. But this is just what Christ is inviting each of us to do in the memorial meeting, to sit down in fellowship with Him, and eat of His bread. God really is here with us at the memorial meeting. He is intensely watching us. He is intensely with us, He really is going to save us, if only we can have the faith to believe how much He loves us, how much He wants us to share His fellowship and know His presence. We are the new priesthood, and can only eat this bread of God if we are unblemished. But we are full of blemishes. We can only be unblemished through believing that we are "in Christ", the unblemished One.

Lev 21:22 He shall eat the food of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy-
LXX "The gifts of God are most holy, and he shall eat of the holy things". Whatever

blemish the man had, he could still personally fellowship with God, but he was not to publically offer the offerings of others. The priests at that moment were to be consciously representative of the sacrifices, which are the only other things which have the language of 'blemish' and 'unblemished' applied to them (e.g. Lev. 22:20). The message may be that whatever a man's disqualification from public ministry, he should never be denied eating "the food of his God", fellowship at the Lord's table.

Lev 21:23 He shall not come near to the veil, nor come near to the altar, because he has a blemish; that he may not profane My sanctuaries, for I am Yahweh who sanctifies them'-
As discussed on :16, there was no man nor animal which was totally without blemish or (Heb.) 'spot'. The thoughtful Israelite would have therefore looked ahead to an unblemished priest and sacrifice which was not to be of the Mosaic order. This idea is alluded to when Paul and Peter write to Hebrews that the Lord Jesus offered "without spot" (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19); and through being "in" Him, we too are counted as without spot, by imputed righteousness (Eph. 5:27; 2 Pet. 3:14). This idea is hinted at here in this verse; the unblemished were not to come near to the veil, because it is Yahweh who would sanctify them / make them holy. This appears at first blush to be a juxtaposition of ideas; but the sense is that the all were in fact blemished, and it was only Yahweh who would sanctify them or make them holy.

Lev 21:24 So Moses spoke to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel-
Leviticus is addressed to the Levites, indeed it could be that the entire book is a transcription of the things said at the inauguration of the Levites after the tabernacle was completed. But "all the children of Israel" were to be aware of them; the priesthood and regulations were to be no secret. All the people were to be made aware of them, so they might perceive the principles being taught. This contrasts with how the pagan religions tended to keep their priestly regulations a close kept secret.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 22

Lev 22:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The language of the next verses is used elsewhere about the peace offerings, so perhaps they were particularly in view. Voluntary devotion to God doesn't mean we can ignore His principles.

Lev 22:2 Tell Aaron and his sons to separate themselves from the holy things of the children of Israel, which they make holy to Me, and that they don't profane My holy name. I am Yahweh-

The summary idea is as in GNB "You must not bring disgrace on my holy name, so treat with respect the sacred offerings that the people of Israel dedicate to me". Eating the offerings was one of the many antecedents of the memorial meeting. Once the offerer had dedicated himself to making it, he was condemned if he didn't then do it, and yet also condemned if he ate it unclean (Lev. 7:18,20). So a man *had* to either cleanse himself, or be condemned. There was no get out, no third road. The man who ate the holy things in a state of uncleanness had to die; his eating would load him with the condemnation of his sins (Lev. 22:3,16 AV mg.). This is surely the source for our possibility of “eating… condemnation" to ourselves by partaking of the breaking of bread in an unworthy manner. And so it is with us as we face the emblems. We must do it, or we deny our covenant relationship. And yet if we do it in our uncleanness, we also deny that relationship. And thus the breaking of bread brings us up before the cross and throne of the Lord Jesus- even now. It brings us to a realistic self-examination. If we cannot examine ourselves and know that Christ is really in us, then we are reprobate; we "have failed" (2 Cor. 13:5 G.N.B.). Self-examination is therefore one of those barriers across our path in life which makes us turn to the Kingdom or to the flesh. If we can't examine ourselves and see that Christ is in us and that we have therefore that great salvation in Him; we've failed.

Lev 22:3 Tell them, ‘If anyone of all your descendants throughout your generations approaches the holy things, which the children of Israel make holy to Yahweh, having his uncleanness on him, that soul shall be cut off from before Me. I am Yahweh-
It was not allowed for unclean offerers to eat peace offerings (Lev. 7:20), nor could Levites or priests approach to the sacrifices whilst unclean (Lev. 22:3). But there is no statement that the offerer had to be clean, indeed Dt. 12:22 says that in some circumstances, some sacrifices could be eaten by the offerer whilst unclean. We see here God's willingness to by all means accept the offerer of sacrifice.

Lev 22:4 Whoever of the seed of Aaron is a leper or has an issue shall not eat of the holy things, until he is clean. Whoever touches anything that is unclean by the dead, or a man whose seed goes from him-
As noted on Lev. 13:1 and throughout Lev. 13,14, I suggest that the leprosy in view is a specific stroke of Divine judgment, from which the person could be cleansed by repentance. It doesn't refer to leprosy as we now understand it, i.e. Hansen's disease. Whilst a priest was under Divine judgment, he couldn't eat in fellowship with God.

Lev 22:5 or whoever touches any creeping thing, whereby he may be made unclean; or a man from whom he may take uncleanness, whatever uncleanness he has-

The "whoever" continues to apply to the Levites; see on :3. Leviticus is specifically commandment to the Levites.

Lev 22:6 the person that touches any such shall be unclean until the evening, and shall not eat of the holy things, until he bathe his body in water-
As we as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) read of these requirements not to eat the holy things whilst unclean, we may wonder how we as sinners can ever eat the bread and drink the wine as required to remember Christ's death. But the fact is, we have been washed and sanctified for service by baptism into the Name of Christ (1 Cor. 6:11 alludes here). This is a status we are continually in- for this is the wonder of the concept of our being "in Christ".

Lev 22:7 When the sun is down, he shall be clean; and afterward he shall eat of the holy things, because it is his food-
The food which the Levites ate is also called God's food (see on Lev. 21:17); their eating of it for themselves was effectively God eating the sacrifices of the people. So in eating it, they were to manifest God, and therefore not be in a state of uncleanness.

Lev 22:8 That which dies of itself, or is torn by animals, he shall not eat, defiling himself by it. I am Yahweh-
Ex. 22:31 says they were to throw such food to the dogs and not eat it. Perhaps "dogs" meant Gentiles. This command wasn't only for hygienic reasons. God wished to encourage His people to have a healthy work ethic, not taking short cuts, but eating animals they had raised themselves for that purpose. We live in a society where laziness and trying to live for free has become almost an art form. We cannot ultimately get around the curse, that we shall eat only as a result of the sweat of our own labour. We have to accept our humanity and our fallen condition, looking for the lifting of the curse in God's future Kingdom.

Lev 22:9 They shall therefore follow My requirements, lest they bear sin for it, and die therein, if they profane it. I am Yahweh who sanctifies them-
They were to be holy or sanctified, because Yahweh counted them as holy / sanctified. We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all.

Lev 22:10 No foreigner shall eat of the holy thing: a foreigner living with the priests, or a

hired servant, shall not eat of the holy thing-
The Law has a lot to say about welcoming foreigners and being hospitable to them. We as the "Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16) should likewise be open rather than closed to the people of the world around us, even though we are in another sense separated *from* them and *unto* the things of our God. The priests who ate the meat sacrificed by the Israelites were representing God by doing so. The food which the Levites ate is also called God's food (see on Lev. 21:17); their eating of it for themselves was effectively God eating the sacrifices of the people. So in eating it, they were to manifest God and therefore a foreigner was not appropriate for this. This was not racism; for foreign slaves and their children could eat of it (:11), the idea therefore seems to be a Gentile traveller who had been given temporary hospitality by a Levite.

Lev 22:11 But if a priest buys a slave, purchased by his money, he shall eat of it; and such as are born in his house, they shall eat of his bread-
Gentiles who had been bought for a price by a priest to be his servants were treated as Israelites. This looked forward to Christ, the final Priest, buying us with His own blood that we might be His servants, and thereby we are fully part of His family and the people of God (1 Cor. 7:23).

Lev 22:12 If a priest's daughter is married to an outsider, she shall not eat of the heave offering of the holy things-
The girl who married a Gentile couldn't eat of the holy things; and neither could a Gentile who was passing through, it is stated, in this same passage (Lev. 22:11). The point was: if you marry a Gentile, then you are a Gentile, and you forego your spiritual privileges which you have as an Israelite.

Lev 22:13 But if a priest's daughter is a widow, or divorced, and has no child, and has returned to her father's house, as in her youth, she may eat of her father's bread-
Divorce was clearly possible under the Mosaic system. If a man's wife committed adultery he could have her killed; *or* he could put her through the trial of jealousy of Num. 5, with the result that she would become barren; or he could divorce her (Dt. 22:19; 24:1 RV; Lev. 21:14; 22:13). Within a Law that was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), unsurpassed in it's righteousness (Dt. 4:8; and let us not overlook these estimations), there were these different levels of response possible. But there was a higher level: he could simply forgive her. This was what God did with His fickle Israel, time and again (Hos. 3:1-3). And so the Israelite faced with an unfaithful wife could respond on at least four levels. This view would explain how divorce seems outlawed in passages like Dt. 22:19,29, and yet there are other parts of the OT which seem to imply that it was permitted. It should be noted that there were some concessions to weakness

under the Law which the Lord was not so willing to make to His followers (e.g., outside the marriage context, Dt. 20:5-8 cp. Lk. 9:59-62; 14:18,19). He ever held before us the Biblical ideal of marriage.

But no stranger shall eat any of it-
But if the stranger had been bought by the Priest, he or she was no longer a stranger (:11). Paul has this passage in mind when he rejoices that those baptized into Christ are no longer strangers and foreigners but members of God's family and fellow citizens with "the saints", a term which he may well have understood in this context as referring to the community of Israel (Eph. 2:19).

Lev 22:14 If a man eats something holy unwittingly, then he shall add the fifth part of its value to it, and shall give the holy thing to the priest-
We note that the legislation about the cities of refuge likewise reflected God's special concern about unintentional sin. He recognizes that there are different kinds of sin. And in this we see His sensitivity, for the other legal codes at the time saw everything in black and white terms of obedience or disobedience to legal statutes. The word for "unwittingly" or "unintentionally" is s.w. 'deceived' (Job 12:16). It could be that God also recognizes that some are deceived into sin, and therefore treats those who lead into sin more severely than those who are led into sin. Likewise the New Testament condemns false teachers, but seems to be more acceptive of the falsely taught, the misguided.

Lev 22:15 The priests shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, which they offer to Yahweh-
The summary idea is as in :2 GNB "You must not bring disgrace on my holy name, so treat with respect the sacred offerings".

Lev 22:16 and so cause them to bear the iniquity that brings guilt, when they eat their holy things; for I am Yahweh who sanctifies them'-
The man who ate the holy things in a state of uncleanness had to die; his eating would load him with the condemnation of his sins (Lev. 22:3,16 AV mg.). This is surely the source for our possibility of "eating... condemnation" to ourselves by partaking of the breaking of bread in an unworthy manner. See on :3.

Lev 22:17 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The idea of the following section is that the offerings now described had to be as the offerers, whose 'without blemish' status has just been described. Perhaps this was to develop the reflection that the offerer was to be as the offering. Because the offering represented the offerer; and this is made explicit in the New Testament invitation to be

living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1).

Lev 22:18 Speak to Aaron, and to his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them, 'Whoever is of the house of Israel, or of the foreigners in Israel, who offers his offering, whether it be any of their vows, or any of their freewill offerings, which they offer to Yahweh for a burnt offering-
The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Lev 22:19 that you may be accepted, you shall offer a male without blemish, of the bulls, of the sheep, or of the goats-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). So this looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 22:20 But whatever has a blemish, that you shall not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you-
The idea of being not accepted may mean that the fire of God would not appear and consume it. "Acceptable" translates the same Hebrew word used for "at your own will" (:19,29; Lev. 1:3; 19:5). The sense is that offering a blemished animal would as it were

cancel out the commendable freewill desire to offer to God. Our desire to serve God on our initiative doesn't mean that we can ignore the need to give Him the best.

Lev 22:21 Whoever offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh to accomplish a vow, or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it shall be perfect to be accepted: no blemish shall be therein-
This repeats the principle discussed on :20; that a desire to serve God on our own initiative does not mean we can ignore His principles. They are not somehow subsumed beneath the value of our freewill; His will is to be honoured more than ours. And yet "perfect to be accepted" would have struck the thoughtful Israelite as a principle which left them for ever unacceptable- for no offerer nor offering was "perfect". And so again the whole structure was set up to elicit a desire for the perfect One, the Lord Jesus.

Lev 22:22 Blind, injured, maimed, having a wart, festering, or having a running sore, you shall not offer these to Yahweh, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to Yahweh-
But this is precisely what the priests at the time of the restoration are condemned for doing in Mal. 1:8. The excuse of the priests would have been that it was the people who offered these defective animals. But they were judged as responsible, as their acceptance of them encouraged the masses in their disrespect. Thus they failed to speak out against the low spiritual standards of their flock, but instead went along with them. So the masses got the spiritual leadership they wanted, even if they despised them (Mal. 1:8,9). For this reason, both society and priesthood were equally to be condemned. They offered blemished sacrifices, when it had been prophesied / commanded in the Ezekiel prophecies of the restored temple that Israel were not to do this (Ez. 43:23). Those prophecies were command more than prediction, and only conditional upon Israel's obedience- which was not forthcoming. So much prophetic potential was wasted, as it is in human life today. See on Mal. 1:7,10; 2:14; 3:8.

Lev 22:23 A bull or a lamb that has any deformity or is lacking in his parts, that you may offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted-
For a freewill offering, God would accept a deformed animal (Lev. 22:23), even though this was against His *preferred principle* of absolute perfection in offerings. There was no atonement without the shedding of blood; and yet for the very poor, God would accept a non-blood sacrifice. This all reflected the zeal of God to accept fallen men.

Lev 22:24 That which has its testicles bruised, crushed, broken, or cut, you shall not offer to Yahweh; neither shall you do thus in your land-

Animals weren't to be castrated. We see in this not only a reflection of the huge value God places upon life in general, but also His sensitivity to animals. Verses 27 and 28 may reflect the same. Animals are usually castrated if they have defects so that they don't produce more deformed animals. But if Israel were obedient to the covenant, their animals would be healthy and not deformed, so obedience to this command would have been easier. If we follow the Spirit, then we are led into an upward spiral of spiritual life and an atmosphere whereby obedience leads to obedience.

Lev 22:25 Neither shall you offer any of these as the food of your God from the hand of a foreigner; because their corruption is in them. There is a blemish in them. They shall not be accepted for you'-

Paul saw the sacrifices of Israel as having some relevance to the Christian communion meal. He comments: "Are those who eat the victims not in communion with the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18); and the altar is clearly the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10). Eating of the communion meal was and is, therefore, fundamentally a statement of our fellowship with the altar, the Lord Jesus, rather than with others who are eating of Him. The bread and wine which we consume thus become antitypical of the Old Testament sacrifices; and they were repeatedly described as "Yahweh's food", laid upon the altar as "the table of Yahweh" (Lev. 21:6,8; 22:25; Num. 28:2; Ez. 44:7,16; Mal. 1:7,12). And it has been commented: "Current translations are inaccurate; *lehem panim* is the 'personal bread' of Yahweh, just as *sulhan panim* (Num. 4:7) is the 'personal table' of Yahweh". This deeply personal relationship between Yahweh and the offerer is continued in the breaking of bread; and again, the focus is upon the worshipper's relationship with Yahweh rather than a warning against fellowshipping the errors of fellow worshippers through this action. What *is* criticized in later Israel is the tendency to worship Yahweh through these offerings at the same time as offering sacrifice to other gods.

The idea of eating the bread of God, the sacrifice which represents His son, and thereby having fellowship with Him, should send our minds forward to John 6. "The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven", i.e. our Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:33). Not for nothing do some Rabbis speak of 'eating Messiah' as an expression of the fellowship they hope to have with Him at His coming. The sacrificial animals are spoken of as "the bread of your God" (Lev. 21:6,8,21; 22:25; Ez. 44:7 etc.), pointing forward to Christ. In addition to alluding to the manna, Christ must have been consciously making this connection when He spoke about himself as the bread of God. The only time "the bread of God" could be eaten by the Israelite was at the peace offering. When in this context Christ invites us to eat the bread of God, to eat His flesh and drink His blood (Jn. 6:51,52), He is looking back to the peace offering. But this is also an evident prophecy of the breaking of bread service. Many of the Jews just could not cope with what Christ was offering them when He said this. They turned back, physically and intellectually. They just could not grapple with the idea that Christ was that peace offering sacrifice, and He was

inviting them to sit down with God, as it were, and in fellowship with the Almighty, partake of the sacrificed body of His Son. But this is just what Christ is inviting each of us to do in the memorial meeting, to sit down in fellowship with Him, and eat of His bread. God really is here with us at the memorial meeting. He is intensely watching us. He is intensely with us, He really is going to save us, if only we can have the faith to believe how much He loves us, how much He wants us to share His fellowship and know His presence.

Lev 22:26 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
We must remember that these commands are given to the Levites- we are reading Leviticus. They were not to consider that the low standards of others were not their concern.

Lev 22:27 When a bull, or a sheep, or a goat, is born, then it shall remain seven days with its mother; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for the offering of an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
Animals often died after birth, and it was only by the eighth day that it was apparent whether or not it was deformed. This was to remind them that they were to offer the best to God, and not to offer that which cost them nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Lev 22:28 Whether it is a cow or ewe, you shall not kill it and its young both in one day-
The Mosaic law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness and extreme sensitivity to all, even animals. Read like this, the law about not boiling a kid in its mother's milk is similar to the prohibitions of killing on the same a cow and a calf, or a ewe and her lamb. It is likely that this was also related to a paganic fertility ritual, performed at harvest time ; and God didn't want His people to even remotely be associated with that. For He alone was the source of all fertility.

The peoples' behaviour in 1 Sam. 14:32 is portrayed as breaking every principle of the commands about eating blood in Lev. 17:10-14. They ate blood, and also killed calves and mothers on the same day (disobeying Lev. 22:28). All because they were more obedient to their oath to Saul not to eat anything until sundown, rather than to God's covenant. For all this, they were to have God against them and be cut off from God's people. The essence of this has been seen so many times in church history. An insistence upon petty legalism leads people to commit major sin. They are more obedient to the party line and the barked orders of their leadership, than to God. And the legalistic demands of their elders lead them to make utter shipwreck of their faith, breaking the most elemental principles of their covenant with God. Once sundown came and they were free from the oath to Saul, the people were totally disobedient to the covenant.

Lev 22:29 When you sacrifice a sacrifice of thanksgiving to Yahweh, you shall sacrifice it so that you may be accepted-
The Levite was not to just assume that an unacceptable peace offering was not his concern. He was not to just do his job as if it were a secular day job of mere religion. His passion was to be that others might be accepted by God; and as a nation of priests (1 Pet. 2:5) we should have the same spirit.

Lev 22:30 It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall leave none of it until the morning. I am Yahweh-
The law of the peace offerings was designed so as to encourage the person who decided to make such a freewill offering to execute immediately- they were to eat it the same day they offered it, and the sacrifice would be totally unacceptable if it was killed but left for some days (Lev. 19:5-7). If we have an impulse to respond to the Lord, we should respond to it immediately. This isn't mere impetuosity. It's a spirit of always having an immediacy of response, which empowers us to overcome the procrastination which holds us back so much. Lev. 7 warns against various ways of using the peace offering for the benefit of the offerer. One such idea may have been to kill meat and eat it over three days, and then claim this was a peace offering- when actually it involved eating meat which the offerer wanted to eat anyway. So the warning is against using voluntary offerings [in whatever way] as a front for doing our own thing, offering what cost us very little, and only appearing to others to have a great religious devotion. Lev. 19:7 warns that "If it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination". We note that "the third day" was not to be taken as 72 hours, and this affects our understanding of the chronology of the Lord's death and resurrection. If we think our freewill devotions to be God can be done as we wish without regard for His principles, then what we do is obnoxious to Him. The Hebrew word translated "abomination" is often used about idol worship; we will not be worshipping Him, but the idols of our own image and standing in the eyes of people.

Lev 22:31 Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and do them. I am Yahweh-
The word so often used for keeping / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13;

11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Lev 22:32 You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be made holy among the children of Israel. I am Yahweh Who makes you holy-
They as us were to live out in practice the status which God had given them. He had made them holy and acceptable in His sight, and they were therefore to live in a holy manner. Because we bear the Lord's Name by baptism into it, we *are* Christ to this world. Likewise, those in covenant relationship in the Old Testament bore Yahweh's Name, and were therefore in all ways to act appropriately lest their behaviour "profane My holy name".

Lev 22:33 Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am Yahweh-
The language echoes that of God to Abraham: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments. Whenever God speaks about His Name, it is in the context of His emphasizing His huge commitment to Israel as His people, often in the face of their weakness (Ex. 12:12; 15:26; 20:2; Ez. 20:5,6). The very meaning of God's Name is of itself encouraging- although it is somewhat masked in English translations. God 'is' not just in the sense that He exists, but in that He 'is' there with and for us. The verb behind 'YHWH' was "originally causative", i.e. God not only 'is' but He causes things to happen. We aren't to understand Him as passive, just a stone cold Name... but rather passionately active and causative in our sometimes apparently static and repetitive lives.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 23

Lev 23:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
There are connections between the various sections of Revelation and the Jewish feasts. Here's a summary:

Revelation 5 Passover Rev. 5:6,9 = Ex. 12:13

Revelation 7 Tabernacles Rev. 7:9,15,16 RV = Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Zech. 14:16-20

Revelation 8,9 Day Of Atonement Lev. 16:31; more detailed links in Harry Whittaker, Revelation: A Biblical Approach pp. 104,105.

Revelation 11 Dedication & Purim The Torah readings for these feasts were Num. 7 and Zech. 2- 4 about the dedication of the temple; Rev. 11:10 = Esther 9:19,22. The period from Tabernacles to Purim is exactly 5 months- as mentioned in Rev. 9:5

Revelation 12 Pentecost & Passover The Jews traditionally ask: "On this Sabbath, shall I reap?"

Revelation 14 Tabernacles

Revelation 15 + 16 Atonement & Passover Lev. 16; Ps. 118 the Hallel Psalm

Revelation 19 Passover Ps. 113,114 Passover Psalms

Revelation 21,22 Tabernacles

Laying out the material chronologically, we have:
Chapter 5: Passover
6 months

Chapter 7: Tabernacles
Chapters 8 & 9: Atonement and Tabernacles
1 year
Chapter 11: Dedication 5 months (Rev 9:5)
Chapter 11: Purim
Chapter 12: Passover and Pentecost
Chapter 14: Tabernacles
1 year
Chapter 15: Atonement
Chapter 16 & 19: Passover
Chapter 21 & 22: Tabernacles
1 year
The conclusion would therefore be that we have in the book of Revelation a literal account of the three and a half years tribulation, with the Jewish feasts being the key marker points. And it would appear there will be an especial period of five months tribulation as described between Revelation chapters 9 and 11.

Lev 23:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'The set feasts of Yahweh, which you shall proclaim to be holy assemblies, even these are My set feasts-
"Convocation" or "assembly" is LXX *ekklesia*. This is the word rendered "church" in the New Testament. We could reason from this therefore that "church" specifically refers to a gathering of God's people. At that time and during those moments, they are a church. When the entire community of believers is referred to as "church", this is how God views them- as if they are all gathered together at a gathering or convocation before Him. The word in its Biblical usage therefore doesn't refer to what we might call a denomination or fellowship.

Lev 23:3 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy assembly; you shall do no kind of work. It is a Sabbath to Yahweh in all your dwellings-
The Lord Jesus invites those who follow Him to accept the "rest" which He gives (Mt. 11:28), using the word which is used in the Septuagint for the Sabbath rest. Jesus was offering a life of Sabbath, of rest from trust in our own works (cp. Heb. 4:3,10). We shouldn't, therefore, keep a Sabbath one day per week, but rather live our whole lives in the spirit of the Sabbath. Just as we are to live the "eternal life" now, the type of life we will eternally live in the Kingdom is to be lived and experienced now. In this sense, as Hebrews makes clear, we "have entered into rest", and yet in another sense we labour now to enter into that rest at the Lord's return. This is a classic case of the "now but not yet" theme of the Bible.

We note that the Sabbath was one of the ten commandments. But the Sabbath was specifically "a sign between them (Israel) and Me (God), that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them" (Ez. 20:12). As such, it has never been intended to be binding on Gentiles (non-Jews). "... the Lord has given *you* [not all mankind] the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29); "... You [God] made known to them [Israel] Your holy Sabbath" (Neh. 9:14). The Old Covenant refers to the Law of Moses, which was replaced on the cross by the New Covenant. God "declared to you (Israel) His covenant which he commanded you (Israel) to perform, that is the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone" (Dt. 4:13). God "wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments" (Ex. 34:28). If we argue that keeping the covenant made in the ten commandments is necessary, we must also observe every detail of the entire Law, seeing that this is all part of the same covenant. It is evidently impossible to do this. "There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb ... the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:9,21). Those tablets, on which were the ten commandments, were the covenant. Heb. 9:4 speaks of "the tablets of the covenant". The ten commandments were written on the tablets of stone, which

comprised "the (old) covenant". Paul refers to this covenant as "written and engraved on stones", i.e. on the tablets of stone. He calls it "the ministry of death… the ministry of condemnation…" that which is "… passing away" (2 Cor. 3:7-11). However, nine of the ten commandments have been reaffirmed, in spirit at least, in the New Testament: 1st. - Eph. 4:6; 1 Jn. 5:21; Mt. 4:10; 2nd. - 1 Cor. 10:14; Rom. 1:25; 3rd. - James 5:12; Mt. 5:34,35; 5th. - Eph. 6:1,2; Col. 3:20; 6th. - 1 Jn. 3:15; Mt. 5:21; 7th. - Heb. 13:4; Mt. 5:27,28; 8th. - Rom. 2:21; Eph. 4:28; 9th. - Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25; 2 Tim. 3:3; 10th. - Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5. Numbers 3,5,6,7,8 and 9 can be found in 1 Tim. 1 alone, and numbers 1,2 and 10 in 1 Cor. 5. But never is the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath repeated in the New Testament as obligatory for us.

Lev 23:4 These are the set feasts of Yahweh, even holy assemblies, which you shall proclaim in their appointed season-
Paul alludes here when he says that the breaking of bread meeting- the only 'feast' we have under the New Covenant- is a proclaiming of Christ's death (1 Cor. 11:26).

Lev 23:5 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, is Yahweh's Passover-
Israel both kept Passover and went through the Red Sea at night. Indeed, it is stressed six times in Ex. 12 that it was "night", and hence Dt. 16:1 reminds them to carefully keep the Passover (i.e. at night), "for… your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night". Other latter day prophecies speak of the events of the second coming being at "night": Lot left Sodom in the very early hours of the morning; and it was "at midnight (that) there was a cry made" informing the virgins of their Lord's return (Mt. 25:6).

Lev 23:6 On the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread to Yahweh. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread-
These seven days were to recall the seven days of creation; for the exodus was a new creation of Israel, out of the water of the Red Sea.

Lev 23:7 In the first day you shall have a holy assembly. You shall do no regular work-
Work was obviously required in order to keep the Passover; the "work" in view is therefore secular work. But the Hebrew phrase "regular work" is that repeatedly used for "the work of the service" of the tabernacle, performed by the Levites (Ex. 35:21,24; 36:1,3,5; 1 Chron. 9:13,19; 23:24; 25:1 etc.). Perhaps this command in Leviticus was specifically addressed to the Levites, and the idea was that at the times of the festivals, the Levites were to focus upon keeping them in their own families and not be unduly taken up with the work of the sanctuary beyond what was required by the Mosaic law.

The principle is that we must not be so taken up with religious duty that we neglect our own personal worship, especially in our own families.

Lev 23:8 but you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh seven days. In the seventh day is a holy assembly: you shall do no regular work'-
The sacrifices on each of the seven days were two young bullocks, one ram and seven lambs for a burnt offering, with the accompanying meat offerings, and one goat for a sin offering (Num. 28:19-24). This explains why the Jews at the time of the Lord's death were careful about not being defiled so that they might eat the Passover (Jn. 18:28). The reference is not to the Passover lamb, but to these sacrifices which began the seven day feast of unleavened bread which followed the Passover feast, which only last one day.

Lev 23:9 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
We wonder whether the following commandment about the feast of ingathering was therefore given at a slightly different time to the preceding material about Passover; or whether the inspired recording of it wished to emphasize a subdivision.

Lev 23:10 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When you have come into the land which I give to you, and shall reap the harvest, then you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest-
It could be argued that the following ritual was specific to the first generation who entered the land. But see on :14. But there is no historical record of their obedience to it. Constantly Israel were reminded that God would indeed give them the promised Kingdom, even though at that time as they wandered in the wilderness it must've seemed merely a nice idea. He encourages us likewise.

Lev 23:11 and he shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted for you. On the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16). Joseph was likened to a sheaf (Gen. 37:7), as a type of the Christ who was the wave sheaf.

Lev 23:12 On the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb without blemish a year old for a burnt offering to Yahweh-
This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Lev 23:13 The grain offering with it shall be two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire to Yahweh for a pleasant aroma; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin-
The mention of bread and wine looked ahead to the breaking of bread meeting. But they were accessory sacrifices; they imply that there must be an offering which they accompany. And that speaks of the Lord Jesus, and of ourselves in response to Him.

“A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 23:14 You shall eat neither bread, nor roasted grain, nor fresh grain, until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God. This is a statute forever throughout

your generations in all your dwellings-
The following ritual was specific to the first generation who entered the land. But there is no historical record of their obedience to it. And yet subsequent generations were to keep this, feeling each year as if they had just entered the land. In this sense Biblical history becomes alive; we live in newness of life, as the historical records come alive for us time and again. History is not therefore bunk for us.

Lev 23:15 'You shall count from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed-
This sheaf represented the Lord Jesus; see on :16. This came to the feast of Pentecost, around 50 days after Passover. After the Lord's death there was to be a great harvest celebration- and that is the significance of the mass baptisms on the day of Pentecost, the greater harvest after the harvesting of the Lord Jesus in His resurrection. All those baptized chose to do so of their own freewill, but things worked out wonderfully in fulfilling the feasts in spiritual terms. We see here the interplay between Divine sovereignty and human volition.

Lev 23:16 even to the next day after the seventh Sabbath you shall number fifty days; and you shall offer a new grain offering to Yahweh-
Dt. 16:9 adds: "You must count for yourselves seven weeks: from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain you shall begin to number seven weeks". These 50 days led to the Greek term "Pentecost". The putting of the sickle to the barley harvest was therefore at Passover (Ex. 9:31). The wheat harvest was seven weeks after this. The Lord's death at Passover was as the barley harvest, and we recall that barley was the food of the poor. He died on 13 / 14 Nissan, and resurrected on 16/17 Nissan, which was when the 50 days to Pentecost began to be counted from; for that was the time when the sickle was put to the grain and the firstfruits harvested (Lev. 23:15). But at the feast of Pentecost 50 days later, there were the baptisms of 3000 people. This was as it were the wheat harvest, of which the Lord's resurrection was a foretaste and firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20,23). That great multitude represented all who would afterwards believe, and be finally harvested at the last day.

Lev 23:17 You shall bring out of your habitations two loaves of bread for a wave offering made of two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour. They shall be baked with yeast, for first fruits to Yahweh-
Yeast represents human sin (1 Cor. 5:8), and was often banned from being offered. But here it was required- to remind the people that they were sinners, and yet God still accepts the offerings of sinners. On the morning after the Passover Sabbath a sheaf of firstripe barley must be waived (i.e. passed to and fro) before the Lord; this represents the resurrection of Christ and the fact He is a firstfruits of us; but so encouragingly, a few weeks later at Pentecost the corresponding wave offering before the Lord was two

loaves *baked with leaven*. Leaven always represents sin or corruption. They represent Jews and Gentiles who because of Christ's resurrection and triumph can come into the presence of God despite their leaven, our natural wretched man of the flesh, not having been completely purged out of them. Personally I feel that the N.T. indicates that it is God's desire that we should break bread weekly; if so, then the seven days of unleavened bread afterwards then represent our restrained lives in the coming week until we come to break bread again.

Lev 23:18 You shall present with the bread seven lambs without blemish a year old, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to Yahweh, with their grain offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of a sweet aroma to Yahweh-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Lev 23:19 You shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old for a sacrifice of peace offerings-
This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Lev 23:20 The priest shall wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering before Yahweh, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to Yahweh for the priest-
The two lambs offered for a burnt offering at the end of harvest contrast with the single lamb offered at the start of it (:12). This was to underline that the receipt of blessing from God must be responded to in dedication to Him- which is what the burnt offering represented.

Lev 23:21 You shall make proclamation on the same day: there shall be a holy assembly to you; you shall do no regular work. This is a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations-

The celebration of harvest was typically a celebration of the fruits of human labour. But God's people were to be careful to realize that any harvest blessings were ultimately of God and not of their labour.

Lev 23:22 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap into the corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest: you shall leave them for the poor, and for the foreigner. I am Yahweh your God'-
The Israelites were reminded of this principle at this point in the legislation lest they become so caught up with realizing their own material blessings that they forgot that others were not so blessed. Whenever we reflect upon our material blessings we are to immediately remind ourselves that others somewhere are not so blessed, and we have a duty towards them. The idea was that the poor could come after the field had been harvested and glean. By allowing gleaners to come and pick up dropped grain, Boaz's grace was going far beyond the letter of the law. This was taking that law way beyond what it said, in a spirit of grace. This would account for the hint in Ruth 2:22 that not every landowner allowed such gleaning in their fields. Likewise he extrapolates from the law of Levirate marriage to marry Ruth. So we see that the law of Moses was not a chain, a leash binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; for Israel is God's partner, not His dog. But rather was it designed as a springboard towards a culture of grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice.

Lev 23:23
Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The feast of trumpets is mentioned separately to that of the day of atonement, but it was clearly intended to prepare for it. To blow trumpets was to proclaim a King, or to rejoice in his kingship. Yahweh was Israel's King. Ps. 81:2,4 interprets the feast as jubilation that God is king and judge of Israel- and this thought of judgment leads to the soberness of the day of Atonement. Yahweh is indeed proclaimed as judge, but we can jubilate in that because He will judge with grace and forgiveness.

Lev 23:24 Speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest to you, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy assembly-
Neh. 8:2 records that this feast was used in order to teach the law to the assembled people. It was a lead up to the affliction of souls on the tenth day of that month at the day of atonement.

Lev 23:25 You shall do no regular work; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh'-
There is repeated emphasis upon not working whilst remembering God's saving work.

Throughout the Mosaic law, there was the clear teaching that it was God's work and not that of man which was to be celebrated and was to be the basis of relationship with God.

Lev 23:26 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The feast of trumpets featured both conviction of sin and also joy in God's salvation and forgiveness; the same strange mixture of emotions we see in the record of its observance in Neh. 8:1-10, and which we experience in our own lives. And this was all to prepare for the same mixture of emotions at the day of Atonement which followed straight on.

Lev 23:27 However on the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement: it shall be a holy assembly to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
"Afflict your souls" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing. The details of the offerings are given in Num. 29:7-15.

We note from Zech. 8:19 that the fast of the seventh month, which clearly refers to this fasting at the day of atonement, was to be a time of joy and cheerful feasting once Israel were assured of their forgiveness. And this was fulfilled to a limited extent when the exiles [apparently on the day of atonement] mourned in conviction of their sins, and then with their eyes streaming with tears, were told to go and rejoice with a feast (Neh. 8:10). It was this spirit which was to be found in the subsequent feast of tabernacles, which was to commemorate and rejoice in sin forgiven. But there is reason to think that the exiles on that occasion were told to in fact celebrate on that very day of atonement; another indication that God never intended His law to be eternally fixed and literally unchanging. Although it is worth considering whether in fact the law was actually requiring fasting; rather was the emphasis upon affliction of souls after conviction of personal sin.

Lev 23:28 You shall do no kind of work in that same day; for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement for you before Yahweh your God-
The Hebrew definitely reads as if it is the day of atonement which made atonement. This verse has been clung on to by Judaism at times when the temple was not standing and

the sacrifices associated with the day of atonement were not offered. Their argument was and is that it is the day of atonement which makes atonement, because the atonement is from God's sovereign grace. And indeed there is some truth in this. For it was ever impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, and Paul's argument in Hebrews is based upon the implications of the day of Atonement. It indeed looks ahead to another and more ultimate atonement, by God's grace through His pronouncement. And that pronouncement was made regardless of the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices; it was made over the blood of His crucified Son.

Lev 23:29 For whoever it is who shall not bow himself down in that same day shall be cut off from his people-

But only God could see which soul did not afflict itself (see AV). So many of these laws were not able to be judged by men; and indeed Yahweh was Israel's judge and not any human judiciary. Hence in Is. 58:3-5 we read of God's judgment of an insincerely kept day of Atonement. The people fasted and bowed down their heads- but God saw that it was an affliction of soul, and in fact they did this for the sake of their own egos. They were to afflict their souls and on this basis give practical help to the afflicted souls (Is. 58:3,5,10). And this was to be the spirit of the subsequent feast of booths. Our generosity to others who are afflicted is to be upon the basis of our own conviction of personal sin and self affliction because of it.

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after

touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Lev 23:30 Whoever it is who does any kind of work in that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people-
As explained on :29, the emphasis is upon how God Himself, and not His people, would cut off or destroy such a person. Whilst work was forbidden during the other feasts, this threat is added only here concerning the Day of Atonement. This was how important it was for them to realize that atonement for our sins is in the end by God's grace through the sacrifice of the animals who represented Christ; and not according to our works.

God in the prophets complains that *His people* don't keep the Sabbath. He didn't cut off the individuals as He threatened. The Lord (Mt. 12:5) said that the priests " profaned" the Sabbath; He didn't say that because they kept the spirit of it, that was acceptable. By using a word as extreme as " profaned" He seems to be even emphasizing the point. This isn't to say that God says but doesn't do. It's just that His grace and patience is beyond His law.

Lev 23:31 You shall do no kind of work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings-
We note how God so wished the people to cease from their own works, and to believe in justification by faith through grace, rather than by their own works.

Lev 23:32 It shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall bow down yourselves. In the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall keep your Sabbath-
The Sabbath is always called God's Sabbath, celebrating His rest from His works; here, the Sabbath associated with the day of Atonement is called Israel's Sabbath. The need to rest from their own works is so strongly stressed.

Lev 23:33 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The material about the feasts is clearly split up into clearly defined sections, probably to assist memorization in a largely illiterate society.

Lev 23:34 Speak to the children of Israel, and say, 'On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the feast of tents for seven days to Yahweh-
This was to celebrate the joy of forgiveness received at the day of Atonement. The

communal nature of it was in order to provide an opportunity for the generosity to others which was intended to arise from personal experience of God's gift of salvation and forgiveness. See on :29.

Lev 23:35 On the first day shall be a holy assembly: you shall do no regular work-
This huge stress upon not working is to be noted. The feast was celebrating God's forgiveness of His people on the day of Atonement, and it was critical for Israel to realize that it was His grace and not their works which was the basis of their salvation. It is therefore quite wrong to think of the Mosaic law as teaching salvation by works; it taught the very opposite.

Lev 23:36 Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. On the eighth day shall be a holy assembly to you; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. It is a solemn assembly; you shall do no regular work-
The details of the offerings are given in Num. 29:12-38. 13 bullocks were to be sacrificed on the first day, and the number of bullocks decreased by one every day until seven bullocks on the last day. Additionally there were to be two rams and fourteen iambs. The sin offering on each day was one kid of the goats. On the eighth day the burnt offering consisted of one bullock, one ram, seven lambs, and the sin offering of one kid of the goats. Over the eight days, this made a total of seventy-one bullocks, fifteen rams, one hundred and five lambs and eight kids plus meat and drink offerings.

Lev 23:37 These are the appointed feasts of Yahweh, which you shall proclaim to be holy assemblies, to offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh, a burnt offering, and a grain offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, each on its own day-
This is the word used in Ex. 5:13 of the 'daily work quota' of Israel under Egyptian abuse. But the phrase is used of their daily work for Yahweh, in collecting manna (Ex. 16:4) and serving in the tabernacle (Lev. 23:37). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

Lev 23:38 besides the Sabbaths of Yahweh, and besides your gifts, and besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to Yahweh-
The repeated use of the word “besides” emphasized that times of special commitment

to God shouldn’t lead us to forget the regular sacrifices and devotions which we are to make. An example of this would be that if one spends some days away at a church gathering, we are not to forget our own personal quiet time with God, prayer and Bible reading.

The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Lev 23:39 So on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruits of the land, you shall keep the feast of Yahweh seven days: on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest-
Leviticus was given at the beginning of the wilderness journey (see on Lev. 1:1). There was continual encouragement that they would indeed possess the promised kingdom and eat the fruits of that land. Just as we are given such continual encouragement by the same God whose greatest will is that we should inherit the Kingdom. This feast would not therefore have been kept whilst Israel lived in tents all the time in the wilderness. Sadly they would have likely considered it an irrelevancy, as in their hearts they returned to Egypt. The solemn rest was ultimately the "rest" of the Kingdom which Joshua didn't give Israel, but the Lord Jesus will. Rev. 7:9-17 uses the imagery of the feast of tabernacles to describe the entire Kingdom of God upon earth; then we will spend eternity in joyful fellowship, celebrating the gift of atonement made possible by the Lord Jesus. The ingathering of fruits of the land / Kingdom would then refer to the time when all the people of God have been gathered in. The firstfruits of that harvest were ultimately the Lord Jesus, but the image also appears to refer to a specific group of Jews saved during the last tribulation (see on Rev. 14:4).

Lev 23:40 You shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God seven days-
The image of rejoicing Israelites with palms in their hands is the image of Rev. 7:9, used of the final joy of the Kingdom, when forgiveness of sins and atonement comes to its ultimate term. Neh. 8:15 records the fulfillment of this "as it is written" by taking "olive

branches". But the olive branches are not listed here; we conclude that obedience "as it is written" still involves keeping the spirit rather than the letter of the law. God is not a literalist nor a legalist, and to interpret the Mosaic law in such a casuistic way is to miss the spirit of the entire law.

Lev 23:41 You shall keep it a feast to Yahweh seven days in the year: it is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall keep it in the seventh month-
The seven days looks forward to the eternity of God's Kingdom. For this feast celebrated the atonement received on the day of atonement.

The whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be “an everlasting statute unto you” (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was “the covenant of an everlasting priesthood” (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but “the priesthood being changed (by Christ’s work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). There was an “everlasting covenant” between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This “everlasting covenant” evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase “everlasting covenant” is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David’s throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated “eternal”, “perpetual”, “everlasting” in the Old Testament? James Strong defines olahm as literally meaning “the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity”. It was God’s purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn’t grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of “practically eternity”. For all of us, the specter of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God’s eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Lev 23:42 You shall dwell in booths seven days. All who are native-born in Israel shall dwell in booths-
The dwelling in booths / tents is not specifically recorded in the historical record, but we do read that on leaving Egypt, Israel camped at Succoth- a related word to "booths" in Hebrew (Ex. 12:37; 13:20 cp. Gen. 33:17). They camped there in tents; but they camped

there in fear of their own vulnerability before Egypt / the world, as well as relief that they had left Egypt / the world. And God wanted His people to always remember that spirit. The booths were not strictly tents, but as it were miniature replicas of the tabernacle. And it was Yahweh who dwelt in the tabernacle. Their dwelling in the mini tabernacles was therefore in order to encourage them to manifest Him, and His generous spirit. Therefore Dt. 16:14 commands that the Gentiles and marginal people should be entertained at this time. So the idea was that they should be generously entertained within the booths erected by the Israelites. This would be an appropriate way of reflecting the generosity shown to them in personal forgiveness (see on :29) and at the deliverance from Egypt (:43).

Lev 23:43 that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God'-
It's not recorded in the account of the Exodus that God made Israel dwell in booths; but see on :42. Often later Scripture gives us extra information about what happened at a historical event. This is why we need to use the entire Bible in order to get the correct picture about what happened in the historical sections.

Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46;), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

Lev 23:44 Moses declared to the children of Israel the appointed feasts of Yahweh-
The Hebrew for "feasts" means literally an assembly, and the same word is translated "synagogue". The essence of the feasts was therefore the gathering together of God's people, and it is in this spirit that all assemblies of God's people are kept under the new covenant. The Old Testament feasts were therefore by their nature not intended to be kept individually. And it has ever been God's intention that His people should not serve Him in total isolation from each other.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 24

Lev 24:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The whole congregation of Israel were to bring a small amount of oil and flour for the bread each week. The constantly burning oil and presence of the small loaves was a symbol of how Israel were continually before Him. Yet the amount of oil and flour required each week was miniscule in comparison to the size of all Israel- there were probably three million of them at the time this law was given (Ex. 12:37). But God is the God of small things. In the very small things we offer Him, we are remembered before Him. Israel were taught that this tiny offering of oil and flour each week was so highly significant; offering even very small things shouldn't be seen by us as unnecessary or insignificant before God. The way Jesus noticed the widow offering two tiny coins and commented upon it is proof of this (Lk. 21:2).

Lev 24:2 Command the children of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually-

"Pure olive oil" apparently refers to olive juice which bursts naturally from the first ripe olives. But we enquire where Israel obtained olive oil from in the wilderness, especially such "pure" olive oil to such great amounts as required here? Perhaps they had been given lots of it as they left Egypt and gave it to the priests. But for 40 years? I suggest as on Ex. 27:8 that this was God's ideal intention, and many of these laws were applicable only in contexts when obedience to them was possible. God's law is not therefore at all a reflection of a God who is a literalist or legalist. For by its nature, the law of Moses shows that He was not like that.

Lev 24:3 Outside of the veil of the Testimony, in the Tent of Meeting, shall Aaron keep it in order from evening to morning before Yahweh continually: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations-

Ex. 27:21 adds "Aaron and his sons". "The tent of meeting" is the tent where God met with His people over the blood of atonement upon the ark of the covenant. But that "meeting" was effectively not with the people, as only the priests entered into the holy place, and the high priest alone, only once / year, into the ultimate place where God met with His people- the Most Holy place. But the candlestick was to be kept burning in order to point the way into the Most Holy. All this suggested that there was something lacking in the entire system. God was prepared and even willing to meet with His people over the blood of atonement on the day of atonement. That meeting was therefore predicated upon their repentance and forgiveness. But it would have left the people aware that a fuller meeting with God was somehow promised. And this would come to full term when the Lord's death tore down the veil, and the way into the holiest was opened for all, not just the priests nor the High Priest.

Lev 24:4 He shall keep in order the lamps on the pure gold lampstand before Yahweh continually-
The lampstand is used as a symbol of the ecclesia in the visions of Revelation 2 and 3. The purpose of the ecclesia is to enable the oil of the Spirit to be burnt, to turn it into light. We are to keep our own personal light burning continually, day and night. Jesus had this in mind when He likened us to women waiting for the bridegroom to come at night, whose oil lamps should not be allowed to go out (Mt. 25:8).

The lampstand is a symbol of the ecclesia; the lamps are us. The oil is the spirit of Jesus. Aaron was as Jesus. He daily 'orders' us, enabling us to shine. Jesus understood this to be so in saying that He came to fan men's' lamps into brighter light, to mend smoking flax, not give up on it. And He is actively about this work on a daily basis as were the priests.

Lev 24:5 You shall take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes of it: two tenth parts of an ephah shall be in one cake-
These "cakes" were quite large seeing that about six pints of flour were used for each of them.

Lev 24:6 You shall set them in two rows, six on a row, on the pure gold table before Yahweh-
The bread on the table connects with the breaking of bread at the table of the Lord under the New Covenant. The bread was replaced- as it were eaten by God- each week (:8). Whilst there is no specific command as to how frequently we should break bread, it would seem from Acts 20:7 that some of the early Christians did it weekly, and this is no bad example for us to follow. Ex. 25:30 expresses this as "You shall set bread of the presence on the table before me always". "The bread of the presence" doesn't simply mean that it was bread which was in God's presence; for that is the meaning covered by "before Me always". Rather the idea is that God's especial presence was there in the eating of the bread. The God who dwelt the other side of the veil, over the mercy seat, as it were came out from there and was present when the bread was eaten. We may have here some hint that there is a special presence of the Father and Son at the breaking of bread, which is the Christian equivalent of this table (Mt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 11:10).

Lev 24:7 You shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may make the bread be for a memorial, even an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
Many times we read of God being provoked to remember someone, often for good (Lev. 24:7 LXX "that God may mercifully remember"; Ps. 69:1 LXX; 37:1 LXX; Zech. 6:14; 1 Kings 17:18). This language of limitation surely suggests that the God who could be

omniscient over time, not needing to have anything brought back to His memory, allows Himself to 'forget' so that sin or righteousness again brings things to His remembrance. Thus generosity and prayer is a memorial before God in the sense that it brings a person to His memory or attention (Acts 10:4), and He appropriately responds in their lives.

The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Paul writes often that he "makes mention" or 'remembers' his brethren in regular prayer (Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 4). The Greek *mneia* is the word used in the LXX for the "memorial" of the incense or the meal offering (Lev. 2:2,16; 6:15; 24:7), or the constant fire on the altar (Lev. 6:12,13). That fire, that flour, that incense, had to be carefully and consciously prepared; it had to be the result of man's labour. And likewise, Paul seems to be saying, he first of all thought through the cases which he then presented to the Father.

Lev 24:8 Every Sabbath day he shall set it in order before Yahweh continually. It is on the behalf of the children of Israel an everlasting covenant-
The whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be “an everlasting statute unto you” (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was “the covenant of an everlasting priesthood” (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but “the priesthood being changed (by Christ’s work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). There was an “everlasting covenant” between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This “everlasting covenant” evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase “everlasting covenant” is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David’s throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated “eternal”, “perpetual”, “everlasting” in the Old Testament? James Strong defines olahm as literally meaning “the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity”. It was God’s purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn’t grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of “practically eternity”. For all of

us, the specter of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God's eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Lev 24:9 It shall be for Aaron and his sons; and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire by a perpetual statute-
The priests had no inheritance amongst Israel, they survived by eating parts of the offerings. Their eating of them represented God's 'eating' of the sacrifices, the altar being described as His table (Mal. 1:7,12), and His acceptance of the offerer and fellowship with them- for eating what had been brought to you was a sign of acceptance and religious fellowship with the donor.

Lev 24:10 The son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian-
This suggests there was some intermarriage between the Egyptians and Israelites, which explains why a mixed multitude left Egypt with the Israelites. That mixed multitude were apparently not spiritually committed to the things of Israel's God once the going got tough in the desert (Ex. 11:4). The similarity of phrasing with Ex. 2:11 leads the rabbis to claim that this was the son of the Egyptian whom Moses slew. See on :17.

Went out among the children of Israel; and the son of the Israelite woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp-
"Went out" is to be connected with how the rebels of Num. 16:27 "came out" in argument as in Prov. 25:8. This striving together could have been in a legal sense, before the judges. The idea is not necessarily of a literal fight between the two men. Perhaps when he was judged against, he blasphemed (:10). The idea is certainly that his blasphemy was done openly and publically in the spirit of rebellion. As the Israelites encamped according to "the names of the tribes of their fathers" (Num. 26:55), it could be that this man whose father was an Egyptian was somehow encamped outside the camp, and he had come into the camp to foment rebellion and express his anger at his position. However the command in :17 could suggest that the half Egyptian had slain an Israelite in this striving.

Lev 24:11 The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name, and cursed; and they brought him to Moses-
Perhaps he repeated the language of Pharaoh who did the same (Ex. 5:2). The context is of the shewbread, so perhaps the striving together in :10 was connected with the use of

the shewbread. Bringing the case to Moses suggests that it had first been brought before the system of judges beneath him (Ex. 18:13-26). This confirms the suggestion made on :10 that the striving together may have been before the judges, as it were in court.

His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan-
If we marry out of the family of faith (:10), our children may well not have the reverence towards the true God which they should have. Her name may have been preserved as a permanent reproach for her influence upon her apostate son; or perhaps we are to understand her name, "Peaceable", and her father's name "Man of the words", and her tribe "Judgment", as implying that she was faithful and not associated with her son's apostacy.

Lev 24:12 They put him in custody, until the will of Yahweh about this should be declared to them-
A similar incident was dealt with the same way in Num. 15:34. It was clear that the person should be executed, but perhaps the question was what method of execution should be used, as it was unclear whether he was to be treated as a Jew or Gentile.

Lev 24:13 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The penalty of death by stoning was appropriate to an Israelite, whereas Gentiles would have been slain by the sword. So although the man was the son of an Egyptian, and foreigners only entered the congregation after three generations (Dt. 23:8), this man was treated as an Israelite. So as ever in God's judgments, we discern even there some element of grace.

Lev 24:14 Bring out of the camp him who cursed; and let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him-
The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorossa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Lev 24:15 You shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, 'Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin-
This contrasts with how the one who blasphemed the name of Yahweh was to be killed (:16). The command is specifically in the context of the Egyptian man who had blasphemed Yahweh. It is as if God is saying that blasphemers of their own gods were still in sin, but Yahweh pronounced no judgment upon them. This is one of a number of Biblical examples of where God requires some level of integrity from those who don't know Him and have their own wrong religious ideas. He even apparently commends the Gentiles for not changing their gods and being faithful to them, whilst lamenting Israel's penchant for many gods and their unfaithfulness to all of them.

Lev 24:16 He who blasphemes the name of Yahweh, he shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him: the foreigner as well as the native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death-
This seems to answer the unclarity which was the reason for Moses asking God's advice; they were unsure whether to treat this man as a foreigner or an Israelite. See on :12,13.

Lev 24:17 He who strikes any man mortally shall surely be put to death-
This additional clarification could be in the immediate context of the striving between the half Egyptian and the Israelite in :10. Perhaps the Israelite had been killed. If indeed this man was the son of the Egyptian whom Moses slew (see on :10), then we can better understand why his abiding anger led him to want to slay an Israelite in revenge.

Lev 24:18 He who strikes an animal mortally shall make it good, life for life-
The context seems to suggest that this was a slaying of an animal intentionally in order to damage the owner.

Lev 24:19 If anyone injures his neighbour; as he has done, so shall it be done to him-
This command may be in connection with the fight between the two men of :10. The equivalent command in Ex. 21:22-25 is also in the context of two men fighting.

Lev 24:20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has injured someone, so shall it be done to him-
When the Lord Jesus gave His commandments as an elaboration of Moses' Law, that Law was still in force. He didn't say 'When I'm dead, this is how you should behave...'. He was showing us a higher level; but in the interim period until the Law was taken out of the way, He was opening up the *choice* of taking that higher level, even though making

use of the concessions which Moses offered would not have been a sin during that period. Thus He spoke of not insisting on "an eye for an eye"; even though in certain cases the Law did allow for this. He was saying: 'You can keep Moses' Law, and take an eye for an eye. But there is a higher level: to simply forgive'.

Lev 24:21 He who kills an animal shall make it good; and he who kills a man shall be put to death-
The slain animal was to replaced by another animal; the slain man was to be replaced, as it were, by the death of the murderer. The idea of 'making it good' could possibly hint that through his willing submission to death, the murderer could be forgiven. The Hebrew *shalam* carries with it the idea of making peace, but the death of the murderer could only make peace with God rather than with the man whom he had slain.

Lev 24:22 You shall have one kind of law, for the foreigner as well as the native-born; for I am Yahweh your God'-
If we have unbelievers into our homes or any situation where we are in charge of the social situation, we are to ensure that God's principles are upheld. Again translating this into modern terms- if parents have unbelieving children in their home to play with their own children, God's principles are still to be upheld by the visitors.

The inclusiveness of Yahweh of His people, the nature of who His Name reveals Him to be, should of itself have led Israel to not discriminate against other races: "For I am Yahweh your God". Because Yahweh *is* who He is, therefore we must be like Him; His very existence and being demands it of us (Lev. 20:7 cp. 19:2, 10). If we really know the characteristics implicit in His Name, we will put our trust in Him (Ps. 9:10; 124:8). If we see / know God in the experiential sense, we will do no evil (3 Jn. 11).

Lev 24:23 Moses spoke to the children of Israel; and they brought out him who had cursed out of the camp, and stoned him with stones. The children of Israel did as Yahweh commanded Moses-
The essential idea of the Hebrew word used for cursing here is to treat as a light thing (s.w. 1 kings 16:31 "as if it had been a light thing"). To treat the things of God as a mere hobby, as light rather than "heavy", which is the idea of the Hebrew *kabod* translated "glory"... is to curse God. It is the same idea as taking God's Name in vain, as a vain, light thing. And this is the problem with hobby level religion. What may begin as a mere religious hobby may lead us to the eternal weight of God's glory. And no longer must we treat these things as a light thing. True spirituality must eclipse mere religion. And if it doesn't, then we risk effectively cursing God, treating Him as a light thing, just a passing part of our lives...

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 25

Lev 25:1 Yahweh said to Moses in Mount Sinai-
The assumption at this point was that those hearing these words would soon be established in the promised land. God foreknew they would not, but He goes ahead with His ideal potentials with absolute enthusiasm and legitimate enthusiasm.

Lev 25:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a Sabbath to Yahweh-
As will be explained below, the whole purpose of the legislation was to teach Israel spiritual things. Whilst leaving land fallow is indeed a good idea, we must remember that the incredible fecundity promised was the result of Divine blessing for covenant keeping, and not of agricultural technique.

Lev 25:3 Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in its fruits-
The parallel here is with six days of work followed by the seventh day of rest. The seventh year was therefore to be a temporary suspension of the curse, the possibility of having a taste of the Kingdom now; just as we today can live "the eternal life", the kind of life which we will eternally live in the Kingdom. The idea of the Sabbath year was also to lead Israel away from the mentality of justification by works. And that was to involve faith in God's provision, rather than trust in our own works. We note that work is a commandment; there is no way to avoid the curse. But the Sabbath day and Sabbath year shows that even in this life, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom when the curse shall be no more.

Lev 25:4 but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to Yahweh. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard-
The legislation about the feasts stressed so often that Israel were not to work at these times. The weekly Sabbath likewise taught the need to trust in God rather than human works. The spirit of it all was that "There's more to life than work, put relationship with God, in the Spirit of the Sabbath rest of the Kingdom, before mad accumulation of wealth". Having hopefully learned these lessons week by week and feast by feast, the people were thus spiritually educated for the far greater test of not working for a whole year, or even three years, in the Jubilee year. There is no historical evidence that Israel ever kept this legislation as outlined here. They failed to learn the lessons and to be taken further in faith. This is why the land had to keep its Sabbath during the years of exile to compensate for how it had never been allowed to rest under the tenure of the Israelites.

Lev 25:5 What grows of itself in your harvest you shall not reap, and the grapes of your undressed vine you shall not gather. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land-
This was so that the poor could eat (Ex. 23:11). So through this experience, the landowners were treated as the poor and landless. They too had to live by faith in God's provision and not in their own works or ownership of assets. God works likewise with us all, helping us to identify with the poor, that we might have a heart and identity with those who lack our resources. LXX has "thou shalt not gather fully the grapes of thy dedication". The idea may be that the fruit of the vine was the best fruit, but it was to be dedicated to God. Israel were not therefore to make or drink wine in the Sabbath or Jubilee years.

Lev 25:6 The Sabbath of the land shall be for food for you; for yourself, for your servant, for your maid, for your hired servant, and for your stranger, who lives as a foreigner amongst you-
Ex. 23:11 expresses the reason for this as being "that the poor of your people may eat". It's true that often, although not always, poverty is partly due to poor decisions and mismanagement, and any aid given is often misused. And it's true that the materially poor are partly poor [in many cases] exactly because of that. And yet the Bible teaches generosity to "the poor". There is no attempt in the Bible teaching about "the poor" to subdivide them into the genuinely poor, and those who are poor because of their own fault or laziness, or who are asking for support when they don't actually need it. A person who comes to you claiming need is "the poor". Thus Israel were not to farm their land in the seventh year, "that the poor of your people may eat" (Ex. 23:11). This immediately raised the issue that all manner of people could eat the fruit which grew naturally on the land that year- but there is no legislation to try to limit who had access to it. Those who had food in their barns might eat what grew- but there was no mechanism within the law which controlled that. The point is, in our spiritual poverty we are just the same. We are in that position partly because of our human situation and other factors over which we have no control; but also partly and largely because we choose to be in it. We cry to God for the riches of His forgiveness- and we waste it, by doing the same sin over and again. Our hold on spiritual things is weak, we don't respond with the grace and appreciation we ought to. We're spiritually lazy. We're no better than those who are materially poor through nothing but their own fault. Our generosity to them is a reflection of our recognition of this.

Lev 25:7 For your livestock also, and for the animals that are in your land, shall all its increase be for food-
LXX "the wild beasts". God feeds wild animals from that which grows naturally, and here He wanted the people to do the same; to experience and live out something of His

generosity to all. But the acceptance that wild animals would exist is perhaps a tacit recognition that the full blessing of the covenant would not come, for the presence of wild beasts in the land was a sign of lack of blessing (Lev. 26:22). It's rather like the promise that there would be no poor in the land, and yet there is plenty of Mosaic legislation about poor Israelites. We see in this God's acceptance that His people would not live and experience as they should, and yet His legislation accounted for that- for He so thirsted for relationship with them. And He likewise is acceptant of our imperfection and failure to receive the blessings we could and should receive.

Lev 25:8 You shall count off seven Sabbaths of years, seven times seven years; and there shall be to you the days of seven Sabbaths of years, even forty-nine years-
The seventh year was also a Sabbath year, so the idea is that there would be two years when the land was not sown, which meant that there would be a bumper harvest given enough for three years (:21).

Lev 25:9 Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land-
This clearly established that the jubilee of abundant Divine provision and rest from works was a result of the atonement. That atonement clearly looked forward to the work of the Lord on the cross, as Hebrews makes clear. Therefore the things of the jubilee year are those of the Kingdom made possible for us through that.

Lev 25:10 You shall make the fiftieth year holy, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee to you; and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family-
To preach [proclaim] the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4:19) is parallel with "You shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants" (Lev. 25:10). Likewise there are to be found other such allusions to the proclamation of Jubilee: "We as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive... the grace of God... a time accepted... in the day of salvation [the Jubilee] have I succoured thee: behold, now is the *accepted time*" (2 Cor. 6:1,2) "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached [proclaimed, s.w. Lk. 4:19] in his name among all nations" (Lk. 24:47). This is alluded to in Lk. 4:19 where we read that Jesus proclaimed "the acceptable year of the Lord". We are to make the same proclamation in preaching the good news to all people- "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached ["proclaimed", s.w. Lk. 4:19] in his name among all nations" (Lk. 24:47). The year of Jubilee began with the Day of Atonement, which is understood in the New Testament as foreshadowing the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sins. We are now to live in a permanent state of Jubilee, announcing it to all people. The Hebrew word translated "jubilee" carries the idea of forgiveness, release, freedom. This is our message to all the people of the world.

Lev 25:11 That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee to you. In it you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself, nor gather from the undressed vines-
LXX "neither shall ye gather its dedicated fruits". The idea may be that the fruit of the vine was the best fruit, but it was to be dedicated to God. Israel were not therefore to make or drink wine in the Sabbath or Jubilee years. The confusion between 49th and 50th year is because the seventh year was a jubilee year anyway, so there were two years when the land wasn't cultivated. In the Sabbath year they could eat what grew naturally, but not in the Jubilee year. This was a massive leap of faith. Only God's law would judicially require such behaviour, in faith in His provision.

Lev 25:12 For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat of its increase out of the field-
The Jubilee year is presented as the land itself. They were to eat the increase of the jubilee year in that their barns were to be full of harvest. They were not to eat that which grew naturally (:11). We think of how the harvests of Egypt gave enough food for seven years, and of how the rich fool thought he had enough in his for many years. But the food which could be stored would have only been basic grain- none of the nicer things which are specifically cultivated would have kept in store for so long. So the Jubilee was a call to live a basic life, remembering their fathers sustained by the harvests of Egypt- by grace alone.

Lev 25:13 In this Year of Jubilee each of you shall return to his property-
"His property" is intentionally contrasted with the reality that "the land is Mine" (:23). The concept of 'private property' is indeed a myth. For we die, and leave it all behind. The Mosaic law sought to teach this- because "The land is mine", what appeared to be a 'sale' of property wasn't really a sale at all- quite simply because the land was God's (Lev. 25:13,23). And likewise our 'generosity', as David observed, isn't really that at all- for we only give God back what He has given us. In fact, when you think about it, the only 'thing' that Biblically a person can say is 'theirs' is their partner or family- even though these are also given of God. And so it's sadly understandable that a materialistic, wealthy society always becomes one that has a low estimate of the family unit and the exclusive sanctity of marriage.

The reality was that the property returned to the owner; but we read that the owner was to return to his property. We see encouraged a mutuality between each individual and their place or inheritance in the Kingdom.

Lev 25:14 If you sell anything to your neighbour, or buy from your neighbour, you shall not wrong one another-

"Do wrong..." is the word used of how the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites in Egypt (Ex. 22:21). The oppression would be through deceiving the buyer concerning how many years were left until the Jubilee. It would be like selling a ten year lease for the price of a forty year lease. But Israel did oppress the simple and ignorant (Ez. 22:7,29), and so were oppressed by Babylon (s.w. Jer. 50:16).

Lev 25:15 According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbour. Relative to the number of years of the crops he shall sell to you-
The ultimate time of Jubilee will be at the return of Christ. We are to perceive the value of all things we buy relative to this. Effectively, the Jubilee was a time of release from debt. “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mt. 6:12) is probably another allusion to the Jubilee. We release / forgive men their debt to us, as God does to us. If we choose not to participate in this Jubilee by not releasing others, then we cannot expect to receive it ourselves.

Lev 25:16 According to the length of the years you shall increase its price, and according to the shortness of the years you shall diminish its price; for he is selling the number of the crops to you-
The idea seems to be, the number of harvests expected until the Jubilee year. But the number of harvests depended upon Israel's blessings for obedience. If they were disobedient, then there would be no harvests. If they were obedient, then every year they would not harvest the land before the time for sowing had come (Lev. 26:5; Am. 9:13). So there was built in to this law an opportunity to reflect upon the potentials possible if they were obedient. God's ideal was that there would be a continual harvest; but His legislation in Lev. 25:16 accepts the reality that this would not happen. His awareness of our failure to reach our potential height of blessing is seen throughout His word. See on :7.

Lev 25:17 You shall not wrong one another; but you shall fear your God; for I am Yahweh your God-
An awareness that Yahweh is intensely watching our treatment of our brethren should have an abiding effect upon us. All forms of harshness, dishonesty and unkind division from them are thereby forbidden to any who truly fear God. For "wrong one another", see on :14 (s.w.).

Lev 25:18 Therefore you shall do My statutes, and keep My ordinances and do them; and you shall dwell in the land in safety-
The Hebrew mishpat, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only

felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word mishpat, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Lev 25:19 The land shall yield its fruit, and you shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety-
But this was conditional upon their obedience (Lev. 26:5,6). This is one of many examples where "Shall..." is used not as total prophecy, but as a statement of a conditional future- even if the conditions are not immediately stated. The style reflects God's earnest desire to give His people the promised Kingdom blessings. And here He asks them to believe it, as He asks us.

Lev 25:20 If you were to say, What shall we eat the seventh year? Behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase; -
We can't have a spirit of meanness in our personal lives if we are proclaiming Yahweh's release. This is one of many instances where the process of preaching the Gospel benefits the preacher. The jubilee offered release from the effects of past misfortune and even past foolishness in decisions; and our offer of jubilee offers this same message in ultimate term. Incidentally, the Lord had implied that we are in a permanent Jubilee year situation when He said that we should "take no thought what ye shall eat ...Sow not nor gather into barns" and not think "What shall we eat?" (Mt. 6:26,31 = Lev. 25:20). There must be a spirit of telling this good news to absolutely *all*. And yet according to Luke's own emphasis, it is the poor who are especially attracted to the Jubilee message of freedom (Lk. 6:20-23; 7:1,22,23; 13:10-17).

Lev 25:21 know that I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for the three years-
For all Moses' desire for Israel's obedience, there are some subtle differences in his attitude to law and obedience between Deuteronomy, and the law earlier given. Thus in Leviticus it was stressed that obedience would bring blessing; whilst Dt. 28:58 says that obedience results in fearing the fearful Name of Yahweh and His glory. Fear shouldn't lead to obedience; but obedience leads a man to *know and fear his God and His Name*. This is blessing enough. Like Jacob and Job, Moses came to a fine appreciation of Yahweh's Name at his latter end.

Lev 25:22 You shall sow the eighth year, and eat of the fruits, the old store; until the ninth year, until its fruits come in, you shall eat the old store-
If Israel had doubts about how they would survive in the seventh year when the land rested, God would provide them with bumper harvests in the sixth year. But when the Lord bids us take no anxious thought what we shall eat on the morrow, He is surely directing us to the higher level, despite His willingness to make concession to human weakness. We note how God is intensely aware of our worries and doubts about His promised provision; and He answers them.

Lev 25:23 The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and live as foreigners with Me-
The principles of the Jubilee taught that all persons and land belong to God; we are only temporarily using them, and nothing ultimately belongs to us personally; all is God's. This helps us cope better with 'loss' of possessions, and should keep us from the manic materialism which has been bred by capitalism, whereby all seek personal ownership of land and resources. Yet we note the parallel between the land being God's, and it being theirs- for they were not to sell it exactly because it was their eternal possession. This "Yours is the Kingdom", but it is God's pleasure to give us the Kingdom.

Lev 25:24 In all the land of your possession you shall grant a redemption for the land-
The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units. This was "The inheritance of fathers", "your possession" (Lev. 25:27,28; Num. 36:7,8). God had given specific inheritances to His people, that this was not to be sold or traded. The division by lot in Josh. 15:1 presumably meant that the tribal areas were defined and then distributed by lot. And then within those areas, each family was given a specific inheritance. This legislation stopped the accumulation of property and wealth in the hands of a few, and protected the unwise and even lazy from the total loss of property.

Lev 25:25 If your brother becomes poor, and sells some of his possessions, then his kinsman who is next to him shall come, and redeem that which his brother has sold-
Boaz extrapolated from the law of Levirate marriage to marry Ruth and thereby redeem the land of the family. But the law here didn't require that. Boaz was going further than this law required. So we see that the law of Moses was not a chain, a leash binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; for Israel is God's partner, not His dog. But rather

was it designed as a springboard towards a culture of grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice. By allowing gleaners to come and pick up dropped grain, Boaz's grace was going far beyond the letter of the law. This was taking that law way beyond what it said, in a spirit of grace. This would account for the hint in Ruth 2:22 that not every landowner allowed such gleaning in their fields.

Lev 25:26 If a man has no one to redeem it, and he becomes prosperous and finds sufficient means to redeem it-
As Hosea 'redeemed' Gomer in His attempt to force through His fantasy for her (Hos. 3:1), so Yahweh is repeatedly described in Isaiah as Israel's *go'el* , redeemer (Is. 41:14; Is. 43:14; Is. 44:6,24; Is. 47:4; Is. 48:17; Is. 49:7,26; Is. 54:5,8). The redeemer could redeem a close relative from slavery or repurchase property lost during hard times (Lev. 25:25,26, 47-55; Ruth 2:20; Ruth 3:9,12). The redeemer was also the avenger of blood (Num. 35:9-28; Josh. 20:3,9). All these ideas were relevant to Yahweh's relationship to Judah in captivity. But the promised freedom didn't come- even under Nehemiah, Judah was still a province within the Persian empire. And those who returned complained: "We are slaves this day in the land you gave..." (Neh. 9:36). The wonderful prophecies of freedom and redemption from slavery weren't realized in practice, because of the selfishness of the more wealthy Jews. And how often is it that the freedom potentially enabled for those redeemed in Christ is in practice denied them by their autocratic and abusive brethren?

Lev 25:27 then let him reckon the years since its sale, and restore the surplus to the man to whom he sold it; and he shall return to his property-
The word translated "Jubilee" carries the idea of 'return'; but the spirit of that return could be practiced at times other than the Jubilee. And it is the same in our lives.

Lev 25:28 But if he isn't able to get it back for himself, then what he has sold shall remain in the hand of him who has bought it until the Year of Jubilee: and in the Jubilee it shall be released, and he shall return to his possession-
Eph. 1:13 speaks of our place in God's Kingdom as our possession which has been purchased by the blood of Christ, and which we will receive as an inheritance at His return. This is all Jubilee language. The eternal time of Jubilee will be when the Kingdom is established upon earth, and we will each receive both literally and more abstractly an eternal inheritance in that Kingdom on earth, each with a varying number of towns to rule over (Lk. 19:17). Whether we are rich or poor in this life, whether or not we purchase our 'own' homes (:29), we are assured that our very own personal possession is assured, and we will return to it eternally in the Kingdom of God at Christ's return. The Israelite who became "poor", either by his own failures, others' manipulations or his own poor decision making, would have continually looked forward to the year of Jubilee-

when finally he and his family would be free, no longer in servitude, and could return to their very own land and inheritance as their eternal possession (:34). We look forward to Christ's return with the same spirit.

Lev 25:29 If a man sells a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it has been sold. For a full year he shall have the right of redemption-
The laws about houses in cities are far less protective than for land. The implication could be that God's intention was that Israel didn't develop urban life, but instead stayed in the inheritance He had given each family, and rejoiced in the abundant harvests of blessing He would shower upon them there. And this is the impression we have in the prophecies of the restored Kingdom.

Lev 25:30 If it isn't redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be made sure in perpetuity to him who bought it, throughout his generations. It shall not be released in the Jubilee-
The implication is that the walled cities would not fall within the personal inheritance of any family. For if they did, then they would be covered by the laws about the redemption of land. It was God's intention therefore that Israel lived in their family allotments. Urban life was not His ideal intention, but as with so much of the law of Moses, He recognized their likely future weakness.

Lev 25:31 But the houses of the villages which have no wall around them shall be reckoned with the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall be released in the Jubilee-
As explained on :29,30, God's intention therefore was that Israel lived in small settlements and not walled cities. For if they had faith they would have no need of walled cities, for there would be peace in the land (Lev. 26:6). The entire law therefore was designed to elicit an upward spiral of obedience and blessing; it was not the miserable chain of legalism which it is made out to be.

Lev 25:32 Nevertheless the cities of the Levites, the houses in the cities of their possession, the Levites may redeem at any time-
The Levites had no land inheritance, only cities. Or better, towns. As explained on :29,30, God's intention therefore was that Israel lived in small settlements and not walled cities. Ideally, the only cities were to be those of the Levites. This detailed potential intention was never realized by Israel; just as the extensive and intricate commands about the restoration of the temple in Ez. 40-48 never were. One of the greatest tragedies for God must be all the wasted potentials He sets up in countless lives. And His joy is when we at least begin to realize them.

Lev 25:33 The Levites may redeem the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, and it shall be released in the Jubilee; for the houses of the cities of the Levites are their possession among the children of Israel-
See on :32. The Levites would only be driven to the desperation of selling their houses if Israel failed to generously provide for them through their tithes. Again God's law foresees their likely failure. Just as He does not expect perfection from us.

Lev 25:34 But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it is their perpetual possession'-
This is the same phrase for "everlasting possession" used in the pro*mises* to Abraham about eternal possession of the land. The intention was that Israel would develop into the Kingdom of God on earth. And the land given the Levites in possession would indeed be eternally theirs. But this great intention never came near to fulfillment; it has been reinterpreted and rescheduled for fulfillment in the eternal Kingdom enabled by the Lord Jesus, with the Levitical priesthood replaced by Him and all God's people would be the priests.

Lev 25:35 'If your brother has become poor, and his hand can't support him among you; then you shall uphold him. He shall live with you like an alien and a temporary resident-
That is, with the same generosity you should show a foreigner. But the acceptance that poor Israelites would exist is perhaps a tacit recognition that the full blessing of the covenant would not come, for the promise was that there would be no poor in the land; and yet there is plenty of Mosaic legislation about poor Israelites. We see in this God's acceptance that His people would not live and experience as they should, and yet His legislation accounted for that- for He so thirsted for relationship with them. And He likewise is acceptant of our imperfection and failure to receive the blessings we could and should receive. See on :7.

Lev 25:36 Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God; that your brother may live among you-
The Lord's parable of the lazy servant alludes here. He spoke to Jewish people who would have known that His advice to the rejected man to have lent out His money for interest was at variance with this teaching. The Lord may have meant that the man should have given His money, the Gospel, to the Gentiles, from whom interest could be taken. Or He may have meant that 'You should at least have done *something*, even if it broke the letter of the law- and then I would have had compassion on you. But you did precisely nothing and kept it for yourself and got on living your life for your own pleasure and profit rather than Mine'.

Lev 25:37 You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit-
The reason is given in :38. Because Israel had been redeemed from Egypt, they were to be generous to their brethren, and generally open handed (Lev. 25:37,38). This is why the Acts record juxtaposes God's grace / giving, and the giving of the early believers in response (Acts 4:33 cp. 32,34-37).

Lev 25:38 I am Yahweh your God, Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God-
Because of Israel's experience of the Red Sea redemption, therefore they were to have a generous spirit to their brother. Because the Egyptians were hard taskmasters, and Israel had been graciously saved from them, *therefore* they were not to be hard on each other (Lev. 25:40). If the oppressed [as Israel were oppressed] cry out unto you [as Israel cried out for their affliction], you must hear them, otherwise God will hear them and punish you, as if you are the Egyptian taskmaster (Ex. 22:24-27). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is shot through with direct and indirect reference to the Red Sea experience. It was as if this was to be the motivator for their obedience and upholding of the culture of kindness which the Law sought to engender (Lev.23, 24; Dt. 17:7; 24:19-24). And our experience of redemption from this world ought to have the same effect.

Lev 25:39 If your brother has grown poor among you, and sells himself to you; you shall not make him to serve as a slave-
The covenant promised wealth and blessing to an obedient Israel. There were therefore to be no poor within Israel. The Israelite who became "poor did so either by his own failures, others' manipulations- or his own poor decision making. But God's law foresaw this failure to realize the potentials He had enabled, and legislated accordingly, still seeking to show grace even in this dysfunctional situation. And that is a pattern for us; for we have all received such grace and must show it to others. If a man digs a hole and falls into it, he is still in the hole and needs our grace.

Lev 25:40 As a hired servant and as a temporary resident he shall live with you; he shall serve with you until the Year of Jubilee-
Perhaps we should note "live with you". The servant was to be a family member. We see here a hint toward God's dislike of slavery, although He tolerated it as He tolerates much lower level behaviour.

Lev 25:41 then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and shall return to his own family, and to the possession of his fathers-
Again we see God's intention that His people should ideally live in the parcel of land

which He had specifically given them. Any work or period away from home was to be but a temporary thing. As noted above, God's intention was that God's people enjoyed the inheritance He intended for them. And He geared things to promote that. He likewise has similar specific plans and intentions for us.

Lev 25:42 For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. They shall not be sold as slaves-
Just as the land was God's and Israel were intended to have on a kind of eternal leasehold, so all Israel were His servants and were not to be treated as the servants of men. He had brought them out of Egypt to serve Him; He had required Pharaoh to release them so that they might serve *Him* and not Pharaoh. Likewise at our Red Sea baptism, there is a change of masters, as Rom. 6 makes clear. We are never to forget that; that our brethren are not ours but the servants of the Lord, they are His and not ours. And we are to treat them appropriately. But "they shall not sold as slaves" was again a conditional statement, although the conditions aren't made immediately apparent. For if they left covenant with Him, they would no longer be His slaves and would be sold into the Gentile world as He later threatened- and as happened (Dt. 28:68). But whilst they remained in covenant with Him, they were His servants. We note how the Lord Jesus took all this to a higher level, in declaring us not even servants, but friends (Jn. 15:15).

Lev 25:43 You shall not rule over him with harshness, but shall fear your God-
Constantly, fear of God is given as a reason never to be harsh nor abusive in any way to God's people. We can deduce that He therefore has a particular interest in how we treat our brethren. Any language or even impression of harshness must therefore be outlawed. The same word is used here of how the Egyptians were harsh toward Israel in Egypt (Ex. 1:13,14), and so by behaving like this we declare ourselves as not God's people but being of the world. And the word is again used as a reason why Judah were finally rejected- they had been "harsh" to each other (Ez. 34:4). These principles are not only relevant to those in leadership or power positions. If someone sins against us, we are in power over them; and it is for us not to be harsh towards them.

Lev 25:44 As for your male and your female slaves whom you may have; of the nations that are around you, from them you may buy male and female slaves-
God was surely against slavery, for it is a reflection of a lack of value of the human person; and all are made in the image of God. But I suggest God allowed slavery if the slave were a Gentile as a concession to their human weakness.

Lev 25:45 Moreover of the children of the aliens who live among you, of them you may

buy, and of their families who are with you, which they have conceived in your land; and they will be your property-
There was continually envisaged a presence of Gentiles in Israel. The "mixed multitude" who came out of Egypt may have been initially in view, but they were to be naturalized into Israel in their third generation. So the idea was that as Israel were a missionary nation, a light to the Gentile world, Gentiles would indeed come and live among them. But the legislation here seems geared towards incorporating those Gentiles into Israel.

Lev 25:46 You may make them an inheritance for your children after you, to hold for a possession; of them may you take your slaves forever; but over your brothers the children of Israel you shall not rule, one over another, with harshness-
Becoming Israel's eternal slaves would be through the children of any Gentile slaves being given an inheritance within the Israelite family; in this sense they would be "forever" in the family. "You may make them..." is misleading; it was not an option. This was a command. They were to do this. As we learn from the book of Ruth, there was great concern about marring an inheritance by splitting it up amongst too many children. So the idea surely was that if indeed Israel did buy Gentile slaves, then they were to give their children a part of the family inheritance, adopting them into their family. In this sense they would become their "slaves forever"; that is perhaps said almost sarcastically. God permitted slavery, but He was making it unattractive for those who only wanted slaves for secular work. These slaves would effectively become part of the Israelite family and their children would share in the family inheritance. It was another reflection of God's continual desire to incorporate Gentiles within the nation of Israel.

Lev 25:47 If an alien or temporary resident with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him has grown poor, and sells himself to the stranger or foreigner living among you, or to a member of the stranger's family-
LXX "or to a proselyte by extraction". The situation envisaged here refers to the curse for disobedience, whereby the Gentiles would rise up above the native Israelites (Dt. 28:43). Again we see how God's law constantly envisaged Israel's failure, and sought to legislate for their protection even then. This is grace indeed.

Lev 25:48 after he is sold he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him-
As discussed on :47, the situation here is that Israel had sinned and individuals were being judged for that. But there was hope for redemption through "one of his brothers", an oblique reference to the Saviour redeemer, the Lord Jesus, who was to arise to save sinful Israel as one of their brothers (Dt. 18:18), fully of their nature.

Lev 25:49 or his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any who is a close relative to him of his family may redeem him; or if he has grown rich, he may redeem himself-
Ps. 49:7-9 appears to be a commentary upon these things: "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their life is costly, no payment is ever enough, that he should live on forever, that he should not see corruption". Even if a man became strong enough to redeem himself, or his brethren could- the ultimate redemption was from eternal death. Whilst the effects of the man's sin (see on :47) might be ameliorated by his brethren, the thoughtful Israelite was to reflect that the ultimate redemption from sin could not come from any known person, but from the future Messianic Saviour, raised up from amongst their brothers.

Lev 25:50 He shall reckon with him who bought him from the year that he sold himself to him relative to the Year of Jubilee: and the price of his sale shall be according to the number of years; according to the time of a hired servant shall he be with him-
There is no mention made of the potential strength of the person nor his age, which surely would have been critical. For a 50 year old sold into servitude with 40 years to run until the Jubilee would surely have been worth less than a 20 year old. Those factors are not weighted, when they cry out to be factored in to such legislation. I suggest that this was to nudge the Israelites towards the higher level- that the person sold into servitude really ought to be released anyway. And they should not be valued for how much work they might produce, but rather the year of redemption ought to be the final and only issue which affected the evaluation of a person. The legislation permits servitude and Gentile slavery, but is effectively geared against it. LXX is somewhat different, apparently outlawing anything apart from a yearly contract to serve: "then shall he calculate with his purchaser from the year that he sold himself to him until the year of release: and the money of his purchase shall be as that of a hireling, he shall be with him from year to year". Or GNB "They must consult the one who bought them, and they must count the years from the time they sold themselves until the next Year of Restoration and must set the price for their release on the basis of the wages paid hired workers".

Lev 25:51 If there are yet many years, according to them he shall give back the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for-
See on :50. The Hebrew text is unclear, GNB for :52,53 offers "They must refund a part of the purchase price according to the number of years left, as if they had been hired on an annual basis". In this case the idea would be that the purchaser had to pay a kind of fine to the person who had been redeemed. Again, the law permits slavery and servitude but effectively makes it unattractive; the purchaser of a servant could end up seriously out of pocket if the servant was redeemed before the year of Jubilee.

Lev 25:52 If there remain but a few years to the year of jubilee, then he shall reckon with him; according to his years of service he shall give back the price of his redemption-
I suggested on :51 that this may imply that the initial purchaser of the servant had to pay a kind of fine; making such purchases of servants or slaves very risky and unattractive. To have forbidden slavery and purchase or servants would have been too much for Israel to swallow, as these practices were so inherent in their world experience. We see God's great sensitivity in recognizing this; and yet His laws led to the thoughtful person finding slavery unattractive. We find the same essential sensitivity and grace in the way that the New Testament as it were 'allows' belief in demons, even though they don't exist; and yet the implication and style of the records effectively deconstructs the idea of their existence.

Lev 25:53 As a servant hired year by year shall he live with him: he shall not rule with harshness over him in your sight-
Any social superiority we may have over others is temporary, and must be seen in the context of the year of Jubilee which has been announced in Christ. The whole concept was designed to teach humility and gentleness in relationships. "In your sight" could mean that those who spotted any abuse of servants was to be reported and acted upon. All Israel were to be aware of abuse issues and to ensure that they didn't occur. Again, the classic idea of slavery is being deconstructed and made impossible to operate.

Lev 25:54 If he isn't redeemed by these means, then he shall be released in the Year of Jubilee, he, and his children with him-
No mention is made of the wife, because it is perhaps assumed that husband and wife should be treated as a unit. The common idea that the children of a servant somehow belonged to the master is here shattered. Again, the practice of slavery as generally practiced in those days is not being tolerated. The family unit is given paramount importance, and everything is geared towards the independence of that family unit.

Lev 25:55 For to Me the children of Israel are servants; they are My servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God'-
Those who had servants were to remember that they themselves were servants. Maybe Paul had this in mind when he reminded us that all our brothers and sisters are servants of Christ and not of us, and we therefore have no right to judge another man's servant (Rom. 14:4). As Israel were to be a nation of servants, so should the Christian community be today.

Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were

forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 26

Lev 26:1 'You shall make for yourselves no idols, neither shall you raise up an engraved image or a pillar, neither shall you place any figured stone in your land, to bow down to it; for I am Yahweh your God-

The Hebrew words for 'image' and 'imagination' are related, just as they are in English, Russian and other languages. This ancient law suddenly becomes bitingly relevant in our highly visual, screen oriented age- we are not to worship imaginations. The idols of the world are to be thrown down. Paul perceived the connection between stone images and psychological imaginations when he wrote of how we are to cast down [the language of casting down idols] imaginations and every high, lifted up thing that is against Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). People live their lives worshipping imaginations, chasing vaguely defined psychological dreams- of what it would be like to drive that car, live in that house, have that career, live with that man or woman. And these are our idols in this age, which we are to cut down and replace with the Christ centered mind.

Lev 26:2 You shall keep My Sabbaths, and have reverence for My sanctuary. I am Yahweh-

The stress may be upon the word "My". The systems of idol worships also required days to be kept as holy to them, and their sanctuaries to be reverenced. For the context here is all about avoiding idolatry. Yahweh's claims upon His people are supreme. There is no way we can worship both Yahweh and idols; the Sabbath was to kept exclusively for Him rather than also to the other gods who also demanded that a Sabbath be kept to them. Perhaps this was one reason for the Sabbath legislation at this time- to preclude keeping Sabbath to any other god. But Israel as so many today sought to worship Yahweh through idol worship. The church at Corinth made the same mistake.

Lev 26:3 If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them-

The list of blessings in Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 were given by God perhaps knowing at the start that they would never be realized- "It shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently

unto the voice of the Lord" (Dt. 28:1). God gave such detailed blessings for obedience even though they would never be realized by Israel. Likewise He gave such detailed plans for the temple in Ez. 40-48- even though the envisaged, possible scenario never came about because Israel chose to be disobedient.

Lev 26:4 then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit-
The amount of fruit given was going to be huge (:5). But it would be because of the rains given by God, as if God was still going to bring about the blessing through natural means. This could imply a change of climate to almost tropical. The creation of such a specific microclimate over the promised land would be no difficulty for God.

Lev 26:5 Your threshing shall reach to the vintage, and the vintage shall reach to the sowing time; and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely-
Israel's dwelling in peace and safety before the final invasion (Ez. 38) could then speak of a time when Israel have repented and Christ is already back. In this case, the blessings of Lev. 26 would then describe the blessedness of the Messianic Kingdom rather, when Israel are totally obedient, rather than having had any fulfillment in Israelite history to date.

The experience of preaching is in itself a foretaste of the future world-wide Kingdom. The harvest is both at the end of the age, according to the parables of Mt. 13, but also is ongoing right now (Jn. 4:36) as we gather in the harvest of converts. The Lord in Jn. 4:35,36 took this figure far further, by saying that the harvest is such that the interval between sowing and harvesting is in some sense collapsed for those who engage in preaching. The reaper was already collecting his wages; the harvest was already there, even though it was four months away (Jn. 4:35). This clearly alludes to the promises that in the Messianic Kingdom there would also be no interval between sowing and harvest, so abundant would be the harvest (Lev. 26:5; Am. 9:13). And hence, we are impelled to spread the foretaste of the Kingdom world-wide by our witness right now. God's ideal was that there would be a continual harvest; but His legislation in Lev. 25:16 accepts the reality that this would not happen. His awareness of our failure to reach our potential height of blessing is seen throughout His word.

Lev 26:6 I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one will make you afraid; and I will remove evil animals out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land
But the acceptance in Lev. 25:7 LXX that wild animals would exist is perhaps a tacit recognition that the full blessing of the covenant would not come, for the presence of wild beasts in the land was a sign of lack of blessing (Lev. 26:22). It's rather like the

promise that there would be no poor in the land, and yet there is plenty of Mosaic legislation about poor Israelites. We see in this God's acceptance that His people would not live and experience as they should, and yet His legislation accounted for that- for He so thirsted for relationship with them. And He likewise is acceptant of our imperfection and failure to receive the blessings we could and should receive.

Lev 26:7 You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword-
There were times in Israel's history when they did chase their enemies, e.g. at the time of David's victory over Goliath (1 Sam. 17). Likewise in the earlier reign of Solomon, Israel lived fruitfully and were multiplied (:9). But they were far from obedient to God's laws. But He all the same gave them the blessings for obedience. This was partly due to His love and grace, and partly because He accepted the faithfulness of a minority as being the obedience of the majority; and in this we see a foretaste of the imputed righteousness of Christ granted to all those in Him, despite their personal failure to achieve total obedience to Divine law.

Lev 26:8 Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand; and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword-
If five chased 100, this meant that one Israelite chased 20. But then the ratio increases- 100 chasing 10,000 means that one Israelite chased 100. The idea may be that their victories would ever increase in wonder. But if we understand by "a hundred" '100 groups of five', i.e. 500 men, then we have the same ratio- for 500 men chasing 20 each would mean they chased 10,000.

Lev 26:9 I will have respect for you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and will establish My covenant with you-
This is all the language of the Abrahamic promises. These promises can come true in a progressive sense in our lives in accordance with our living in step with God's ways. The language suggests that each one of God's people stands with Abraham that starry night; he is no distant saint, but a living personal example whose path of faith is to be replicated in the life of each of God's children.

That God can “respect” mere humans indicates not only His humility but also His extreme sensitivity to us and His delight in our feeble attempts to please Him; rather like a parent may be thrilled by the responses of a baby, totally insignificant as they are in themselves.

They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, knowing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and

failure. We wonder why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He rejoiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

Lev 26:10 You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall move out the old because of the new-
This may be a specific reference to the legislation about the year of Jubilee just given in Lev. 25. They would be given such a big harvest before the year of Jubilee that they would eat it for three years. But if they were obedient to the covenant, then every year would be like the year of Jubilee. They would live permanently in that spirit. Having to move out the old begs the question "Where to?". Presumably to the poor and marginalized, to the extent that there would be no poor left in the land, as was God's ideal intention. The Lord seems to have had this verse in mind when speaking of the householder who brings out of his treasures things new and old, once he accepts the new covenant (Mt. 13:52). And Paul likewise speaks of the person in Christ letting the old things pass away ["move out"] because of the new things (2 Cor. 5:17). Clearly we in Christ are to live in the spirit of this, in spiritual terms.

Lev 26:11 I will set My tent among you: and My soul won't abhor you-
David and Solomon sought to force the fulfillment of this promise to place God's dwelling place within Israel by building a temple for God to dwell in. They wanted to bring about the effects of obedience by human strength; rather like seeking peace in Christianity without making true peace with God through repentance. The same words translated "set [My] tabernacle" are found in Ez. 25:4, where God says that in distinction to this, Israel's enemies would set *their* dwellings / tabernacles within Israel. If God doesn't live in us, then the world will do so; we will be indwelt by some spirit, be it God's or that of the flesh and the world. We can't just be neutral in this.

I will set My tabernacle among you- God did this (2 Sam. 7:6,7), by grace, even though the precondition of Israelite obedience was not met. Such is His desire to dwell with His people.

Lev 26:12 I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you will be My people-
Again, God did this (2 Sam. 7:6,7), by grace, even though the precondition of Israelite obedience was not met. Such is His desire to walk with His people. Revelation concludes with the picture of God's tabernacle being with men and walking amongst us (Rev. 21:3)- the reward for obedience given by grace to we who have been disobedient.

"Be your God… My people" is alluded to in the closing visions of Revelation, which speak of this as the final destiny of God's people- even though we have all failed to be obedient. Obedience, therefore, will be imputed to us, and we shall receive the blessings of obedience even though we have not attained total obedience. "The tabernacle of God" being God's people; He being our God; God living and walking with us (Rev. 21:3) is evidently alluding to Lev. 26:11,12 and Ex. 29:45,46 concerning the ultimate blessings of the covenant after Israel's final repentance. The shadowy fulfillment they have had in the past through God's manifestation in an Angel doesn't mean that these promises can and must only be fulfilled by some form of God manifestation. Surely Rev. 21:3 is saying that at the second coming the principle of God manifestation will change in that God will personally be with His people. Because we have so far lived under the paradigm of God manifestation, let's not think that it's not possible for God to personally be with us.

Lev 26:13 I am Yahweh your God, Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves; and I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you go upright'-
The emphasis is on the word "their". Israel were to change masters- to become *God's* servants and not those of Pharaoh. We do the same at our Red Sea baptism, as Rom. 6 explains.

Lev 26:14 'But if you will not listen to Me, and will not do all these commandments-
The judgments to come upon the earth / land of Israel in Revelation are presented in four groups of seven. This is exactly the pattern of Lev. 26, where Israel are threatened with seven-fold judgments; and if they did not repent, then the seven-fold judgments would be repeated. Four times this is threatened; if they had repented after the first seven-fold judgments, there would have been no need for the others. It seems to me that the sequence of events in the last days is likewise impossible to predict in detail, because depending upon human freewill, the fulfillment of the various prophecies may be suspended or be realized in more symbolic ways, as we have already seen God working like this in the past.

He not only repeats all the curses of Lev. 26 to them, but he adds even more, under inspiration (Dt. 28:50-57). Presumably the Angel had explained in one of their conversations how Israel would suffer even greater punishment than what He had outlined in Lev. 26. Notice in passing that Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 are not strictly parallel. And in some ways, Moses became more demanding, whilst at the same time emphasizing grace and love.

Lev 26:15 and if you shall reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances, so that you will not do all My commandments, but break My covenant; -
See on :44. God promised that even if Israel sinned, He would never break His covenant with them (Lev. 26:44; Jud. 2:1). But He did (Zech. 11:10 cp. Jer. 14:21), as witnessed by the termination of the Law of Moses, which was the basis of His covenant with Israel. His love creates yet another Bible paradox. Israel broke the covenant by their disobedience (Lev. 26:15; Dt. 31:16 and many others). God therefore broke His part of the covenant. Yet God made His promises concerning the unbreakable covenant because He chose to speak in words which did not reflect His foreknowledge that Israel would sin. The apparent contradiction is resolvable by realizing that God did not set His mind upon Israel's future apostasy when He made the 'unbreakable' covenant with them. And yet the paradox still ultimately stands; that He broke His covenant with them when they sinned. He worked through this punishment in order to establish an even more gracious new covenant.

Lev 26:16 I also will do this to you: I will appoint terror over you-
"I will *appoint* over you terror" uses a Hebrew word which appears elsewhere concerning appointing officers over a land (Gen. 41:34), implying some form of enemy rulership over Israel during the desolation period. The curses to come upon Israel as a result of the latter day invasions are described in terms which are extremely apposite to modern warfare. The plagues to come upon Israel as a result of the invasions are almost impossible to identify with anything presently known: "a consumption... a fever... an inflammation... an extreme burning... blasting... the burning ague that shall consume the eyes" (Dt. 28:22; Lev. 26:16) all seems to echo the language of nuclear fall-out. "They shall be burnt... and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction" (Dt. 32:24) is similar. The release of complex chemical weapons, as well as nuclear detonation, would explain why rainfall patterns will be interrupted during this latter day tribulation (Dt. 28:23). The fall-out from such weapons would create the murderous rain of dust upon the land which Dt. 28:24 speaks of: "The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed". It is twice emphasized that those in the land would suffer blindness (Dt. 28:28,29), which may also be related to such nuclear or chemical fallout. This has not yet happened; the context invites us to read this as literal rather than figurative. We know that the latter day invaders who attack Jerusalem will both fight each other and have their eyes rot in their sockets (Zech. 14:12), the implication being that they use their weaponry against each other as well as against Israel. Their earlier use of these weapons would account for this blindness coming upon Israel, and again we see the principle that what the attackers do to Israel will be inflicted upon them.

And make the soul to pine away; and you will sow your seed in vain, for your enemies will eat it-
God's blessings and cursings involve His direct operation upon the human heart. Many of the cursings involve psychological attitudes- fleeing when nobody is chasing (:17), having pride broken (:19), faintness sent into the heart (:36) etc.

Lev 26:17 I will set My face against you, and you will be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you will rule over you; and you will flee when no one pursues you-
The fleeing of the Egyptians from Israel in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27) was a case of fleeing when none pursued them. This was the judgment upon Israel (Lev. 26:17,36; Dt. 28:25), which was to arise because in their hearts they had returned to Egypt (the world) and were therefore to be judged as Egypt, "condemned with the world" they had loved (1 Cor. 11:32).

A spirit of fear, nervousness and negativity can be given by God as a result of willful disobedience to His ways. He can give a spirit (mental attitude) of fear (2 Tim. 1:7).

Lev 26:18 If you in spite of these things will not listen to Me, then I will chastise you seven times more for your sins-
It should be noted that the record of the curses in Lev. 26 splits them up into six sections, each introduced by a phrase like, "If you will not for this hearken unto me... then..." more curses would come (Lev. 26:14,18,21,23,27,36). It is tempting to associate this with the series of six judgments to be poured upon Israel and her enemies as outlined in the six seals (Rev. 6) and six vials (Rev. 16), leading up to the seventh period, of Israel's repentance and Christ's Kingdom. There are many other points of contact between the curses and the language of the seals and vials.

"If you will not for all this *hearken* unto me" (Lev. 26:18) may suggest that God's word will be spoken to Israel along with the trials brought about by the curses. This again indicates that the Elijah ministry will operate within Israel during their period of final downtreading. See on :23.

Lev 26:19 I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your sky like iron, and your soil like brass-
The same word is used in 2 Kings 25:13 concerning the breaking of the brass temple pillars by the Babylonians. The Babylonian invasion clearly looks forward to the final destruction of Israel in the last days. The lack of rain recalls how this was the situation during the three and a half years of Elijah's appeal to Israel to forsake idolatry. And that looks ahead to the latter day Elijah ministry.

Lev 26:20 and your strength will be spent in vain; for your land won't yield its increase, neither will the trees of the land yield their fruit-
"Ye shall sow your seed in vain... your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase" (Lev. 26:16,20), not only confirms the many other hints that Israel's physical fertility will be ruined during this period, despite that implication that Israel will make a major effort to be agriculturally self-sufficient in the tribulation. This may indicate a world-wide trade embargo against her, or a blockade which the West refuses to challenge.

Lev 26:21 If you walk contrary to Me, and won't listen to Me, then I will bring seven times more plagues on you according to your sins-
"If..." could suggest that when suffering the curses for disobedience, they would then be offered the opportunity for repentance. But if they refused this, then the plagues would not be of 'short continuance' as was potentially possible, but would last "long" (Dt. 28:59), or made seven times heavier (Lev. 26:21).

Lev 26:22 I will send wild animals among you, which will rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your roads will become desolate-
See on 1 Kings 22:22. "Your highways shall be desolate" (Lev. 26:22 AV) is definitely picked up in Jud. 5:6, concerning the result of the reign of terror in Israel. They were saved from it through repentance and the raising up of a saviour / judge, looking ahead to the Lord Jesus in the last days. The highways and transport infrastructure of modern Israel face a like fate.

"I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle" (Lev. 26:22 cp. Dt. 28:31) speaks of the "beasts of the earth / land" (Dt. 28:26), who refer to the nations within the earth / land promised to Abraham. The use of cattle raiding language in Ez. 38:12 would then lead us to equate that latter day invasion with the final fulfillment of the curses upon Israel here.

But the acceptance that wild animals would exist in the land (Lev. 25:7 LXX) is perhaps a tacit recognition that the full blessing of the covenant would not come, for the presence of wild beasts in the land was a sign of lack of blessing. It's rather like the promise that there would be no poor in the land, and yet there is plenty of Mosaic legislation about poor Israelites. We see in this God's acceptance that His people would not live and experience as they should, and yet His legislation accounted for that- for He so thirsted for relationship with them. And He likewise is acceptant of our imperfection and failure to receive the blessings we could and should receive.

Lev 26:23 If by these things you won't be returned to Me, but will walk contrary to Me-
It seems that the curses mentioned in this chapter aren't just a general list, but there is an intended chronological sequence. God had planned from the start that if Israel were disobedient, then He would bring various judgments, in order to help them be obedient; and if they failed, He would bring more, again with the intention that they responded to them. The curses for disobedience weren't therefore merely an offended deity lashing out at a people who had irritated Him; God has purpose and positive spiritual intention even in the judgments He brings into peoples' lives. He is constantly seeking our return to Him, just as the shepherd searched for the lost sheep until He found it (Lk. 15:4).

"If you will not be *reformed* by me" (Lev. 26:23 AV) uses a Hebrew word elsewhere translated 'to teach', defined by Strong as 'to chastise by words'. This provides further confirmation of the ideas discussed on :18 about a latter day appeal by a teaching ministry to Israel, as they go through these curses.

Lev 26:24 then I will also walk contrary to you; and I will strike you, even I, seven times for your sins-
To have God against you ["even I"] is a terrible thing (Heb. 10:31). But they had walked contrary to God (:21), and so inevitably they would find Him walking against them. It was their choice. It was not that God was walking with them and then turned around and walked against them. They decided to walk against God, and so it is axiomatic that He was therefore walking against them. All judgment is effectively chosen by men, sin is its own judgment. Men more condemn themselves rather than being condemned by Him against their will.

Lev 26:25 I will bring a sword upon you, that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; and you will be gathered together within your cities: and I will send the plague among you; and you will be delivered into the hand of the enemy-
Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon

(Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

The "pestilence" which was the plague upon Egypt (Ex. 9:3) was to come upon a hard hearted Israel (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Num. 14:12; Dt. 28:21; Jer. 21:6). It will do in the last days (Ez. 33:27-29). The plagues upon Egypt form the basis for the vials and seals of Revelation, which speak of judgment to come upon the land of Israel. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

Withdrawal into fenced cities was what happened in the Assyrian invasion (2 Kings 18:13). The great emphasis on how famine and plague would lead to Israel's capture by their enemies rather than straight military defeat (Lev. 26:25), is especially relevant to Nebuchadnezzar's taking of Jerusalem (cp. Jer. 14:12). All these curses had elements of historical fulfillment, but will have their main fulfillment in the last days.

Most especially is Babylon called "the enemy": Ps. 78:61; Jer. 6:25; 15:11; 18:17; 31:16 and an impressive 11 times in Lamentations. 'Babylon' has specific latter-day application to the neighbouring enemies of Israel.

Lev 26:26 When I break your staff of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver your bread again by weight-
These words are quoted in Is. 3:1 concerning Judah's deprivation at the hands of the Assyrians. The curses, like all Bible prophecy, had multiple fulfillments over Israelite history- but will come to complete fulfillment only in the last days.

Ezekiel's prophecies of the coming Babylonian tribulation have several references to Lev. 26. The initial fulfillment was in Babylon, but it looks ahead to that in the last days. "They shall eat bread by weight" (Ez. 4:16) = "They shall deliver you your bread by weight" (Lev. 26:26); "The fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of (Zion), and the sons shall eat their fathers" (Ez. 5:10)= "You shall eat the flesh of your sons" (Lev. 26:29). "I will make you waste" (Ez. 5:14) = "I will make your cities waste" (Lev. 26:31, s.w.); "...draw out a sword after (you)" (Ez. 5:12) = "I will scatter you among the heathen, and draw out a sword after you" (Lev. 26:33).

Note that to break the bread in a place was an idiom for breaking the life there (Ez. 4:16; 5:16; 14:13; Lev. 26:26). This was what the Lord asks us to remember- not the physical breaking of His body, but the breaking of His life for us and sharing it with us (Is. 58:7). The Lord's death is surely to be understood as a tearing apart of the flesh nature and

tendencies which He bore; and it is this we remember in breaking the bread which represents His flesh.

And you shall eat, and not be satisfied-
So many of the judgments are mental attitudes (especially :16,36). God gives people attitudes of mind, positive and negative. And He uses that ability today through the work of the Spirit on human hearts. Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

The description of the thin cows eating up the fat cows (Gen. 41:21) is alluded to in the Hebrew text of the curses for Israel's disobedience in Lev. 26:26: "you shall eat, and not be satisfied". The seven years of famine were therefore to be seen as a curse. Disobedient Israel would be treated like Egypt, which is a theme throughout all the curses of Lev. 26. Egypt represents the world, and those rejected from the new Israel will likewise "be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32), sent back into the world they loved to share the world's judgment.

Lev 26:27 If you in spite of this won't listen to Me, but walk contrary to Me-
See on :24 for "walk contrary". We note the parallel between listening and walking. Daily life, walking, is to be guided step by step by our listening to God's word. In our age and situation, daily Bible reading is a major part of this process, as well as developing the ability to hear those ancient words speaking to us as we face the life moves which make up daily walking in this world.

Lev 26:28 then I will walk contrary to you in wrath; and I also will chastise you seven times for your sins-
This chastisement was in order to elicit repentance and change, s.w. Dt. 8:5; 21:18- it was not the lashing out of an offended Deity, but the chastisement of a loving Father. God had spoken to Israel from Heaven with His own voice, that He might "instruct" (s.w. chastise) them (Dt. 4:36). Although He was madly in love with Israel in the wilderness, He chastised them even there and tried to teach them to live by His word daily (Dt. 8:5 s.w.), but they refused all this. If we refuse God's direct statements to us through His word, then He uses life situations to try to teach or instruct us. And this will come to full term in Israel's latter day afflictions, until they finally admit they have been chastised / instructed and turn to God and His Son in repentance (s.w. Jer. 31:18).

Lev 26:29 You will eat the flesh of your sons, and you will eat the flesh of your daughters-
In the account of the great famine in Samaria which this invasion brought about, there is the extraordinary record of the two women arguing about the eating of their children (2 Kings 6:29). The inclusion of this incident in the record must be to recall Lev. 26:29, where it is prophesied that this is exactly what would occur. Ben-hadad's invasion is typical of the onslaught of the last day. Likewise in the Babylonian context "The fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of (Zion), and the sons shall eat their fathers" (Ez. 5:10); see on :26.

Lev 26:30 I will destroy your high places, and cut down your incense altars, and cast your dead bodies upon the bodies of your idols; and My soul will hate you-
This was done by Josiah (2 Chron. 34:5) because God said that He would do this if His people broke covenant. Josiah was recognizing that indeed they had broken covenant and were worthy of such things. He was agreeing that this curse was true and legitimate and hastened to bring it about, with the humility which only comes from conviction of sin.

Lev 26:31 I will lay your cities waste, and will bring your sanctuaries to desolation-
The same word is used of the Babylonian desolation of Judah, both historically and in the last days "I will make you waste" (Ez. 5:14). See on :26. *"Waste"* uses a Hebrew word which means 'wasted by intense heat' - i.e. nuclear fission? See on :16.

And I will not take delight in the sweet fragrance of your offerings-
As can be imagined, there will be much Jewish prayer in the last days, but the majority of Israel will fail to accept that it is faith in Christ's mediation of prayer, rather than the mental intensity of supplication, which brings a response. Spiritual Israel may have to re-learn this lesson at the same time.

“A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. But Israel in their tribulation will still have rejected the Lord Jesus, so they can never be a pleasing aroma. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the

burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev 26:32 I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies that dwell therein will be astonished at it-
The desolation of the physical land of Israel is associated with God's anger at Israel's disobedience, and the physical blossoming of the land with His blessing for obedience. But since 1948 the land of Israel has blossomed physically- but without Israel's obedience. This, then, is the outpouring of God's grace in these last days. This 'remembering of the land' by God will be if dispersed Israel repent (:42). They did not- but God has gone beyond His terms of blessing here, such is His grace and desire to save Israel. In this spirit :45 seems to say that even if they are disobedient, God will still remember His covenant desire to bless them. This is grace indeed.

Lev 26:33 I will scatter you among the nations, and I will draw out the sword after you; and your land will be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste-
The same phrase is used of the Babylonian desolation of Judah, both historically and in the last days: "I will... draw out a sword after (you)" (Ez. 5:12). See on :26.

Lev 26:34 Then the land will enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land. Even then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths-
Judah's exile in Babylon was to allow the land to enjoy her Sabbaths (2 Chron. 36:21). But the restoration from Babylon was not because of Judah's repentance; it was brought about by God's grace, because Judah were largely impenitent. "Enjoy" is literally 'repay', and this idea is found in Is. 40:2 "her iniquity has been repayed". The idea of the Isaiah reference was that the exile had as it were repayed for Israel's refusal to obey the legislation about the Sabbath years and Jubilee years, which as explained on Lev. 25 required huge faith to obey- which they didn't have. We see that God has His way ultimately; Israel didn't obey that legislation, and yet God made the land have that Sabbath rest through the exile of the people upon it.

Lev 26:35 As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, even the rest which it didn't have in your Sabbaths, when you lived on it-
Closer study reveals the variableness of outworking of the time periods. Jer. 25:11,12 and Jer. 29:10 speak of a 70 year period of Babylonian rule over Judah, beginning with the invasion of BC597. But Babylon only ruled over Judah for 49 years, before Babylon fell to the Persians. This would connect with the way that Zech. 4:3 speaks of 7 menorah candlesticks each with 7 lamps, making 49 lamps. 49 is the cycle of 7 Sabbath years

that culminated in the jubilee year, and the jubilee year, the proclamation of liberty to the land (Lev. 25:8-12; 27:7-24) is a figure used so often in Isaiah to describe the freedom of Judah once released from Babylon. Lev. 26:34,43 speak of the land enjoying her Sabbaths whilst Israel were in exile for their sins- i.e. for 49 years. So it seems that there could have been some restoration after 49 years- but it didn't happen. But Dan. 9:2 and 2 Chron. 36:21 seem to reinterpret those 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecies as speaking of a 70 year period during which Jerusalem and the temple would be desolate. And yet there again, Ezekiel was asked to prophecy that Judah would suffer for their sins for 40 years (Ez. 4:6). Perhaps something could've happened after 40 years... Perhaps some restoration could have happened to the ten tribes after 390 years (Ez. 4:5), although there's no sign it ever did. And then, the starting point of the 70 or 40 years was somewhat flexible- for Ez. 22:3,4 records Ezekiel's prophecy that the desolation of Jerusalem by the Babylonians [the starting point of the time periods] was actually being hastened, brought forward, by the terrible behaviour of the Jews living there after the initial Babylon invasion of the land. In fact, if a person had been found who would have powerfully interceded for Jerusalem, 'stood in the gap' (Ez. 22:30), God wouldn't have destroyed Jerusalem - "that I should not destroy it" is an allusion to Abraham interceding for Sodom in Gen. 18:28. There were simply so many possible scenarios! And this is what we must expect if even time periods can be shortened or extended in response to human behaviour.

Lev 26:36 As for those of you who are left, I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a driven leaf will put them to flight; and they shall flee, as one flees from the sword; and they will fall when no one pursues- During their latter day tribulation, Israel will experience "faintness in their hearts", intense "terror" (Lev. 26:16), which would be enough to kill them (Dt. 32:25). This extraordinary level of paranoia will be modelled upon that of Jacob as he faced Esau - representing Israel's confrontation with the Arabs in the last days (Jer. 30:5,7). This state of fear will result in many Jews going to live in Jerusalem, as happened during the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions (Jer. 35:11). Ezekiel had prophesied of this time: "Terrors (an intensive plural - i.e. 'the one great terror') by reason of the sword shall be upon my people" (Ez. 21:12). Likewise our Lord spoke of "fearful sights" being seen in latter-day Israel (Lk. 21:11). This fear will be absolute paranoia: "I will make you a terror to yourself" (Jer. 20:4) because of latter day Babylon's invasion; "ye shall flee when none pursueth you... I will send a faintness into their hearts... the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them" (Lev. 26:17,36). "I will bring the land into *desolation*" (Lev. 26:32) uses a Hebrew word which can imply stupefaction by fear. This paranoia will be associated with a manic depression which will have its roots in a chronically bad conscience towards God, going back thousands of years to their national childhood: "I will... cause sorrow of heart... they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity... and also in

the iniquity of their fathers shall they pine away" (Lev. 26:16,39). Note how the *land* will be brought into this mental desolation. Frequently the land of Israel is paralleled with the people (e.g. Jer.19:14 cp. 26:17). The intense desolation of Jewry will be reflected physically in the state of their land. And the resolution of this psychological torment will only be through repentance and acceptance of the Saviour Messiah whom they crucified.

Lev 26:37 They will stumble over one another, as it were before the sword, when no one pursues: and you will have no power to stand before your enemies-
This is one of a number of word pictures among the curses which recall the scenes of Nazi death camps. But even they were nothing to the scenes which tragically are yet to come in the last days. The stumbling when no man chased them is another indication of a psychological state given to them. We recall that this was the method of destruction God used against Israel's enemies, e.g. in the time of Gideon. And they were to experience the same judgments as their enemies. Revelation makes this clear in a latter day context, where the seals of judgment upon Israel are in fact essentially the same as the vials of judgment upon their enemies.

Lev 26:38 You will perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies will eat you up-
"The land of your enemies will eat you up" implies that Israel's enemies are to be seen as a beast. This sort of language is quite common in the prophecies which speak of a latter-day beast devouring Israel (e.g. Is. 49:19; Joel 1:6).

Lev 26:39 Those of you who are left will pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them-
Israel's repentance would involve a recognition that their fathers had sinned; in contrast to their way of praising their ancestors as great men of God, when in fact they slew God's prophets and crucified His Son. There is no religion like Judaism for quoting with veneration the various fathers of their faith, and seeking to whitewash all Jewish Bible characters from any real wrongdoing.

Lev 26:40 If they confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, in their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and also recognize that because they walked contrary to Me-
"Confess" is the word for praise. Praise is related to the realization that sin has been forgiven. Hezekiah's praise on realizing God's mercy to him was expressed in a desire to walk in quiet fellowship with God for the rest of his life. There is no suggestion that praise was some kind of ecstatic exuberance of emotion. The normal Hebrew word translated "praise" is also translated "confess" in the context of confessing sin (Lev. 5:5;

16:21; 26:40; Num. 5:7). Contrition of heart because of appreciating our own failures is therefore one way of praising Yahweh's Name. So often does the word "praise" occur in the context of praising the *Name* of Yahweh, or the praising of "the God of Israel", i.e. Yahweh.

Lev 26:41 I also walked contrary to them, and brought them into the land of their enemies: if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity-
See on :24 for "walk contrary". This clearly demonstrates how the whole of Jewry will be destroyed apart from this righteous remnant who are left (:39) - and that even they will be a remnant of a remnant. This accords with our previous conclusions, that there will be a group within latter-day Israel who associate themselves with the remnant, but who do not fully repent. They may well meet their final curse in the (temporary) fires of Gehenna, outside the city of their refuge.

Lev 26:42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham; and I will remember the land-
We read of God 'remembering' His covenant (Ex. 2:24; Lev. 26:42; Jer. 14:10,21); and of God 'not remembering' or forgetting the sins of His covenant people (Is. 43:25; Jer. 31:34). If words mean anything, this surely implies that sins which God once remembered, He then stops remembering and 'forgets'. Such language seems on one hand inappropriate to the God who by nature doesn't have to forget and can recall all things. But He has willingly entered into the meaning of time which is experienced by those with whom He is in covenant relationship. He allows Himself to genuinely feel it like it is. The 'gap' between God stating His plan and its actual fulfillment is the opportunity for men and women to plead with Him, as Moses did, as Abraham did regarding Sodom (Gen. 18:17-22), as so many have done...

Lev 26:43 The land also will be left by them, and will enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them: and they will accept the punishment of their iniquity-
Some prophecies were delayed / rescheduled in their fulfillment. Others have their intended fulfillment changed into another form. Is. 40:2 speaks of how Jerusalem's "punishment is accepted" (RVmg.), referring to how Lev. 26:43 had said that the land would lie desolate until her punishment was fulfilled. This passage could have come true when Judah returned from captivity. But it didn't. It is applied to the preaching of John the Baptist in the first century; but again, Judah would not hear. And so once again the land lay desolate again, until now the time has arrived for the final Elijah prophet.

Because, even because they rejected My ordinances, and their soul hated My statutes-
See on :44. Israel have ever claimed to love God's word, studying every letter of every

word in the Mosaic law with apparently great respect. But God sees things from His perspective. And they despised and even "hated" those statutes and rejected them. For they all led to His Son, whom they crucified. We have here an example of how God sees to the essence of implied positions. If we hate or despise God's word, He will hate us (:30). Our attitude to God's word is related to His attitude to us. The very least we can do is to read His word daily and love it, through all our weakness.

Lev 26:44 Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them; for I am Yahweh their God-

The covenant was broken, not least because Israel broke it and abrogated it (see on :15). The promise here however is that even when Israel were to be in the land of their enemies as punishment for their sins, "I will not cast them away". God will not cast away Israel (Is. 41:9). Only if Heaven can be measured will God cast away Israel (Jer. 31:37). God has not cast away His people (Rom. 11:2). And yet the same word is found in statements like "My God will cast them away" (Hos. 9:17; Is. 54:6); the same Hebrew word occurs when God says He would "reject" Israel (Hos. 4:6). This is only explicable as a paradox of God's grace. Although we could read Romans as Paul arguing that God has only not rejected His people in that He has redefined His people as those now "in" His Son who was "Israel" as intended.

Although it is true as it was with Saul that those who reject Yahweh's word are rejected (1 Sam. 15:23), God's grace is beyond such a simplistic picture. Israel were to despise / reject God's word (s.w. Lev. 26:15,43), "and yet for all that.. I will not reject them / cast they away" (Lev. 26:44 s.w.). Israel rejected Yahweh when they wanted Saul to be their king (s.w. 1 Sam. 8:7; 10:19), and yet He did not reject them immediately because of that. The relevance to the exiles was in that they were in captivity because they too had rejected God's word and therefore God had rejected them (2 Kings 17:15 cp. 2 Kings 17:20; 23:27), because they rejected His prophetic words, He rejected them (Jer. 6:19,30; Hos. 4:6), "and yet for all that... I will not reject them / cast they away" (Lev. 26:44; Jer. 31:37 s.w.). For ultimately God has not rejected / cast away His people (Is. 41:9; Jer. 33:26; Rom. 11:2). This is the mystery of grace, no matter how we may seek to explain it away by Biblical exposition and balancing Bible verses against each other. See on :15.

Lev 26:45 but I will for their sake remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am Yahweh'-

See on :32. The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God,

as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Lev 26:46 These are the statutes, ordinances and laws, which Yahweh made between Him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by Moses-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 27

Lev 27:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
This chapter is as it were an appendix to the Law because it concerns vows which were freewill decisions to give something to God and weren't part of the legal demands which God made upon His people in the previous chapters. It's good for us to at times make a special commitment to God from a joyful heart. The values attached to people in the next verses seem to speak of the price that should be paid if a person wished to cancel the dedication of themselves or even of others which they had made. It seems Jephthah may have been ignorant of these provisions and therefore suffered immensely from not paying attention to all God's law (Jud. 11:31-40).

Lev 27:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, 'When a man makes a vow, the persons shall be for Yahweh by your valuation-

It could be argued that this continues from the theme of Lev. 25 about valuing persons. There, the context was valuing them in the context of the year of Jubilee. Here, the valuation is in the context of vowing property to God's service. In this sense, Lev. 27 is not really an appendix but a continuation (although see on :1). The idea in this verse is perhaps that a vow must not be vaguely expressed, but must be defined specifically- in order to discourage the general desire and expression of a wish to give something to God, and then just leaving it as a vague, undefined desire which could later be pulled back from. And that is an abiding lesson for us all. LXX implies this section speaks of a person vowing themselves to God rather than vowing to give a servant to His service: "Whosoever shall vow a vow as the valuation of his soul for the Lord".

Lev 27:3 Your valuation shall be of a male from twenty years old even to sixty years old, even your valuation shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary-
The person was valued at what they would be worth on the secular market as it were, which is why the female is valued at less (:4); not because God thinks women are less valuable, but because the idea was that the person was being given to the Lord's service just as a property could be given, and to redeem or take back the gift, an appropriate price must be paid according to the secular value of whatever had been dedicated.

Lev 27:4 If it is a female, then your valuation shall be thirty shekels-
See on :3. Jephthah could have redeemed his daughter from the vow he involved her with (Lev. 27:4). But he decided in his mind: "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back" (Jud. 11:35). Actually he could have done; but he so firmly chose the higher level that it was as if there was no way back. Ps. 15:4, in evident allusion to Jephthah, describes those who will attain the Kingdom as fearing Yahweh, and swearing to their own hurt and changing not. Some may swear and change and attain the Kingdom; but we are invited to follow Jephthah to the highest level.

Lev 27:5 If the person is from five years old even to twenty years old, then your valuation shall be for a male twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels-
As discussed on :3, this was not because God was devaluing females; the idea was that a dedication of a person should not be undertaken lightly, and if it was to be changed, then the person who made the vow had to pay the secular value of the person.

Lev 27:6 If the person is from a month old even to five years old, then your valuation shall be for a male five shekels of silver, and for a female your valuation shall be three shekels of silver-

We have an example of this when Hannah dedicated Samuel to the sanctuary from a young age.

Lev 27:7 If the person is from sixty years old and upward; if it is a male, then your valuation shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels-
Again as discussed on :3,5, the idea is not that God is devaluing elderly people nor women nor youngsters. The idea simply is that the secular value of the person must be calculated and the price required for redeeming them back had to be decided accordingly.

Lev 27:8 But if he is poorer than your valuation, then he shall be set before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to the ability of him who vowed shall the priest value him-
This provision seems to foresee the possibility that a totally poor person would dedicate themselves to God's service (e.g. doing some work related to the maintenance of the sanctuary) and yet need to change that commitment (perhaps to care for a sick and dying relative), and yet have nothing to pay for his own redemption. The idea is 'Too poor (to pay) your valuation'. This freewill dedication of oneself to God's service is alluded to when Paul praises some of the Macedonian believers for devoting their own selves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5), and the family of Stephanas for having 'ceremonially consecrated' themselves to serving their fellow believers (1 Cor. 16:15 Gk.). What could we devote ourselves to do, remembering that wealth is no barrier to making this kind of devotion?

Lev 27:9 If it is an animal, of which men offer an offering to Yahweh, all that any man gives of such to Yahweh becomes holy-
This legislation and in :10 is typical of where the law foresees people trying to disobey. Whatever animal was given was holy / dedicated for good. No substitute could therefore be given. But if a substitute was given (:10), then that too would be dedicated. The *l*aws were geared to discourage anyone from making a rash vow, and towards acceptance that whatever we give to God should never be demanded back. Giving must be total and absolute and never regretted later; and that again is an abiding principle.

Lev 27:10 He shall not alter it, nor change it, a good for a bad, or a bad for a good; and if he shall at all change animal for animal, then both it and that for which it is changed shall be holy-
Changing what we have given to God according to new circumstances isn't encouraged; we should give and assume that what we gave is now not ours any longer. Giving should be frank and final, with no thought of regret afterwards or considering what might have

been if we had not given it- e.g. letting our mind wander around the possibilities of what we could have used money for if we'd not given it to God.

Lev 27:11 If it is any unclean animal, of which they do not offer as an offering to Yahweh, then he shall set the animal before the priest-
The unclean animal would have been given for the domestic use of the priests.

Lev 27:12 and the priest shall value it, whether it is good or bad. As you the priest values it, so shall it be-
A bad animal that was unclean could still be given to God. The idea was that the very poor could still be allowed to give to God whatever they could. And that again is an abiding principle. For giving is not only for rich Christians. It is to be the spirit for all God's people of whatever social or economic status.

Lev 27:13 But if he will indeed redeem it, then he shall add the fifth part of it to its valuation-
The fact the unclean could be redeemed but not the clean perhaps hints at the Lord's redeeming work. He came as a doctor for the sick, the unclean, rather than for the healthy who considered themselves clean.

Lev 27:14 When a man dedicates his house to be holy to Yahweh, then the priest shall evaluate it, whether it is good or bad: as the priest shall evaluate it, so shall it stand-
There is continually the hint that the person vowing would consider his 'gift' of a different value to what it really was. There was always the concern that public vowing was not from pure motives. Dt. 23:21 is of the same spirit: "When you make a vow to Yahweh your God you must not be slack to pay it, for Yahweh your God will surely require it of you and it would be sin upon you". This was to guard against the temptation to make a vow which was publically impressive before men, but then not to pay it. Any attempt to garner kudos for our spiritual devotion is absolutely wrong; such spiritual pride is the worst. God would therefore "require it" and severely judge those who did this (Dt. 23:21). Not being slack to pay a vow (Dt. 23:21) fits in with a wider Biblical theme of being quick in responding to God. It comes to full term in the New Testament accounts of immediate baptisms straight after people had grasped the basic message of the Gospel. "Yes straight away" is what God really seeks from His children. Israel were not to delay in offering their firstfruits to God (Ex. 22:29), lest their intentions weren't translated into practice. The disciples immediately left the ship, simply put their nets down and followed (Mt. 4:20,22); Matthew left his opened books and queue of clients in the tax office and walked out never to return (Lk. 5:17,18 implies).

Lev 27:15 If he who dedicates it will redeem his house, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall be his-
Again we note that the law is geared towards the conclusion that any gift to God should not be given in the hope of getting it back. What is given is given and we live in the joy of having made that gift, without regretting it or seeking to recoup it. Although God does make concessions to those who for some reason wanted or needed to retract their gift. "It shall be his" is a reminder that when something had been given, it was no longer "his".

Lev 27:16 If a man dedicates to Yahweh part of the field of his possession, then your valuation shall be according to the seed for it: the sowing of a homer of barley shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver-
The idea is that the field was calculated in accordance with how much seed was required in order to sow it, and not the projected harvest from it. The quality of the land was not taken into account. Fifty shekels of silver was a lot if indeed a homer (10 ephahs, Ez. 45:11) of barley was all that it produced. Again, the law is geared to make redemption of such a dedicated field very expensive, and to enforce the idea that vows should not be rashly made. And what is given to God should not be considered as reclaimable. See on :17.

Lev 27:17 If he dedicates his field from the Year of Jubilee, according to your valuation it shall stand-
The idea may be that the 50 shekels of :16 was the price for the field if dedicated for the Jubilee cycle, a shekel / year making therefore 50 shekels.

Lev 27:18 But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, then the priest shall reckon to him the money according to the years that remain to the Year of Jubilee; and a reduction shall be made from your valuation-
See on :17; apparently the idea was a shekel for every year.

Lev 27:19 If he who dedicated the field will indeed redeem it, then he shall add the fifth part of the money of your valuation to it, and it shall remain his-
"Remain his" is not the sense; rather is the idea that the field would be established to him. The idea is as in :15, "it shall be his", whereas after it had been vowed to God, it was not his. Again the lesson is that giving to God means we are totally in deficit, we have actually parted with what was ours and it is no longer ours. We must remind ourselves of this definition of giving; for we are not to "give" in some secret hope that what we give will return to us somehow, at least in part. Failure to realize this led to the destruction of Ananias and Sapphira.

Lev 27:20 If he will not redeem the field, or if he has sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed anymore-
Giving something to Yahweh and then selling it to another man was an awful thing to do. But the law foresaw that people would be inclined to "give" to God and yet still assume ownership and power over what they had given. Like a donor to a charity then thinking they can thereby take control of that charity. The punishment for this was that the field would be totally lost both to that man and any who had purchased it (:21).

Lev 27:21 but the field, when it goes out in the Jubilee, shall be holy to Yahweh, as a field devoted; it shall be owned by the priests-
See on :20. The land was God's anyway, so the punishment for the wrong behaviour of :20 was that the 'owner' would be taught this lesson- for he could hardly complain at this judgment, if he accepted the land was God's anyway.

Lev 27:22 If he dedicates to Yahweh a field which he has bought, which is not of the field of his possession-
Here we have the tendency revealed to be generous with that which is not ours. The principle is that we are not to offer that which costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

Lev 27:23 then the priest shall reckon to him the worth of your valuation up to the Year of Jubilee; and he shall give your valuation on that day, as a holy thing to Yahweh-
The value of all things is relative to the Year of Jubilee, which speaks of the return of Christ (see on Lev. 25:10,15,20). And we are to live by this principle.

Lev 27:24 In the Year of Jubilee the field shall return to him from whom it was bought, even to him to whom the possession of the land belongs-
The idea could be that the field itself was not bought, as the land possession of the Israelites was not to be sold, but rather the usage of the land to grow crops. Although this indicated that the ideal situation in the land was not going to be achieved, whereby each Israelite enjoyed super abundant harvests in the land God had specifically given to them. Constantly we see examples of where the law of Moses foresaw human failure and yet God was still eager to work with them, even though they were not experiencing His ideal intentions for them.

Lev 27:25 All your valuations shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs to the shekel-
There were various definitions of shekels; but as in our lives, all valuation, our entire

worldview and value system, is to be based upon God's way and values rather than ours or those of the surrounding world.

Lev 27:26 Only the firstborn among animals, which is made a firstborn to Yahweh, no man may dedicate it: whether an ox or sheep, it is Yahweh's-
We should avoid the temptation to give what we owe to God anyway as if it is a gift of special freewill devotion.

Lev 27:27 If it is an unclean animal, then he shall buy it back according to your valuation, and shall add to it the fifth part of it; or if it isn't redeemed, then it shall be sold according to your valuation-
The redemption of unclean devoted animals was to be at the basis of the animals value plus one fifth. But the firstborn of donkeys were to be redeemed with a lamb, and a lamb would have been of less value than a newborn donkey. The firstborn of the donkey was to be redeemed by a lamb (Ex. 13:13) as a ritual reminder of the power of the Passover lamb's redemption. The value of its blood was far greater than its commercial value. And this was to point forward to the value of the blood of the Lord Jesus, far more precious than of any gold or silver (1 Pet. 1:18). The donkey was the most common domestic animal, and it was an unclean animal. It was therefore representative of common people, in their unclean state. Firstborn donkeys were to be redeemed because they were to be understood as representative of God's people, redeemed by the Passover lamb.

Lev 27:28 Notwithstanding, no devoted thing that a man shall devote to Yahweh of all that he has, whether of man or animal, or of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy to Yahweh-
We have been reading earlier in this chapter of how things devoted in a vow could be redeemed, usually upon the payment of extra money. So now in this section the devoted things must refer to something different. Perhaps what is in view is the things devoted in tithe to the priests; the priests were not sell these things back to the donor. Verse 30 speaks of the tithe. Or perhaps the devoted things refer to things taken in warfare, which makes more sense when we come to :29.

Lev 27:29 No one devoted, who shall be devoted from among men, shall be ransomed: he shall surely be put to death-
As discussed on :28, what may be in view are people or things captured in warfare which were devoted to Yahweh. If someone [like Achan] was to be slain, then they must be- and money was not to be taken in order to save their lives. Ps. 49:7 alludes here, lamenting that no man, no matter how rich or powerful, can redeem his brother in this

case. But that passage goes on to imply that it is the Lord Jesus who alone can do so, through abrogating all such legal condemnation.

Lev 27:30 All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is Yahweh's. It is holy to Yahweh-
Whilst devoted animals could not be redeemed, it seems agricultural produce could be (see on :28). But there must be firstly the recognition that it was Yahweh's. It had been given to Him, and did not belong to the donor any more. It was His, and should not be given in the hope of somehow getting it back. However what may be in view here is the natural growth of the seeds in the land, and not of cultivated crops. In the context of this chapter, which speaks about vows, perhaps the idea is that the tithes were not to be claimed as voluntary offerings, as if to try to impress others by their apparent generosity when in fact they were only giving the required tithes anyway. The law was clearly aware that there would be such tendencies, and we must accept that we have the same.

Lev 27:31 If a man redeems anything of his tithe, he shall add a fifth part to it-
They could only possibly redeem their own tithe; they were not to look at the tithes of others and wish them for themselves. Constantly the legislation is geared towards stopping people from 'giving' with a view to taking back what they had given.

Lev 27:32 All the tithe of the herds or the flocks, whatever passes under the rod, the tenth shall be holy to Yahweh-
The Rabbis explain this as meaning: "When a man was to give the tithe of his sheep or calves to God, he was to shut up the whole flock in one fold, in which there was one narrow door capable of letting out one at a time. The owner, about to give the tenth to the Lord, stood by the door with a rod in his hand, the end of which was dipped in vermilion or red ochre. The mothers of those lambs or calves stood without: the door being opened, the young ones ran out to join themselves to their dams; and as they passed out the owner stood with his rod over them, and counted one, two, three, four, five, etc., and when the tenth came, he touched it with the coloured rod, by which it was distinguished to be the tithe calf, sheep, etc., and whether poor or lean, perfect or blemished, that was received as the legitimate tithe".

Lev 27:33 He shall not analyze whether it is good or bad, neither shall he change it; and if he changes it at all, then both it and that for which it is changed shall be holy. It shall not be redeemed'-
God foresaw their disobedience to His stated principle, and made a concession and provision. This ruling about tithes is an example: "...neither shall he change it: and if he change it..." (Lev. 27:33). Likewise God told Israel that He wanted altars made of earth;

but He knew they would want to make altars of stone like the other nations, and He made allowance for this (Ex. 20:24,25). The Law has several examples of this living on different levels. "Ye shall let nothing of (the Passover) remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire" (Ex. 12:10) is an evident example. We should not be carefully calculating in our giving to God, trying to do so at minimal cost to ourselves.

Lev 27:34 These are the commandments which Yahweh commanded Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai-
The implication is that no more commandments would now be given. The law had been given as a whole and was not to be meddled with or have additional commandments added, although Deuteronomy appears to be God's clarification of some of them at the end of the wilderness wandering. The whole system of laws was designed to inculcate an upward spiritual spiral, with each law reinforcing others. Removing some laws or adding others would not in fact make the path to obedience easier; the laws given were especially designed to be adequate and self reinforcing, and any removal or addition would destroy their purpose and collective effect.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: NUMBERS

NUMBERS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it,

respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

NUMBERS CHAPTER 1

Num 1:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying,-
This was 54 weeks, just over a year, since leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:18). The tabernacle had been erected a month before (Ex. 40:1) and they had been now at Sinai around 11 months (Ex. 19:1).

Num 1:2 Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, every male, one by one-
Much of the later reasoning of the law assumed that each Israelite family would receive a unique land inheritance in the Kingdom, just as we shall each have a unique nature of inheritance in the future Kingdom. Therefore such a list of all Israel was required, and had to be constructed before leaving Sinai to enter the land- for that was the intention, although the people turned away from it when they heard the report of the spies.

Num 1:3 from twenty years old and upward, all who are able to go out to war in Israel. You and Aaron shall number them by their divisions-
The disorganized mass of people who had fled Israel were now prepared for military action- for it was God's intention that once numbered, they should leave Sinai and enter Canaan. He makes so much effort to set people up for inheriting the Kingdom, acting in full trust that their faith will remain strong- although as with Israel believing the spies, so many turn away and refuse to enter the Kingdom. The implication was that every male citizen of military age was going to be a soldier. Although they would not be used to fight

in reality, for Yahweh would give them the victory [at least that was what He intended] they had to be absolutely prepared to fight for the Kingdom.

Num 1:4 With you there shall be a man of every tribe; each one the head of his fathers' house-
The previous census was made by the Levites, but now God wanted the heads of families to take responsibility for their families; for the land was to be divided up by families, as God is a family God. See on :2.

Num 1:5 These are the names of the men who shall stand with you: Of Reuben, Elizur the son of Shedeur-
The list of tribes here is in the order of their later encampment—south, east, west and north. Gad is however displaced. "Elizur", 'God is my rock', is a name indicating faith that God would indeed be a rock to Israel. And probably these were names which were taken by choice rather than birth names. But Israel turned back from entering Canaan; their leaders had the names of faith but in reality their faith was weak. And we must ask ourselves whether that is the case with us, having a name that we spiritually live when we are dead.

Num 1:6 of Simeon, Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai-
"God's peace" son of "The Almighty is my rock" could reflect a faithful family, especially considering that Israel were idolaters in Egypt, and carried the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:6-8) and also the tabernacle of Moloch as well as that of Yahweh, the star of Remphan as well as the standards of their tribes (Acts 7:43).

Num 1:7 of Judah, Nahshon the son of Amminadab-
He was brother-in-law of Aaron (Ex. 6:23), and yet also married to Rahab in order to be the ancestor of David and the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:4). He was one of the points at which the lines of Judah and Levi converged in the Lord's genealogy, appropriate for Him as a king-priest.

Num 1:8 of Issachar, Nethanel the son of Zuar-
'God has given' suggests that he was named in faith that the promised land would indeed be given to Israel.

Num 1:9 of Zebulun, Eliab the son of Helon-
We note how most of the names feature the 'El' suffix and not 'Yah' or 'Iah'. This is understandable, for Moses declared the Name of Yahweh to the people after most of

these men had been born. This kind of artless internal corroboration is to me one of the strongest arguments for the Divine inspiration of the Bible.

Num 1:10 of the children of Joseph, of Ephraim, Elishama the son of Ammihud, of Manasseh, Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur-
Elishama was Joshua's grandfather (1 Chron. 7:26). "God who hears" reflects Moses' message that God had indeed heard the crying of the Israelites in Egypt. This was likely a name change after acceptance of Moses' teaching.

"Gamaliel" is 'God is my reward', named in hope that the promised reward of the Kingdom would indeed be given.

Num 1:11 of Benjamin, Abidan the son of Gideoni-
The names associated with the leadership of Benjamin and Naphtali (:11,15) stand out as not having any spiritual reference in them. Israel were very spiritually weak as they left Egypt and it is likely that the more spiritual names we read of in this list were the result of name changes. But the leaders of these two tribes didn't do that.

Num 1:12 of Dan, Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai-
"Ammishaddai" means 'People of the Almighty', using the term *shaddai* which is often associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He may well have been one of the faithful few who kept perceiving the vital separation of God's people from Egypt, whereas the majority in their hearts returned to Egypt and wished to assimilate with them in order to escape persecution and have what they imagined was a good life.

Num 1:13 of Asher, Pagiel the son of Ochran-
Pagiel ['accident of God'] was son of Ochran, 'muddler'. As discussed on :15, people had multiple names and were known by the 'name' they carved for themselves in life, and the attitudes they had. God makes no accidents; so maybe in depression and bitterness this man felt like this, and was known for it. Hardly a great example to the tribe he was supposed to be leading. And indeed Asher all but disappears from Israel.

Num 1:14 of Gad, Eliasaph the son of Deuel-
Deuel of Num. 1:14 is better Reuel as in Num. 2:14. The Hebrew letters for 'D' and 'R' are easily confused; so here we have an example of slight copying errors in the original texts. But these in no way negate the overall Divine inspiration of the texts.

Num 1:15 of Naphtali, Ahira the son of Enan-

What mother would have named her child Nabal (fool), or Ahira (brother of evil), or 'sickness' or 'wasting' (Mahlon and Chilion)? These names were either given to them by others and the use adopted by God, or simply God in the record assigned them such names. The names associated with the leadership of Benjamin and Naphtali (:11,15) stand out as not having any spiritual reference in them. Israel were very spiritually weak as they left Egypt and it is likely that the more spiritual names we read of in this list were the result of name changes. But the leaders of these two tribes didn't do that.

Num 1:16 These are those who were called of the congregation, the princes of the tribes of their fathers; they were the heads of the thousands of Israel-
The term "thousands" is not to be taken literally. It effectively refers to a group of families within a tribe; perhaps "clan" would be an appropriate translation.

Num 1:17 Moses and Aaron took these men who are mentioned by name-
Although some of their names reflected spiritual inappropriacy, as noted especially on :13,15, God wanted to use them. And to build out of them and their children and families a fighting force which would inherit the Kingdom.

Num 1:18 They assembled all the congregation together on the first day of the second month; and they declared their ancestry by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, one by one-
The implication is that every single Israelite was part of a family. In such a large community there inevitably would have been some who had no family. In commenting upon the Exodus, Ps. 68:6 observes that God set the lonely in families. This may have happened at this point. Those who had no family were arranged into one, so that God's people moved through the wilderness in family units. In this we see how God is a family God; the family is His desired way of human organization, and we should seek to preserve it.

Num 1:19 As Yahweh commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai-
The numbering was done by Moses' representatives but is spoken of as his work. This principle of representation is throughout the Bible. It comes to full term in the way the Lord Jesus functions as God and is spoken of in language appropriate to that function-without being God Himself personally, as the Trinity wrongly states. Just as those who numbered the tribes were not Moses personally.

Num 1:20 The children of Reuben, Israel's firstborn, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, one by one, every male from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war-

“The number of the names” implies there was a written list. Moses had been educated in Egypt and therefore would’ve been able to write (Acts 7:22). We should use what worldly wisdom we have in the service of God’s people.

Num 1:21 those who were numbered of them of the tribe of Reuben, were forty-six thousand five hundred-

The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night. This would then make better sense of Ex. 23:30 GNB: "I will drive them out little by little, until there are enough of you to take possession

of the land". This indeed sounds as if Israel were the smallest of the nations, and not a huge nation comprising several million people.

Num 1:22 Of the children of Simeon, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, those who were numbered of it, according to the number of the names, one by one, every male from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war-
"One by one" reflects the value and meaning attached to the human person by God. Practically this would have meant their names were written down.

Num 1:23 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Simeon, were fifty-nine thousand three hundred-
Simeon's 59,300 fell to 22,200 by the end of the wilderness wanderings, according to the second census in Num. 26. This suggests a huge apostacy amongst the Simeonites, resulting in such a dramatic fall. Not all the failures and punishments of Israel are recorded in the record. The plague of Num. 25 killed 24,000 people for committing fornication with the Moabites (Num. 25:9); but the ringleader of that had been Zimri, a Simeonite prince (Num. 25:14). It's likely therefore that he led his tribe into the orgy with the Moabites, which resulted in so many of them being killed.

Num 1:24 Of the children of Gad, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war-
"All who were able to go out to war" is not reflective of the Hebrew text. Translators added "able to" because they balked in disbelief at the idea that every citizen was to be a soldier. What about the handicapped, the mentally weak...? The idea was that all who were numbered and named were soldiers- in God's eyes. He wasn't interested in their secular, physical ability, because He was going to fight for Israel and give them the victories. He was interested in the names, in the people as individuals- for they were all soldiers from His perspective.

Num 1:25 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Gad, were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty-
A "fifty" may not be a literal number, but a technical term for a group; see on :23. We recall groups of soldiers called a "fifty" being sent to capture Elijah.

Num 1:26 Of the children of Judah, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war-
"The number of the names" is the phrase used in Acts 1:15 of the very early church. The

idea was that the fledgling Christian church was now the new Israel of God, who were to go out and do spiritual warfare in conquering the world for Christ.

Num 1:27 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Judah, were sixty-four thousand six hundred-

Here is a comparison of the numbers given in the first census of Num. 1, and those given at the end of the wilderness journeys in Num. 26:

1. Judah 74,600 rose to 76,500
2. Dan 62,700 rose to 64,400
3. Simeon 59,300 fell to 22,200
4. Zebulun 57,400 rose to 60,500
5. Issachar 54,400 rose to 64,300
6. Naphtali 53,400 fell to 45,400
7. Reuben 46,500 fell to 43,730
8. Gad 45,650 fell to 40,500
9. Asher 41,500 rose to 53,400
10. Ephraim 40,500 fell to 32,500
11. Benjamin 35,400 rose to 45,600
12. Manasseh 32,200 rose to 52,700

Total 603,550 in the first census, but 601,730 by the end of the 38 years wanderings in Num. 26. But see on :30.

If we are to understand blessing under the old covenant as related to numbers of children, then there may be the hint that Judah were the most faithful. We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 1:28 Of the children of Issachar, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war-

The mention of "generations" suggests that some kind of genealogy was developed and recorded at this time. This would have been important because the intention was that

each family were to inherit a specific lot of land; they were to therefore place great value upon genealogies in the future.

Num 1:29 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Issachar, were fifty-four thousand four hundred-
This tribe increased by about ten thousand during the wilderness journeys. Other tribes decreased. It was God's intention that the seed of Abraham should multiply. And yet some tribes multiplied by different amounts, and others decreased. We see that the promises to Abraham will have different levels of fulfillment for those who are faithful; and no fulfillment for some who are technically the seed, but don't walk in the steps of faith of Abraham. And so it is today. Some will make more of God's truth than others; some multiply their talents more than others, in terms of the Lord's parable. And so some stars will shine brighter than others in God's Kingdom.

Num 1:30 Of the children of Zebulun, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war-
The emphasis of this census was upon those who could go to war, whereas the later census at the end of the wanderings includes the Levites because it was not so focused upon forming a military organization. It could be that the comparison with the numbers in Num. 26 is somewhat fallacious, because Num. 1 is a census of those of military age whereas that of Num. 26 appears to be of the entire tribes. In which case the numbers would have decreased sharply for all the tribes due to their failure to be Abraham's ever multiplying seed, and due to the judgments they all experienced in the wilderness.

Num 1:31 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Zebulun, were fifty-seven thousand four hundred-
Zebulun increased by a minimal amount over the course of the wilderness journey (see on :27). As discussed on :29, this is rather like the person who receives the talent of God's truth and keeps it but doesn't develop it much. We get this same impression of Zebulun in 2 Chron. 30:18.

Num 1:32 Of the children of Joseph, of the children of Ephraim, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war-
Ephraim is placed before Manasseh although he was not the firstborn. This reflects Joseph's wish to continue the Divine theme of blessing the firstborn less than the other son, which is so typical of how He despises secular advantage.

Num 1:33 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Ephraim, were forty thousand five hundred-

We note the huge growth of Manasseh during the wilderness journeys, 32,200 rose to 52,700; whilst Ephraim's 40,500 fell to 32,500. This would appear to contradict Joseph's desire to bless Ephraim more than Manasseh (Gen. 48:14). It shows that the utterances of a patriarch were not determinate. For under the old covenant, numbers of children were related to obedience to the covenant. Prophecy was and is not determinate, but always conditional upon human response. Hence not all the blessings of the tribes uttered by Jacob came true; because the potential wasn't realized by the descendants. And so it is sadly true of so many people who turn away from the Kingdom promises.

Num 1:34 Of the children of Manasseh, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war-

20 years old was the ager at which someone could be dedicated to the Lord's service (Lev. 27:3). The idea may be that simply by reason of being in Israel, these men were therefore automatically counted as able for active service- regardless of their state of health and strength. And the Lord counts His people likewise. There are to be no passengers amongst God's people. We are called to active service.

Num 1:35 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Manasseh, were thirty-two thousand two hundred-

We note the huge growth of Manasseh during the wilderness journeys, 32,200 rose to 52,700; whilst Ephraim's 40,500 fell to 32,500. This would appear to contradict Joseph's desire to bless Ephraim more than Manasseh (Gen. 48:14). It shows that the utterances of a patriarch were not determinate. For under the old covenant, numbers of children were related to obedience to the covenant. Prophecy was and is not determinate, but always conditional upon human response. Hence not all the blessings of the tribes uttered by Jacob came true; because the potential wasn't realized by the descendants. And so it is sadly true of so many people who turn away from the Kingdom promises.

Num 1:36 Of the children of Benjamin, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war-

For "generations", see on :28; for "number of the names", see on :26; for "able to go out to war", see on :3,24; for "from twenty years old", see on :34.

Num 1:37 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Benjamin, were thirty-five thousand four hundred-

Benjamin's 35,400 rose to 45,600 by the end of the wilderness journeyings. We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 1:38 Of the children of Dan, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go forth to war-
For "generations", see on :28; for "number of the names", see on :26; for "able to go out to war", see on :3,24; for "from twenty years old", see on :34.

Num 1:39 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Dan, were sixty-two thousand seven hundred-
We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 1:40 Of the children of Asher, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go forth to war-
For "generations", see on :28; for "number of the names", see on :26; for "able to go out to war", see on :3,24; for "from twenty years old", see on :34.

Num 1:41 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Asher, were forty-one thousand five hundred-
We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin

increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 1:42 Of the children of Naphtali, their generations, by their families, by their fathers' families, according to the number of the names, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go forth to war-
For "generations", see on :28; for "number of the names", see on :26; for "able to go out to war", see on :3,24; for "from twenty years old", see on :34.

Num 1:43 those who were numbered of them, of the tribe of Naphtali, were fifty-three thousand four hundred-
Naphtali's 53,400 fell to 45,400 by the end of the wilderness journeys, a decrease by a ratio of 0.85; very similar to how Gad's 45,650 fell to 40,500, a decrease by a ratio of 0.88. See on :41.

Num 1:44 These are those who were numbered, whom Moses and Aaron numbered, and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: they were each one for his fathers' house-
It could be that we are to understand from this, as do the Rabbis, that Moses personally numbered each person. They all passed before him and were individually known by him, looking forward to the personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus of all God's people.

Num 1:45 So all those who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' families, from twenty years old and upward, all who were able to go out to war in Israel-
For "families", see on :28; for "able to go out to war", see on :3,24; for "from twenty years old", see on :34.

Num 1:46 even all those who were numbered were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty-
Over a period of 430 years (Gen. 15:13; or perhaps 215 years, see on Ex. 12:40), the Israelites grew from 70 people (Gen. 46:27; Dt. 10:22) to a great number. This was a primary fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, that his descendants would greatly multiply (Gen. 22:17; Heb. 11:12). We who are in the same covenant relationship with God will experience some element of blessing and fulfillment of the covenant promises

in this life too. The large numbers may also have been due to the Egyptians joining the people of Israel.

Num 1:47 But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them-
Num. 14:29 says that "Your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness; and all who were numbered of you". This excluded the Levites, as they were not numbered. Robert Roberts rightly described the generation that was under twenty years old on leaving Egypt as the most faithful of all Israel's generations. The faithful element with whom God so 'fell in love' was not just comprised of the 'under 20s'. Joshua and Caleb also featured amongst them, as did the Levites (who the curse of destruction in the wilderness did not apply to: Num. 14:29 cp. 1:47). There would have been a bond between those younger people and the Levites. Numerically, the largest of these three groups who constituted the 'faithful element' was the under 20s. It is fitting, therefore, that this faithful remnant are personified as a young person. Thus God reflected to Hosea: "When Israel was a child (s.w. "young man"), then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (Hos. 11:1).

Num 1:48 For Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The Levites were not numbered in the first census, but they were at the end of the wilderness journey. The number of 23,000 given in Num. 26:62 makes them one of the smallest tribes. If we are to understand blessing under the old covenant as related to numbers of children, then there may be the hint that Judah were the most faithful and Levi and Simeon the least, in line with Jacob's curse of those two sons for what they did at Shechem. But it was from this spiritually weak group of Levites that God wished to raise up a priesthood to spiritually guide His people. This is typical of His counter instinctive way of working with people.

Num 1:49 Only the tribe of Levi you shall not number, neither shall you take a census of them among the children of Israel-
We have an example here of how we must read the Bible in context and never forget the primary context of the words we read. For a census was taken of the Levites in Num. 26 at the end of the wilderness journey. So this verse here means that they were not to take a census of the Levites at that time only. Or it could be that God revised His intentions about the Levites and later did command a census; for His purpose is to some extent open ended and He is not ashamed to change in accordance with human responses to Him.

Num 1:50 but appoint the Levites over the Tabernacle of the Testimony, and over all its

furnishings, and over all that belongs to it. They shall carry the tabernacle, and all its furnishings; and they shall serve it, and shall encamp around it-
We are a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). The spirit of the Levites should be ours. As they encamped around the tabernacle, having it as the center of their lives, so the things of God's ecclesia, His church, should be central to our lives and have far more importance to us than our careers and associations in this world. We note that repeatedly the tabernacle is defined in terms of the testimony, the tables bearing the ten commandments: "the ark of the testimony" (Ex. 25:22), the "tablets of the testimony" (Ex. 31:18), the "veil of the testimony" (Lev. 24:3). We would likely have defined it in terms of the shekinah glory there; but for God, His word of command to His people is of the essence, and is at the core of His holiness and intimacy with man.

Num 1:51 When the tabernacle is to move, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall set it up. The stranger who comes near shall be put to death-
LXX "Who advances to touch it", as if touching it in a conscious and defiant way. Hence the command for some Levites to be as sentries guarding the tabernacle (Num. 3:32). Although 'coming near' is a Hebraism for coming near to Yahweh in worship and service.

Num 1:52 The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, according to their divisions-
And yet Israel carried the star of their god Remphan with them through the wilderness (Acts 7:43) as they carried the tabernacle of Moloch and the idols of Egypt (Ez. 20:6-8). The star of Remphan would have been similar to the standards of their tribes. Their loyalties were divided from the start. Their standards reflected the cherubim of Divine manifestation, and yet whilst externally they pitched their tents in conformity to that (see on :54), this was mere religious appearance. In their hearts they were following the standards of their false gods, and their hearts were in Egypt. In our wilderness journey we have to ask ourselves how relevant this is to ourselves.

Num 1:53 But the Levites shall encamp around the Tabernacle of the Testimony, that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel; and the Levites shall be responsible for the Tabernacle of the Testimony-
Wrath would come upon all Israel if the Levites weren't encamped around the tabernacle. In this we see the power of human behaviour- we can really affect others. The wellbeing of others is dependent upon our efforts. If we don't do our part for them, we cannot assume that God will raise up someone else. There really can be Divine wrath on others because of our lack of attention to them.

The LXX implies the Levites were to guard the tabernacle with literal weapons, hence the command in :51 to kill any Gentile who attempted to come and touch it: "But let the Levites encamp round about the tabernacle of witness fronting it, and so there shall be no sin among the children of Israel; and the Levites themselves shall keep the guard of the tabernacle of witness".

Num 1:54 Thus the children of Israel did. According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so they did-
But as discussed on :52, this was mere surface level conformity. Their hearts were in Egypt and with their gods.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 2

Num 2:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
Encamping around standards and by their tribes was different to how they had filed out of Egypt as one long stream of humanity (Ex. 13:18). After our exodus from the world through our Red Sea baptism, we find our place within the larger family of God. Their sense of which tribe they belonged to had probably been eroded in the 430 years they spent in Egypt; now even the isolated and lonely were given family groups to belong to (Ps. 68:6; see on Num. 1:18).

Num 2:2 The children of Israel shall encamp every man by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers' families: at a distance from the Tent of Meeting shall they encamp around it-
The standards of the tribes were a pole with a symbol upon it. Israel marched through the wilderness towards the promised land, as we walk through the wilderness of life towards the Kingdom, carrying and walking behind poles- foreshadowing the cross or stake of Christ, which we are asked to daily pick up and walk behind. Is. 11:10-12 speaks of the cross of Christ as a standard lifted up, to which the believing Gentiles come and camp around- as if they take their place in the Israel of God.

Num 2:3 Those who encamp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Judah, according to their divisions, and the prince of the children of Judah shall be Nahshon the son of Amminadab-
Three tribes camped on each of the four sides, around the tabernacle. This place of meeting with God was to be central to the community. It is the things of Christ and our relationship with God which should be at the core of the Christian community; we're not held together by geography, personal friendship or shared denominational history. We are to be Christ centered. The language of the numbering of Israel according to how

many fighting men there were in each tribe, and the ideas of encamping and breaking up, all suggest that Israel were God's army on earth. According to Jewish tradition, Judah carried a lion emblem on their standard, Reuben a man, Joseph an ox, and Dan an eagle. In this case, the cherubim vision of Ezekiel 1 would allude to Israel, as if to say that above them there hovered an Angelic army organized the same way, and the armies of God's people on earth were a reflection of them. The tent of meeting in the midst of the troops of Israel would've been understood in military terms as the tent or pavilion of a general in the centre of an army. But there was nobody within that pavilion- just the presence of God over the sprinkled blood. We aren't just sitting around waiting for Christ's return; we are God's army in this world, with a very present although invisible Heavenly commander in our midst. But His invisibility led Israel many times to ask 'Is the Lord among us?', and we face the same doubt in our weak moments. But this is the essence of faith.

Num 2:4 His division, and those who were numbered of them, were seventy-four thousand six hundred-
Although Reuben was numbered first as the firstborn (Num. 1:20), Judah had first place in the positioning. For Reuben had been demoted by Jacob and replaced by Judah.

Num 2:5 Those who encamp next to him shall be the tribe of Issachar, and the prince of the children of Issachar shall be Nethanel the son of Zuar-
Although the inheritances for the location of the tribal cantons were drawn by lot, it is clear the hand of God was in it. For the inheritances were appropriate to the people given them. Issachar's lot for possession of the land was next to Judah and Zebulun (Josh. 19:17), with whom Issachar had lived and journeyed side by side during the wilderness years (Num. 2:5; 10:15). This opens up the question as to whether we should also draw lots in this age. For God worked through them clearly enough in Joshua's time.

Num 2:6 His division, and those who were numbered of it, were fifty-four thousand four hundred-
The children of Leah camped together, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. The meaning of their names is prophetic: Praise (the Son), he will reward with an inheritance.

Num 2:7 The tribe of Zebulun, and the prince of the children of Zebulun shall be Eliab the son of Helon-
We note how most of the names feature the 'El' suffix and not 'Yah' or 'Iah'. This is understandable, for Moses declared the Name of Yahweh to the people after most of these men had been born. This kind of artless internal corroboration is to me one of the strongest arguments for the Divine inspiration of the Bible.

Num 2:8 His division, and those who were numbered of it, were fifty-seven thousand four hundred-
Zebulun increased by a minimal amount over the course of the wilderness journey (see on Num. 1:27). As discussed on Num. 1:29, this is rather like the person who receives the talent of God's truth and keeps it but doesn't develop it much. We get this same impression of Zebulun in 2 Chron. 30:18.

Num 2:9 All who were numbered of the camp of Judah were one hundred eighty-six thousand four hundred, according to their divisions. They shall set out first-
"Divisions" is a military term. All Israel were to be part of God's army, even though they would not necessarily have to fight. Their health or strength didn't factor in this- He counted all of them as His troops.

Num 2:10 On the south side shall be the standard of the camp of Reuben according to their divisions. The prince of the children of Reuben shall be Elizur the son of Shedeur-
There are evident similarities between Ezekiel's cherubim, the encampment in the wilderness and the four living creatures of Rev. 4. They are both described as "full of eyes" (Ez. 1:18 = Rev. 4:6), with four very similar faces (lion, calf, man, eagle in Rev. 4:7 = lion, ox, man, eagle in Ez. 1:10); and both have wings (Rev. 4:8 = Ez. 1:8). Yet the living creatures of Revelation speak of being redeemed by the blood of Christ and made king-priests in God's Kingdom (Rev. 5:8-10)- as if they are the redeemed people of God. The four faces are likely to be connected with the four standards of the tribes of Israel (Lion = Judah, Man = Reuben, Ox = Ephraim, Eagle = Dan). Each of those tribes had two other tribes assigned to them in the encampment procedures of Num. 2. There is extra-Biblical tradition that the cherubim in Solomon's temple had the same four faces which Ezekiel saw on the cherubim- lion, ox, man and eagle. Those to whom Ezekiel related his vision would have immediately understood the point- that the earthly sanctuary was a reflection of the Heavenly, and that above that was a huge Angelic system operating, which also represented God's people- them. But that huge system was to remove to Babylon, and then the final visions of Ezekiel show that glory returning. Ezekiel, as the representative "son of man" as he's so often styled, was caught up within that system and transported at ease between Babylon and Jerusalem- and those who wanted to opt in with God and His Angels could likewise be taken to Babylon and returned. Those who chose to remain in Babylon were therefore resisting being part of an awesome system of God manifestation and Angelic operation. We have that same choice in things great and small today.

The Kohathites camped on the south side of the tabernacle, which is where Reuben, Simeon and Gad camped (Num. 2:10; 3:29). The proximity of the Kohathites and

Reubenites would explain why some of the family of Kohath joined with some of the Reubenites during Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:1). Quite simply, we are influenced by those we mix with.

Num 2:11 His division, and those who were numbered of it, were forty-six thousand five hundred-

The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night. This would then make better sense of Ex. 23:30 GNB: "I will drive them out little by little, until there are enough of you to take possession

of the land". This indeed sounds as if Israel were the smallest of the nations, and not a huge nation comprising several million people.

Num 2:12 Those who encamp next to him shall be the tribe of Simeon. The prince of the children of Simeon shall be Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai-
"God's peace" son of "The Almighty is my rock" could reflect a faithful family, especially considering that Israel were idolaters in Egypt, and carried the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:6-8) and also the tabernacle of Moloch as well as that of Yahweh, the star of Remphan as well as the standards of their tribes (Acts 7:43).

Num 2:13 His division, and those who were numbered of them, were fifty-nine thousand three hundred-
Simeon's 59,300 fell to 22,200 by the end of the wilderness wanderings, according to the second census in Num. 26. This suggests a huge apostacy amongst the Simeonites, resulting in such a dramatic fall. Not all the failures and punishments of Israel are recorded in the record. The plague of Num. 25 killed 24,000 people for committing fornication with the Moabites (Num. 25:9); but the ringleader of that had been Zimri, a Simeonite prince (Num. 25:14). It's likely therefore that he led his tribe into the orgy with the Moabites, which resulted in so many of them being killed.

Num 2:14 The tribe of Gad, and the prince of the children of Gad shall be Eliasaph the son of Reuel-
Deuel of Num. 1:14 is better Reuel as in Num. 2:14. The Hebrew letters for 'D' and 'R' are easily confused; so here we have an example of slight copying errors in the original texts. But these in no way negate the overall Divine inspiration of the texts.

Num 2:15 His division, and those who were numbered of them, were forty-five thousand six hundred and fifty-
A "fifty" may not be a literal number, but a technical term for a group; see on :11. We recall groups of soldiers called a "fifty" being sent to capture Elijah.

Num 2:16 All who were numbered of the camp of Reuben were one hundred fifty-one thousand four hundred fifty, according to their armies. They shall set out second-
"Set out" is literally 'to pull up the tent pins'. This could mean that they were to keep the tents up until the whole preceding division had moved out.

Num 2:17 Then the Tent of Meeting shall set out, with the camp of the Levites in the midst of the camps. As they encamp, so shall they march out, every man in his place, by their standards-

Our attitude and position at rest or leisure is to be our attitude when on the move for Christ.

Num 2:18 On the west side shall be the standard of the camp of Ephraim according to their divisions, and the prince of the children of Ephraim shall be Elishama the son of Ammihud-

Ps. 89:12 shows how God reckons the points of the compass with reference to Jerusalem: "The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice". Likewise "the sea" is often used to show that the west is intended, the Mediterranean being to the west of Jerusalem (Num. 2:18; Josh. 16:5,6; Ez. 42:19). "The east" is put for Persia, Media and the lands east of Jerusalem (Ez. 25:4; Mt. 2:1); "the south" for Egypt, south of Canaan (Jer. 13:19; Dan. 11:5), or for the Negev, the hill country south of Jerusalem (Gen. 12:9; 13:1,3; Ez. 20:46,47); "the north" is put for Babylon (Jer. 1:13-15 etc.). God is believer centric in His view of things on planet earth.

Num 2:19 His division, and those who were numbered of them, were forty thousand five hundred-

We note the huge growth of Manasseh during the wilderness journeys, 32,200 rose to 52,700; whilst Ephraim's 40,500 fell to 32,500. This would appear to contradict Joseph's desire to bless Ephraim more than Manasseh (Gen. 48:14). It shows that the utterances of a patriarch were not determinate. For under the old covenant, numbers of children were related to obedience to the covenant. Prophecy was and is not determinate, but always conditional upon human response. Hence not all the blessings of the tribes uttered by Jacob came true; because the potential wasn't realized by the descendants. And so it is sadly true of so many people who turn away from the Kingdom promises.

Num 2:20 Next to him shall be the tribe of Manasseh, and the prince of the children of Manasseh shall be Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur-

Gamaliel" is 'God is my reward', named in hope that the promised reward of the Kingdom would indeed be given.

Num 2:21 His division, and those who were numbered of them, were thirty-two thousand two hundred-

We note the huge growth of Manasseh during the wilderness journeys, 32,200 rose to 52,700; whilst Ephraim's 40,500 fell to 32,500. This would appear to contradict Joseph's desire to bless Ephraim more than Manasseh (Gen. 48:14). It shows that the utterances of a patriarch were not determinate. For under the old covenant, numbers of children were related to obedience to the covenant. Prophecy was and is not determinate, but always conditional upon human response. Hence not all the blessings of the tribes

uttered by Jacob came true; because the potential wasn't realized by the descendants. And so it is sadly true of so many people who turn away from the Kingdom promises.

Num 2:22 The tribe of Benjamin, and the prince of the children of Benjamin shall be Abidan the son of Gideoni-

The names associated with the leadership of Benjamin and Naphtali (:22,29) stand out as not having any spiritual reference in them. Israel were very spiritually weak as they left Egypt and it is likely that the more spiritual names we read of in this list were the result of name changes. But the leaders of these two tribes didn't do that.

Num 2:23 His army, and those who were numbered of them, were thirty-five thousand four hundred-

Benjamin's 35,400 rose to 45,600 by the end of the wilderness journeyings. We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 2:24 All who were numbered of the camp of Ephraim were one hundred eight thousand one hundred, according to their divisions. They shall set out third-

"All who were numbered" could suggest, as the Rabbis like to think, that they were each personally numbered by Moses. This personal connection between Moses and each Israelite therefore looked ahead to the personal relationship between the Lord Jesus and each of His people.

Num 2:25 On the north side shall be the standard of the camp of Dan according to their divisions, and the prince of the children of Dan shall be Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai-

"Ammishaddai" means 'People of the Almighty', using the term *shaddai* which is often associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He may well have been one of the faithful few who kept perceiving the vital separation of God's people from Egypt, whereas the majority in their hearts returned to Egypt and wished to assimilate with them in order to escape persecution and have what they imagined was a good life.

Num 2:26 His division, and those who were numbered of them, were sixty-two thousand seven hundred-

We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 2:27 Those who encamp next to him shall be the tribe of Asher, and the prince of the children of Asher shall be Pagiel the son of Ochran-

Pagiel ['accident of God'] was son of Ochran, 'muddler'. As discussed on :29, people had multiple names and were known by the 'name' they carved for themselves in life, and the attitudes they had. God makes no accidents; so maybe in depression and bitterness this man felt like this, and was known for it. Hardly a great example to the tribe he was supposed to be leading. And indeed Asher all but disappears from Israel.

Num 2:28 His division, and those who were numbered of them, were forty-one thousand and five hundred-

We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 2:29 The tribe of Naphtali, and the prince of the children of Naphtali shall be Ahira the son of Enan-

What mother would have named her child Nabal (fool), or Ahira (brother of evil), or 'sickness' or 'wasting' (Mahlon and Chilion)? These names were either given to them by others and the use adopted by God, or simply God in the record assigned them such names. The names associated with the leadership of Benjamin and Naphtali (:22,29)

stand out as not having any spiritual reference in them. Israel were very spiritually weak as they left Egypt and it is likely that the more spiritual names we read of in this list were the result of name changes. But the leaders of these two tribes didn't do that.

Num 2:30 His division, and those who were numbered of them, were fifty-three thousand four hundred-
Naphtali's 53,400 fell to 45,400 by the end of the wilderness journeys, a decrease by a ratio of 0.85; very similar to how Gad's 45,650 fell to 40,500, a decrease by a ratio of 0.88. See on :28.

Num 2:31 All who were numbered of the camp of Dan were one hundred fifty-seven thousand six hundred. They shall set out last by their standards-
And yet Israel carried the star of their god Remphan with them through the wilderness (Acts 7:43) as they carried the tabernacle of Moloch and the idols of Egypt (Ez. 20:6-8). The star of Remphan would have been similar to the standards of their tribes. Their loyalties were divided from the start. Their standards reflected the cherubim of Divine manifestation, and yet whilst externally they pitched their tents in conformity to that (see on Num. 1:54; :34), this was mere religious appearance. In their hearts they were following the standards of their false gods, and their hearts were in Egypt. In our wilderness journey we have to ask ourselves how relevant this is to ourselves.

Num 2:32 These are those who were numbered of the children of Israel by their fathers' families. All who were numbered of the camps according to their armies were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty-
The size of Israel's encampment would've been huge- maybe twenty square kilometers, like a moveable city, with streets and lanes. The continual commands to move on, to follow the leading of the Angel in the pillar of fire and cloud, would've likely been received without enthusiasm because the breaking of camp would've been a long and tedious process. Yet as with us, God works things so that His people are always on the move. God looked down upon their orderly encampment and thought His people were beautiful (Num. 24:5,6). Perhaps Paul alludes to their order when he says that the body of Christ should likewise be characterized by orderliness when they are beheld by others (Col. 2:5).

Num 2:33 But the Levites were not numbered among the children of Israel; as Yahweh commanded Moses-
A census was taken of the Levites in Num. 26 at the end of the wilderness journey. So this verse here means that they were not to take a census of the Levites at that time only. Or it could be that God revised His intentions about the Levites and later did

command a census; for His purpose is to some extent open ended and He is not ashamed to change in accordance with human responses to Him.

Num. 14:29 says that "Your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness; and all who were numbered of you". This excluded the Levites, as they were not numbered. Robert Roberts rightly described the generation that was under twenty years old on leaving Egypt as the most faithful of all Israel's generations. The faithful element with whom God so 'fell in love' was not just comprised of the 'under 20s'. Joshua and Caleb also featured amongst them, as did the Levites (who the curse of destruction in the wilderness did not apply to: Num. 14:29 cp. 1:47). There would have been a bond between those younger people and the Levites. Numerically, the largest of these three groups who constituted the 'faithful element' was the under 20s. It is fitting, therefore, that this faithful remnant are personified as a young person. Thus God reflected to Hosea: "When Israel was a child (s.w. "young man"), then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (Hos. 11:1).

Num 2:34 Thus the children of Israel did. According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so they encamped by their standards, and so they marched out, everyone by their families, according to their fathers' families-
And yet Israel carried the star of their god Remphan with them through the wilderness (Acts 7:43) as they carried the tabernacle of Moloch and the idols of Egypt (Ez. 20:6-8). The star of Remphan would have been similar to the standards of their tribes. Their loyalties were divided from the start. So as discussed on :31, this was mere surface level conformity. Their hearts were in Egypt and with their gods.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 3

Num 3:1 Now this is the history of the generations of Aaron and Moses in the day that Yahweh spoke with Moses in Mount Sinai-
No genealogy of Moses is given here; "the generations of" seems to mean 'the history of'. Or perhaps Moses as the author, with typical humility, didn't record the account of his own family. He didn't want to set up any dynasty of leadership, for his humility was such that he recognized that he had been raised up as a leader, and such Divine callings are to individuals and not to dynasties. The phrase is effectively a Hebraism for 'an account of the life' of someone, e.g. Noah (Gen. 6:9). Yet the Hebrew for "generations" means just that. We expect to now encounter a list of children, grandchildren etc. Instead we read a summary of Aaron and Moses' actions, or in Gen. 6:9 we read of the character of Noah. His children, his offspring, his memorial in this earth, was not his children, but rather his character. This is comfort for the childless. Our characters are

our generation. This is what shall remain beyond the grave; for our spirit, the personality we develop, abides with God after our death and shall live eternally as 'us' at the Lord's return to earth. So often, individual character development becomes subsumed beneath the pressures of childrearing. But our ultimate "generation" is us, our personality and character.

Num 3:2 These are the names of the sons of Aaron: Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar-
We note the lack of emphasis upon the children of Moses and Miriam, the great wilderness leaders of Israel. There was to be no cult of personality nor nepotism, no riding on the name of a forefather in order to be a leader of God's people. Spiritual leadership in the Bible was intended to be based upon spiritual qualification. This also continues the major Biblical theme, that the firstborn is often not used by God and is replaced. This is His style, to exalt the underdogs.

Num 3:3 These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests who were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office-
The Lord died that He might "consecrate" or "sanctify" us to God. This is the word used by the LXX to describe the consecration of the priests to service of the body of Israel (Ex. 28:41). If we reject the call to priesthood today, we reject the point of the Lord's saving suffering for us. The Septuagint word used for 'anointing' here occurs in the New Testament in 1 Jn. 2:20,27, where we read that we have each been anointed. The idea of anointing was to signal the initiation of someone. I'd therefore be inclined to see 1 Jn. 2:20,27 as alluding to baptism; when we become in Christ, in the anointed, then as 2 Cor. 1:21 says, we too are anointed in a sense. We're given a specific mission and purpose. "The anointing that you received" would therefore refer to our commissioning at baptism. It seems to imply a one time act of being anointed / commissioned / inaugurated for service. Baptism isn't therefore merely an initiation into a community; it's a specific commissioning for active service, in ways which are unique to us. We do well to bring this point out to those we prepare for baptism. The words for 'anointing' are unique to 1 John but they occur in the LXX to describe the anointing / initiation of the priests, and of the tabernacle / dwelling place of God (e.g. Ex. 29:7; 35:14,28). John sees us as the dwelling place / tabernacle of the Father, and specifically as the priests.

Num 3:4 Nadab and Abihu died before Yahweh, when they offered strange fire before Yahweh in the wilderness of Sinai-
Strange or "gentile" fire was fire other than that fire which was perpetually burning on the altar. The fire of the altar was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening.

The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

And they had no children. Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the presence of Aaron their father-

That is, no children who ministered as priests. Ultimately, from the perspective of the Kingdom, if our children don't serve God it will be as if we have no children. Hence the need in this life to train them up to be God's servants. 1 Chron. 24:2 alludes here: "But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children; therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office". Despite having gone up Sinai and witnessing the theophany of Ex. 24:9, their desire to 'play God' for personal power had been stronger than their awe at God's presence and majesty. Visible acts of God are often desired by His servants, but they do not of themselves inculcate spirituality. The language here clearly alludes to Num. 3:4: "Nadab and Abihu died before Yahweh... and they had no children". But "Before Yahweh" is replaced with "before their father". Aaron was the manifestation of Yahweh and is thus spoken of as Him, just as the Lord Jesus can be spoken of likewise. The other references to their death repeatedly speak of it as being 'before Yahweh'. Why does Chronicles alone imply that Aaron was present with them when they made the offering? Perhaps it is to highlight the weakness of Aaron and indeed of the whole priesthood; for these genealogies were likely prepared whilst Judah were in captivity and the priesthood no longer functioned because of their sins. "And had no children" may not be intended literally. The genealogy is speaking of the Levites who did Divine service, and the idea is that their children did not serve God. And so we see His perspective on family life over the generations of history- if our children don't enter into His service, it's as if we had no children.

Num 3:5 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The appointment of Aaron's sons as priests meant that Moses' sons were Levites and not priests, and were given to serve Aaron's sons. Yet Moses time and again is revealed as the undoubted leader of the people, and more spiritually mature and committed than Aaron. Verse 38 could imply that Moses even camped separately to his children. There were no special privileges for the children of the leader, and Moses' humility would have been exercised by seeing his sons serve Aaron's sons. If all we want to see is God's work go forward, we will likewise not become resentful of such things as they work out in church life today.

Num 3:6 Bring the tribe of Levi near, and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may

minister to him-
The Hebrew term "bring near" is that translated "offer". The idea is that the Levites were to be living sacrifices to Yahweh. This idea is applied to all in Christ in Rom. 12:1. The New Testament presents all in Christ as the equivalent of the Levites, a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). None of us can therefore pass off spiritual responsibility to someone else; for we are all priests.

Num 3:7 They shall keep his requirements, and the requirements of the whole congregation before the Tent of Meeting, to do the service of the tabernacle-
The idea of Num. 3:7 may be that *they,* the Levites, shall keep the commandments which the congregation were required to keep. In this sense the Levites carried the sin of the people (Num. 18:1); according to Num. 1:53, the Levites must be obedient "that there may be no wrath on the congregation of the children of Israel". God typically operates on a basis of representative atonement; the Lord Jesus died as our representative rather than our substitute. Moses' offer to be a substitute for Israel, offering His eternal salvation for theirs, was not accepted. But such was the weakness of Israel, and His desire to save His people, that God at some times and in some ways does effectively accept a substitutionary salvation, where the obedience of X saves disobedient Y.

Num 3:8 They shall keep all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, and the obligations of the children of Israel, to do the service of the tabernacle-
Again we see that the Levites were to keep "the obligations" of the other Israelites; see on :7.

Num 3:9 You shall give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons. They are wholly given to him on the behalf of the children of Israel-
See on Jn. 17:6. "The men which You gave me out of the (Jewish) world... they have kept Your word" (Jn. 17:6) compares with the Levites being "given" to Aaron / the priesthood out of Israel (Num. 3:9; 8:19; 18:6); at the time of the golden calf they "observed thy word, and kept thy covenant" (Dt. 33:9), as did the disciples. The relationship between Moses and the Levites was therefore that between Christ and the disciples- a sense of thankfulness that at least a minority were faithful.

Num 3:10 You shall appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall keep their ministry. The stranger who comes near shall be put to death-
The phrase "keep their ministry" from the Septuagint version is quoted by Paul about our service of the ecclesia / church today (Rom. 12:7). Whatever day job or career we have in this world, our real work is our ministry to God's people.

Num 3:11 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Jn. 17:9 alludes to the Levites in saying that all in Him are "those whom You have given me; for they are Yours". The disciples were given to the Lord out of the Jewish world, as the Levites were. As the Levites were God's (Num. 3:12,13,45; 8:14), so are the believers. The Levites represent us (Dt. 33:9); the relationship between Moses and the Levites represents that between the Lord and us. Moses' thankfulness that they remained faithful during the golden calf crisis, that sense of being able to rely on them, will be reflected in the Lord's feelings toward the faithful.

Num 3:12 Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn who open the womb among the children of Israel; and the Levites shall be mine-
The priests weren't part-timers. They gave their lives to God in recognition of the fact that God had saved the lives of the firstborn at the Passover and Red Sea deliverance (Num. 3:12). Our deliverance from the world at baptism was our Red Sea. We have been saved. Those firstborns represent us, the ecclesia of firstborns (Heb. 12:23 Gk.). We are now being led towards that glorious Kingdom, when by rights we ought to be lying dead in that dark Egyptian night. The wonder of it all demands that like the Levites, we give our lives *back* to God, in service towards His children.

Num 3:13 for all the firstborn are mine. On the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I made holy to me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and animal. They shall be mine. I am Yahweh-
Those who had been spared from death by the blood of the lamb on Passover night weren't just free to do as they wished with their saved lives, but were to be devoted to God. We are those who have likewise been spared from eternal death by Christ's blood, and we are therefore not to see ourselves as having merely escaped eternal death but must go further to perceive ourselves as thereby dedicated to God's service. Hence the Christian community is called "the church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23)- we are all as it were the firstborn who were saved by grace on Passover night, because we are in Christ, the firstborn (Col. 1:18).

Num 3:14 Yahweh spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying-
This is significant; the purpose with Levi was not revealed whilst Moses was in the mountain, but after he had returned and some Levites had resisted the apostacy of the golden calf. We marvel at the way the Divinely inspired record consistently consistent.

Num 3:15 Count the children of Levi by their fathers' families, by their families. You shall

count every male from a month old and upward-
This could be read as a command to Moses to personally number all the people of his own tribe, Levi. This looks ahead to the similar personal relationship between the Lord Jesus and His people.

Num 3:16 Moses numbered them according to the word of Yahweh, as he was commanded-
The obedience of Moses is constantly emphasized. It looked ahead to the total obedience of the Lord Jesus to the Father's word.

Num 3:17 These were the sons of Levi by their names: Gershon, and Kohath, and Merari-
"Gershon" means 'expelled', maybe meaning that like Reuben he was expelled from the role of firstborn [he is mentioned first as if he was the firstborn]. This is a theme of the Genesis record. But perhaps because of these weaknesses, the line to the high priest ran through Kohath.

Num 3:18 These are the names of the sons of Gershon by their families: Libni and Shimei-
We note that both Moses and Aaron had sons called Gershon (Ex. 2:22). Such repetition of names within families and in the same generation was quite common, and is one thing which makes the study of the genealogies difficult in places.

Num 3:19 The sons of Kohath by their families: Amram, and Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel-
We note the lack of emphasis upon the children of Moses and Miriam, the great wilderness leaders of Israel. There was to be no cult of personality nor nepotism, no riding on the name of a forefather in order to be a leader of God's people. Spiritual leadership in the Bible was intended to be based upon spiritual qualification.

Num 3:20 The sons of Merari by their families: Mahli and Mushi. These are the families of the Levites according to their fathers' families-
"Mahli" and "Mushi" mean 'sickly' and 'sensitive' respectively. This confirms the suggestion I have often made, that names were given in response to later character and life experience. Sometimes in these genealogies we read the birth names, at others, the names they were given later in life. And therefore the same person can have more than one name.

Num 3:21 Of Gershon was the family of the Libnites, and the family of the Shimeites: these are the families of the Gershonites-

For :21-39 see on Num. 1:1. We have a choice between understanding the Hebrew *elep* as meaning a literal number, or a "thousand" in the sense of a family group. In this case, the number following the word "thousand" would refer to the number of males amongst that number of families. This makes a more realistic number of Levites (see on :39,43). Although it means that as discussed on :22, the total number of Israelites who left Egypt was not as huge as often imagined.
Thus the numbers would work out like this:
Gershon 7,500, or 7 families with 500 males, making 71 males / family group.
Kohath 8,600 or 8 families with 600 males, making 75 males / family group.
Merari 6,200 or 6 families with 200 males, making 33 males / family group.
This would make a total of 22,300 if we take "thousand" literally; or a total of 21 families [7+8+6] and 1300 males, making a total of 48 males per family group. See on Num. 4:36.

Num 3:22 Those who were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, even those who were numbered of them were seven thousand five hundred-
This could mean 'seven families, with 500 men'. The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological

evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night. This would then make better sense of Ex. 23:30 GNB: "I will drive them out little by little, until there are enough of you to take possession of the land". This indeed sounds as if Israel were the smallest of the nations, and not a huge nation comprising several million people.

Num 3:23 The families of the Gershonites shall encamp behind the tabernacle westward-
The word for "west" in Hebrew is the same for "sea", often used with reference to the Mediterranean. We see how the whole structure of God's language was based around Israel. He was and is believer centric, His focus in this world is upon His people- into whom there is an open invitation to enter.

Num 3:24 The prince of the fathers' house of the Gershonites shall be Eliasaph the son of Lael-
We note how most of the names feature the 'El' suffix or prefix and not 'Yah' or 'Iah'. This is understandable, for Moses declared the Name of Yahweh to the people after most of these men had been born. This kind of artless internal corroboration is to me one of the strongest arguments for the Divine inspiration of the Bible.

Num 3:25 The duty of the sons of Gershon in the Tent of Meeting shall be the tabernacle, and the tent, its covering, and the screen for the door of the Tent of Meeting-
This was no small task. It has been estimated that there were 14 tons 266 lbs. [about 14000 kg. or 14 tonnes] of metal used in the tabernacle, besides the huge weight of the skins, hangings, cords, boards, and posts.

Num 3:26 and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the door of the court, which is by the tabernacle, and around the altar, and its cords for all of its service-
See on :25. The Gershonites took care of the cords of the Tabernacle; the Merarites did so for the cords of the court (:37). Ex. 27:9 speaks of "hangings for the court of fine twined linen one hundred cubits long for one side". The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made

from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. It perhaps appropriately designated the boundary between the believer and the world, represented by the linen fence which marked the enclosure of the tabernacle. 100 cubits is 58 yards or 53 meters.

Num 3:27 Of Kohath was the family of the Amramites, and the family of the Izharites, and the family of the Hebronites, and the family of the Uzzielites: these are the families of the Kohathites-
We note that there was only one of these names which has 'God' in it. I discuss on :43 how Levi was perhaps the spiritually weakest of the tribes at this point- and yet were the ones chosen by God to be His special servants.

Num 3:28 According to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, there were eight thousand six hundred, keeping the requirements of the sanctuary-
Some original manuscripts read 8,300. This could solve the apparent discrepancies in the numbers later on. The difference between the Hebrew letters for 8,300 and 8,600 is miniscule. Although the word of God itself is inspired and infallible, this isn't to say that there aren't minor errors of copyists as the manuscripts were passed on over the generations.

Num 3:29 The families of the sons of Kohath shall encamp on the south side of the tabernacle-
The Kohathites camped on the south side of the tabernacle, which is where Reuben, Simeon and Gad camped (Num. 2:10; 3:29). The proximity of the Kohathites and Reubenites would explain why some of the family of Kohath joined with some of the Reubenites during Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:1). Quite simply, we are influenced by those we mix with.

Num 3:30 The prince of the fathers' house of the families of the Kohathites shall be Elizaphan the son of Uzziel-
Elizaphan means 'God of treasures', perhaps with reference to the Divine treasures of :31 they looked after. This is an example of where names were given to people in reflection of their life experience, rather than being their birth names. Perhaps Korah led the rebellion against Moses because he objected to how Elzaphan son of Uziel had been appointed over the Kohathites (Num. 3:30). Kohath had four sons, Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uziel (Ex. 6:18). Amram's sons, Moses and Aaron, had already received high honour in ruling over all Israel. So Korah, as the firstborn son of the next born son Izhar, thought that he ought to have been over the Kohathites. But instead, the son of Uziel,

Kohath's youngest son, had been made prince of the Kohathite clan. This is typical of how God appoints those who are least qualified and strong in secular terms. But Korah disliked this. He felt he was next in line to be the leader of the Kohathites.

Num 3:31 Their duty shall be the ark, the table, the lampstand, the altars, the vessels of the sanctuary with which they minister, and the screen, and all its service-
We note in this list the progression outward from the ark in the most holy, to the table of shewbread, lampstand and incense altar in the holy place, to the altar of burnt offering in the court. Man first had to bow his head to enter the court, referring to humility. Then there was accepting the principle of sacrifice at the altar, followed by baptism in the laver- and then entry to the holy place, where there was the incense altar [prayer- Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4], the table of shewbread [the breaking of bread] and candlestick [church life], shining light towards the entrance to the most holy place where God dwelt between the cherubim.

Num 3:32 Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be prince of the princes of the Levites, with the oversight of those who keep the requirements of the sanctuary-
Eleazar was to replace Aaron as priest, and in this sense looked ahead to the Lord Jesus. "The requirements" is better translated "watch" in the military sense of sentry duty. The Levites were to literally guard the tabernacle, against any "Who advances to touch it" (Num. 1:51 LXX), as if touching it in a conscious and defiant way. Hence the command for some Levites to be as sentries guarding the tabernacle (Num. 3:32).

Num 3:33 Of Merari was the family of the Mahlites, and the family of the Mushites. These are the families of Merari-
"Mahli" and "Mushi" mean 'sickly' and 'sensitive' respectively. This confirms the suggestion I have often made, that names were given in response to later character and life experience. Sometimes in these genealogies we read the birth names, at others, the names they were given later in life. And therefore the same person can have more than one name.

Num 3:34 Those who were numbered of them, according to the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were six thousand two hundred-
"Those who were numbered of them" could imply that not all were numbered. We are given the number of those who allowed themselves to be numbered. This might explain why the tribe of Levi is apparently so numerically small- not all the various families wished to be numbered for priestly service. Which would be another indication that the tribe chosen for special service was very spiritually weak. But that is God's style.

Num 3:35 The prince of the fathers' house of the families of Merari was Zuriel the son of Abihail. They shall encamp on the north side of the tabernacle-
Again we note how many of the names feature the 'El' or 'Il' suffix or prefix and not 'Yah' or 'Iah'. This is understandable, for Moses declared the Name of Yahweh to the people after most of these men had been born. This kind of artless internal corroboration is to me one of the strongest arguments for the Divine inspiration of the Bible.

Num 3:36 The appointed duty of the sons of Merari shall be the tabernacle's boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, all its instruments, all its service-
Nearly all the features of the tabernacle suggest parts of the body. The girl in Solomon's song portrays her lover as having "legs as pillars [s.w. "pillars" here] set upon sockets [s.w. "sockets" here, meaning "bases"] of gold" (Song 5:15). The pillars therefore correspond to legs, and the bases / "sockets" to feet. It was as if the tabernacle was surrounded by men's legs and feet, holding hands with each other.

Num 3:37 the pillars of the court around it, their sockets, their pins, and their cords-
The Gershonites took care of the cords of the Tabernacle; the Merarites did so for the cords of the court (:37). The "pins" were the tent pegs, made of brass and heavy (Ex. 27:19).

Num 3:38 Those who encamp before the tabernacle eastward, in front of the Tent of Meeting toward the sunrise, shall be Moses and Aaron and his sons, keeping the requirements of the sanctuary for the duty of the children of Israel. The stranger who comes near shall be put to death-
See on :6. Moses speaks of himself in the third person. Thus we see his selfless and humble approach to the business of relaying God's inspired word. He makes no mention of his own sons, only of Aaron's sons. Humanly speaking, it must have been hard for him to see his own sons ignored, when by all accounts Moses was spiritually stronger than Aaron. This was all part of the Divine process which made Moses the humblest man on earth at the time.

Num 3:39 All who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of Yahweh, by their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty-two thousand-
38,000 Levites were numbered by David in 1 Chron. 23:3, although "thousand" may mean a division rather than a literal 1000. At the time of Num. 4:47,48 there were only 8,580. And Levite males from a month old were 22,000 in Num. 3:39 and 23,000 at the time of Num. 26:62. This suggests a great increase in the number of Levites by David's

time; or perhaps he more generously counted who was a Levite, because he wanted to have as many as possible involved in his grandiose plans for the temple services. There was no need for such large numbers of Levites in order to serve God effectively, for there were far fewer Levites at the time of the figures given in the book of Numbers, and the sanctuary and Divine service still continued.

Num 3:40 Yahweh said to Moses, Number all the firstborn males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names-
"The number of the names" is the phrase used in Acts 1:15 of the very early church. The idea was that the fledgling Christian church was now the new Israel of God, who were to go out and do spiritual warfare in conquering the world for Christ.

Num 3:41 You shall take the Levites for Me (I am Yahweh) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the livestock of the children of Israel-
The number of cattle was not counted, unlike the numbers of firstborn compared to the number of Levites; rather the Levite's cattle were just accepted for those of the Israelites. Ex. 13:13 and Num. 18:17 taught that the firstborn of clean animals were to be sacrificed; although the firstborn of unclean donkeys were to be redeemed. The teaching was that God's redeemed were as unclean donkeys. But the sacrificing of the firstborn of all clean animals may well have been now considered by God as too difficult for the Israelites. Their devotion to Him was sadly not to that standard. And so He upheld His basic principle but reduced the demand, by accepting the Levite's cattle at this point in place of the firstborn of the clean animals of the Israelites. We see here God's flexible attitude, because He so wanted to save His people and have relationship with them even on a lower level than ideal. And in Deuteronomy, the second law, we will see many examples of amelioration of the laws.

Num 3:42 Moses numbered, as Yahweh commanded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel-
This could be read as a command to Moses to personally number all the firstborn. This looks ahead to the similar personal relationship between the Lord Jesus and His people.

Num 3:43 All the firstborn males according to the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those who were numbered of them, were twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three-
There are various possibilities here. Because the combined number of the male Levites was only 22,000 (:39), although the actual total of the figures in Num. 3:22,28,34 is

22,300. There were apparently not enough Levites to cover all the Israelite firstborn. I go along with the standard Rabbinic suggestion that the difference between the figure of 22,000 in :39 and the sum of 22,300 in :22,28,34 is because there were 300 Levites who were firstborn. This, however, requires us to understand "thousand" as referring to a family, followed by the number of males. Thus "twenty-two thousand two hundred and seventy-three" would mean 22 families and 273 males. I have argued on :22 that the number of Israelites who left Egypt was probably far smaller than usually imagined, because the term for "thousand" usually means 'family' or 'group'. If there were only 300 Levite firstborn amongst 22,300 Levites, this means only one in 74 were firstborns. That is unrealistic- unless in fact most of their firstborn were slain at Passover for disobedience. If however we understand the figure as 21 families and 1300 makes, we get a figure of 1 firstborn to every 4.3, which is far more realistic.

The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did all Israel eat the Passover? Were many in fact slain. My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, “the Destroyer” Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). “The Destroyer” is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer” (*olothreutes;* this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the ‘Destroyer’ Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of “He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. *olothreuo*) the firstborn”. Israel were side-tracked from what should have been the central object of their attention: the blood of the lamb. They were disobedient from the day God knew them, i.e. Passover night (Dt. 9:24).

Levi was by far the smallest tribe- the numbers of the males over 20 in the other tribes (as recorded in Num. 1) is far larger than the number of males of the tribe of Levi. God uses as His special workers those who are weakest in human terms. It could be argued that Levi grew less in number than the other tribes because of some spiritual weakness- for at this time, Divine blessing was reckoned in terms of number of offspring. So perhaps spiritually as well as numerically they were the weakest, yet were chosen by God for His special work. God seems to love to work in this way.

However as noted elsewhere, "thousand" is not to be read as a literal number but as referring to a family grouping. If there were 22,273 male firstborns, then we can assume that the number of families in which the first-born child was a female would be about the same, making a total of 44,546 families. If there were literally 600,000 fighting men

(Ex. 12:37; Num. 11:21) then the total population would have been in the millions, requiring an average of about 50 children to a family. It is far better to understand "thousand" as a term for a group and not a number.

The Levites encamped around the tabernacle can be compared to the number of Angels encamped around Israel in their cherubim chariots as being 'in the twenty thousands', AV "twenty thousand, even thousands of Angels" (Ps. 68:17,18). Both the priests and the Angels are called *elohim*. The idea of Angels encamped around the tabernacle led to the connection of the cherubim faces with the encamped tribes of Israel.

Num 3:44 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The inadequacy of the Levites to totally redeem all the firstborn is now addressed. And it looked ahead to how the priesthood could redeem but not totally redeem Israel. Just as Moses could see into the promised land, but not enter it. It all reflects the ultimate inadequacy of the Mosaic system, requiring the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus.

Num 3:45 Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock; and the Levites shall be Mine. I am Yahweh-
The Levites were God's (Num. 3:12,13,45; 8:14), and the Lord alludes to this: "I pray not for the (Jewish) world, but for them (the disciples, cp. the Levites) which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (Jn. 17:9). The Levites represent us (Jn. 17:6 = Dt. 33:9); the relationship between Moses and the Levites represents that between Christ and us. Moses' thankfulness that they remained faithful during the golden calf crisis, that sense of being able to rely on them, will be reflected in the Lord's feelings toward the faithful.

Num 3:46 For the redemption of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the children of Israel, who exceed the number of the Levites-
273 is the numerical value of "Abram", and this group represent all the redeemed- those who could not be redeemed by the Levitical system, but are redeemed in Christ. And they are Abraham's seed.

Num 3:47 you shall take five shekels for each one; after the shekel of the sanctuary you shall take them (the shekel is twenty gerahs)-
273 firstborns needed redemption at five shekels / head, requiring a total payment of 1365 shekels or 5,460 pieces of silver. Five shekels was 20 pieces of silver, the price of a slave, paid for Joseph. These who could not be redeemed by the Levites represent all of us, saved by the work of the Lord Jesus and not the Levitical priesthood. We wonder at the similarity with the 276 people in the boat saved by Paul, who was accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus (Acts 27:37). This meant that there were 273 unbelievers

redeemed in that ship, and that whole incident was representative of Christ's salvation of His people.

Num 3:48 and you shall give the money, with which their remainder is redeemed, to Aaron and to his sons-
The obvious thought was that the blood of the Passover lamb had effectively redeemed them. But for that to be ultimately effective, there was to be a sense of giving to God in response to that. Whether through the substitution of the Levites or giving the redemption money, there had to be response to the work of that blood. Just as there must be response from us to the blood of the Lord Jesus.

Num 3:49 Moses took the redemption money from those who exceeded the number of those who were redeemed by the Levites-
Again we see that the "redemption" by the Levitical system was incomplete. It was a case of "almost but not quite", and as with many aspects of the Mosaic system, it pointed forward to the ultimate inadequacy of that system in relation to ultimate redemption. The redemption of the Lord Jesus was required.

Num 3:50 from the firstborn of the children of Israel he took the money, one thousand three hundred and sixty-five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary-
There were various other definitions of a shekel, but as ever, it is by God's standards and not secular standards that we must take our reference point.

Num 3:51 and Moses gave the redemption money to Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of Yahweh, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
The obedience of Moses is constantly emphasized. It looked ahead to the total obedience of the Lord Jesus to the Father's word.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 4

Num 4:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
Kohath wasn't the firstborn nor the senior born amongst the three sons listed here, but the Kohathites are numbered first and had the greatest responsibility. Again we see how God prefers to work not with the humanly best, strongest or most senior.

Num 4:2 Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, by their families, by their fathers' families-
"From among" is literally 'from the midst', and Kohath was the middle son out of

Gershom, Kohath and Merari. He is perhaps listed first here because his family carried the ark.

Num 4:3 from thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all who enter into the service, to do the work in the Tent of Meeting-
David numbered the Levites from 30 years old (1 Chron. 23:3), in accordance with the law which said Levites were to serve between the ages of 30 and 50 (Num. 4:3,23,35,39). But in 1 Chron. 23:24 we are told that David numbered the Levites from 20 years old. We note in Num. 8:23 that there appeared some flexibility within the Mosaic law; the Levites could be numbered from 25 years old. This is one of many examples of how the Mosaic law was not set in stone. It was principle and spirit rather than letter of the law, and within it there are examples of where one law overrode another, or one principle overrode letter of the law. The law was not designed as a simple test of obedience, for it was far more detailed than that. It was designed to inculcate a spirit of living which looked forward to the spirit of the Lord Jesus. And so David felt free to number the Levites from 20 years old, even though we also read that he numbered 'the Levites from 30 years old', suggesting that this was a technical term rather than a literal description. This would go toward explaining why 38,000 Levites were numbered by David, although "thousand" may mean a division rather than a literal 1000. At the time of Num. 4:47,48 there were only 8,580.

Num 4:4 This is the service of the sons of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting, in the most holy things-
“Enter into the service” in Hebrew has a military connotation. Whatever our occupation in this world, we are to see ourselves as soldiers fighting for the only truly good and worthy cause on earth. There should therefore be in our lives an element of discipline, regimentation and focus on specific objectives. The New Testament is full of military metaphors (e.g. 2 Tim. 2:4).

Num 4:5 When the camp moves forward, Aaron shall go in, and his sons, and they shall take down the veil of the screen, and cover the ark of the Testimony with it-
The taking down of the tabernacle is turned by Paul and Peter into a metaphor for our death (2 Cor. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:14). The implication is that all the valuable things within the tabernacle through which God was manifest can on one level be interpreted as our lives. In this metaphor alone we see the immense value and meaning of human life if it is lived in God’s service.

Num 4:6 and shall put a covering of sealskin on it, and shall spread over it a cloth all of blue, and shall put in its poles-

The continual mention of rings and poles is because all the tabernacle had to be portable, as Israel were constantly on the move. This is proof enough that much of the "law of Moses" was only relevant to the wilderness generation. God's desire to be continually on the move, dwelling in a tent, was still evident at the time when Israel settled in the land. For He told David that He didn't want a temple because He was dynamic, always moving on. But the way of religion is to have a permanent, stable closed system, rather than the dynamic way of the Spirit and true spirituality. "Rings" in Hebrew is literally 'that which sinks in', and refers to a signet ring. If a literal ring was solely in view, a different word would have been used. It was as if this mobile, ever moving onwards style of the tabernacle was the signature or hallmark of God.

Num 4:7 On the table of show bread they shall spread a blue cloth, and put on it the dishes, the spoons, the bowls, and the cups with which to pour out; and the continual bread shall be on it-
The bread and wine which we take are antitypical of the Old Testament sacrifices; and they were repeatedly described as "Yahweh's food", laid upon the altar as "the table of Yahweh" (Lev. 21:6,8; 22:25; Num. 28:2; Ez. 44:7,16; Mal. 1:7,12). And it has been commented: "Current translations are inaccurate; *lehem panim* is the 'personal bread' of Yahweh, just as *sulhan panim* (Num. 4:7) is the 'personal table' of Yahweh". This deeply personal relationship between Yahweh and the priests eating the bread is continued in the breaking of bread. For we are all priests (1 Pet. 2:5).

Num 4:8 They shall spread on them a scarlet cloth, and cover the same with a covering of sealskin, and shall put in its poles-
Sealskins were presumably taken by the Israelites from the shores of the Red Sea? Whatever we pick up along the wilderness journey of life we are to give to God’s service.

Num 4:9 They shall take a blue cloth, and cover the lampstand of the light, and its lamps, and its snuffers, and its snuff dishes, and all its oil vessels, with which they minister to it-
Ex. 25:38 says that "Its snuffers and its snuff dishes shall be of pure gold". Gold wasn’t the strongest or most practical material for these instruments. But it represents faith (1 Pet. 1:7). We aren’t the best instruments for God to use in His house, but He prefers to use the soft and those who aren’t humanly qualified for His work- because He works by faith in us, and by our faith in Him rather than our human strength

Num 4:10 They shall put it and all its vessels within a covering of sealskin, and shall put it on the frame-
They would have gathered these sealskins from the shores of the Red Sea and taken

them with them. The lesson is that what we pick up along life's way we are to dedicate to the Lord's service.

Num 4:11 On the golden altar they shall spread a blue cloth, and cover it with a covering of sealskin, and shall put in its poles-
"Pole" is s.w. "strength". There is again a juxtaposition of ideas- the weak acacia wood (Ex. 27:6), which is no more than a thorn bush, was to be turned into God's strength through being overlaid with precious metal. "Acacia" is literally "thorns". It is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. But from this weak material which was very difficult to work with, brittle, fragile and very weak, God covered this weak, difficult wood with gold and constructed a system with it where His glory might dwell. It all speaks of how He uses us. And we connect this with how God speaks of His people are wood from a vine tree, which is not used by anyone else for making anything; but He uses it for His work (Ez. 15:1-6). We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. It was a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and easily broken in order to do His work.

Num 4:12 They shall take all the vessels of ministry, with which they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a blue cloth, and cover them with a covering of sealskin, and shall put them on the frame-
"Frame" is better "pole". These things were all to be carried by poles on the shoulders. When David brought the ark to Zion, he paid no attention to this repeated emphasis. The man who claimed to study God's word and law all the day... missed an obvious emphasis, and considered that his 'keeping the spirit of the law' enabled him to disobey God's basic principles. And there is clear warning for us in all ages.

Num 4:13 They shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth on it-
Purple cloth was a sign of royalty, and these cloths were likely given to the Israelites by the leaders of Egypt when they left Egypt. And so there is a juxtaposition of ideas between the glory of secular royalty, and the usage of it to cover the ashes of Yahweh's altar. The world's greatest honours are as nothing to God and are here used for the lowest work.

Num 4:14 They shall put on it all its vessels, with which they minister for it, the fire pans, the flesh hooks, the shovels, and the basins; all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread on it a covering of sealskin, and put in its poles-
Jewish tradition has it that the fire which came down from Heaven in Lev. 9:24 remained burning; and this fire was preserved burning all night and day. Hence the need for "fire pans" (Ex. 27:3) to keep the fire burning whilst the altar was being cleaned or the remains of sacrifices removed from it. But the fact these fire pans were packed away and transported raises some difficulties for this idea.

Num 4:15 When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary, and all the furniture of the sanctuary, as the camp moves forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to carry it: but they shall not touch the sanctuary, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the Tent of Meeting-
In 2 Sam. 6:8, God slew Uzzah because he touched the ark when David brought it back to Jerusalem on a cart. Yet the Law clearly stated that the ark was to be carried only by the Levites, and was to be carried on poles rather than on a cart. Throughout Ps. 119, David declares how he loves God's law and studies and recites it by day and night. That surely included this passage in Numbers 4. But we have a tendency to read God's word, to know it well, speaking of it to others- and yet somehow assume that it doesn't apply to us personally, and we can take shortcuts as convenient to us. If righteous David did this, how much more should we be aware of our temptation to fail in the same way.

There were very specific laws about the transportation of the ark, which David disobeyed in 2 Sam. 6:2-5. It was to be carried on poles on the shoulders of not just Levites but specifically the sons of Kohath (Num. 4:15); and Abinadab's family were not the right people to carry it. David claims in Ps. 119 to have studied God's law all the day whilst on the run from Saul, reciting it to himself. Perhaps he forgot these details in Numbers 4. But I suggest because he came to see that God wanted the spirit and not letter of the law to be followed, he came to totally place himself above Divine law. We face the same temptation. And it was this which led David into his sin with Bathsheba. Shaving off bits and pieces of God's laws and principles, on the basis that we are above His law, leads to the final catastrophe of David's sin with Bathsheba. Instead of following God's laws about the transportation of the ark, it seems David instead followed the pattern of the Philistines, who also transported the captured ark on a cart (s.w. 1 Sam. 6:10,11). And considered that having built a new cart, never used before, he was in his own way showing respect to it.

Num 4:16 The duty of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall be the oil for the light, the sweet incense, the continual grain offering, and the anointing oil, the requirements of all

the tabernacle, and of all that is in it, the sanctuary, and its furnishings-
There is no suggestion that this was to be the duty of every High Priest. Eleazar is mentioned as he was to replace Aaron. So much of the Mosaic law was only for the generation who were to march through the wilderness to the promised land, where God had in view another worship system. All claims that any law of God is eternally binding must be considered in this context. It is simply not the case.

Num 4:17 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
The family of Kohath were to bear the ark, and so they had greater responsibility and greater risk of destruction for inappropriate behaviour. If we love God, we will not shy away from intimacy with Him. But it is also true that knowledge brings responsibility to act the more appropriately.

Num 4:18 Don't cut off the clan of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites-
By Moses' inattention, a whole group of people could have died. Our sensitivity, or lack of it, to others' likely failings can lead to their losing their part amongst the family of the redeemed. We can't reason that human failure is simply their fault; we also bear some responsibility if we don't do what we can to mitigate against it.

Num 4:19 but thus do to them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach to the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them each one to his service and to his burden-
Not touching holy things connects with the command not to touch the forbidden fruit of Eden (Gen. 3:3). Time and again, Adam's sin is presented (by way of such allusions) as the sin of everyman; elements of it are to be found in all human sin, and therefore we can never blame Adam as the source of our present discomfort under the curse; for we would have done the same. In this sense, all humanity sinned as it were in Adam (Rom. 5:12 Gk.). It's no bad exercise to analyze our own sins in the light of Adam's failure and see wherein are the essential similarities.

Num 4:20 but they shall not go in to see the sanctuary even for a moment, lest they die-
This law was applied even to Gentiles who looked into the ark (1 Sam. 6:19). God still feels sin as a committed offence against Him personally, even when it's performed by those not responsible to His law. It must be hard being God, seeing and feeling so much offence against Him every moment. In this we see not only His sensitivity to sin, but His grace in allowing the whole of human society to exist in its disobedient, sinful state, minute by minute. And thereby we can appreciate more fully the way that He delays judging this world and ending sin, all because He is so earnest that we and others might come to repentance and salvation (2 Pet. 3:9).

Num 4:21 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The census of Israel required that a half shekel of redemption money be offered to Him. We wonder whether this census of the Levites required the same; for we have just read in Num. 3:49-51 of how they had been given the redemption money for the 273 firstborns they had failed to substitute for. They were being tested as to whether they would give it back to God. Just as we are by any receipt of wealth.

Num 4:22 Take a census of the sons of Gershon also, by their fathers' families, by their families-
Gershon was the firstborn but he was not given any particular honour for that, and Kohath had the honour of bearing the ark and is mentioned first in this list. This is typical of how God often doesn't choose the firstborn, those with secular advantage, but delights to work otherwise. See on :24.

Num 4:23 you shall count them from thirty years old and upward until fifty years old; all who enter in to wait on the service, to do the work in the Tent of Meeting-
The fact the Lord Jesus began His service at age 30 therefore presents Him as the ideal priest; although He was not of Levi but from Judah, His ministry was effectively a priestly service.

Num 4:24 This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, in serving and in bearing burdens-
Bearing burdens is the language of the lowest servant, although Gershon was the firstborn; see on :22.

Num 4:25 they shall carry the curtains of the tabernacle, and the Tent of Meeting, its covering, and the covering of sealskin that is above it, and the screen for the door of the Tent of Meeting-
These are the coverings of Ex. 26:14: "You shall make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of sea cow hides above". They were dyed red to represent how the blood of Christ is the covering for God's people.

Num 4:26 and the hangings of the court, and the screen for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and around the altar, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and whatever shall be done with them. In this will be their service-

These are the "hangings" of Ex. 27:9: "You shall make the court of the tabernacle: for the south side southward there shall be hangings for the court of fine twined linen one hundred cubits long for one side".
The "fine twined linen" was given to them on leaving Egypt, as it was characteristic of Egypt ("fine twined linen from Egypt" Ez. 27:7). It was apparently only in Egypt at that time that such fine linen was "made from yarn of which each thread was composed of many delicate strands". We see that the best wealth we take from Egypt / the world is to be devoted to the Lord's work. It perhaps appropriately designated the boundary between the believer and the world, represented by the linen fence which marked the enclosure of the tabernacle. 100 cubits is 58 yards or 53 meters.

Num 4:27 At the commandment of Aaron and his sons shall be all the service of the sons of the Gershonites, in all their burden, and in all their service; and you shall appoint their duty to them in all their responsibilities-
As the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), we too have specific service intended for us. Eph. 2:10 alludes to this: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God beforehand prepared that we should walk in them". Man is never better than when working at what is clearly his calling and empowered by God in doing so. We need to pray that God will reveal to us what are those specific works which He has prepared for us to do- and make them the thrust of our lives. For it's unlikely that His intention and hope was that we should get qualified, climb the career ladder, improve our homes, go up the ladder of cars, holiday homes and expensive gadgets... and die in a comfortable nursing home leaving what was left over to our kids or someone else as a kind of short cut towards that same sad life we thought we did so well in. Entry into Christ, therefore, is a beginning and not an end. Nor is it merely an assent to the correctness of a set of theological truths. Rather is it an opening of ourselves to His workmanship upon us, and working for Him. See on :32.

Num 4:28 This is the service of the families of the sons of the Gershonites in the Tent of Meeting: and their duty shall be under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest-
The Levites were under the command of the priests. Eleazar was to succeed Aaron as High Priest, and so he was placed over the Kohathites as they carried the ark; Ithamar, his younger brother, commanded the Gershonites and Merarites (Num. 4:33).

Num 4:29 As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families, by their fathers' families-
It is likely that a sense of genealogy had been somewhat lost during the time spent in Egypt. There was huge emphasis on genealogies at Sinai, because God is a family God and wanted the people to be arranged by families. God set even the solitary in families at this time (Ps. 68:6)- those without any family were assigned to one. This looks ahead

to God's desire that His people should not be solitary individuals but organized ideally in spiritual family groups, what we would call churches.

Num 4:30 you shall count them from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who enters on the service, to do the work of the Tent of Meeting-
"The service" translates a word usually used for a military group. The idea was that they were to do God's work as soldiers grouped for battle, disciplined and with respect for authority and specific ends in view. As the new priesthood, we should have a similar disciplined approach. Not just drifting into church life and remaining in it as spectators at a show, as mere religion, but specifically aware that we are called to personal engagement, participation and action. See on :31.

Num 4:31 This is the duty of their burden, according to all their service in the Tent of Meeting: the tabernacle's boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets-
As discussed on :30, "duty" is likewise a military term, something similar to 'sentry duty'. These are the boards of Ex. 26:16: "Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and one and a half cubits the breadth of each board". As discussed on :11, acacia bushes don't grow so long nor straight. These boards would have been very difficult to construct, and would have involved much joining together of pieces of wood which were difficult to work with. It was an appropriate symbol for the kind of human material which goes to make up God's dwelling place. For God dwells in the community of His people, and not within wood and stone. The materials of the tabernacle therefore represent us His people.

Num 4:32 and the pillars of the court around it, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name you shall appoint the instruments of the duty of their burden-
GNB "Each man will be responsible for carrying specific items". Again we have the sense that each Levite had specific responsibilities, looking ahead to how we in the new priesthood have specific callings unique to each of us. See on :27.

Num 4:33 This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, in the Tent of Meeting, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest-
"The service... their service" continues the theme of each group and individual having a specific service or ministry intended for them. See on :27,32.

Num 4:34 Moses and Aaron and the princes of the congregation numbered the sons of the Kohathites by their families, and by their fathers' families-

There is repeatedly specific priority and emphasis given to the Kohathites, although Kohath was not the firstborn. They were chosen to carry the ark, and we see God's repeated theme of not choosing the firstborn or those with secular advantage for His most significant work. And that is His abiding style to this day.

Num 4:35 from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered into the service, for work in the Tent of Meeting-
The grammar of the original doesn't have to mean that every make between 30 and 50 was in "the service". Rather those numbered were between those ages, who had entered into the service. This suggests an element of freewill agreement to serve- without which they were not numbered within Israel.

Num 4:36 Those who were numbered of them by their families were two thousand seven hundred and fifty-
The Kohathites had 2,750 men able to serve, 5,850 unable or unwilling to serve, making a total of 8,600
The Gershonites had 2,630 men able to serve, 4,870 unable or unwilling to serve, making a total of 7,500
The Merarites had 3,200 men able to serve, 3,000 unable or unwilling to serve, making a total of 6,200.

We can conclude from this that there was a higher level of relative commitment amongst those of Merari. The Kohathites, given the highest honour of carrying the ark, were in fact the least committed. And yet God often gives a high calling to those apparently least spiritually qualified, to inspire them. We think of the entire choice of the tribe of Levi as the priestly tribe, the calling of Saul son of Kish and many others.

Num 4:37 These are those who were numbered of the families of the Kohathites, all who served in the Tent of Meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of Yahweh by Moses-
Num. 3:15 could be read as a command to Moses to personally number all the people of his own tribe, Levi. And he did so. His obedience is constantly stressed. This looks ahead to the similar personal relationship between the Lord Jesus and His people.

Num 4:38 Those who were numbered of the sons of Gershon, by their families, and by their fathers' families-
"Gershon" means 'expelled', maybe meaning that like Reuben he was expelled from the role of firstborn [he is mentioned first as if he was the firstborn]. This is a theme of the

Genesis record. But perhaps because of these weaknesses, the line to the high priest ran through Kohath.

Num 4:39 from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered into the service, for work in the Tent of Meeting-
God met with Israel over the ark in the most holy place (Ex. 25:22; 30:6; Num. 17:4). But they were never allowed there. And so He also "met" (s.w.) with Israel at the door of the tabernacle, and spoke with them there (Ex. 29:42,43; 30:36). But the word for "meet" is used in Am. 3:3, where God laments that Israel had not "met" with Him and therefore they could not walk further together. The idea of the "meeting" was that God's word might be revealed, so that the people could walk with Him in His ways. It was an awesome invitation, to be able to meet with the God who only otherwise met with His people in the glory of the most holy place, over the ark. He as it were came out of that most holy place and met with them at the door of the tabernacle. But they weren't interested. Just as so many today.

Num 4:40 even those who were numbered of them, by their families, by their fathers' families, were two thousand six hundred and thirty-
We have a choice between understanding the Hebrew *elep* as meaning a literal number, or a "thousand" in the sense of a family group. In this case, the number following the word "thousand" would refer to the number of males amongst that number of families. This makes a more realistic number of Levites (see on Num. 3:39,43). Although it means that as discussed on Num. 3:22, the total number of Israelites who left Egypt was not as huge as often imagined.
Thus the numbers would work out like this:
Gershon 7,500, or 7 families with 500 males, making 71 males / family group.
Kohath 8,600 or 8 families with 600 males, making 75 males / family group.
Merari 6,200 or 6 families with 200 males, making 33 males / family group.
This would make a total of 22,300 if we take "thousand" literally; or a total of 21 families [7+8+6] and 1300 males, making a total of 48 males per family group.

Num 4:41 These are those who were numbered of the families of the sons of Gershon, all who served in the Tent of Meeting, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of Yahweh-
As discussed on :40 and Num. 3:22,39,43, this numbering of families rather than individuals could suggest that the "thousands" we read of refer to families rather than literal numbers. This makes more sense, as otherwise thousands of men would each be involved in carrying something- although the structure may just about have given each

of them something to carry, and they may have taken turns in carrying the poles when on the march.

Num 4:42 Those who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, by their families, by their fathers' families-
The Merarites had 3,200 men able to serve, 3,000 unable or unwilling to serve, making a total of 6,200. We can conclude from this that there was a higher level of relative commitment amongst those of Merari. See on :36.

Num 4:43 from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered into the service, to do work in the Tent of Meeting-
The Israelite males were to be counted as able to fight from 20 years old (Num. 1:3). The higher age limit of 30 for priestly service therefore suggests that a greater maturity was required for their work.

Num 4:44 even those who were numbered of them by their families, were three thousand two hundred-
The Merarites had 3200 workers out of a total of 6200. Although they were the smallest of the three families, they had the most number of workers (Gershon had 2630 out of 7500; Kohath 2750 out of 8600). This may have been for various reasons, but it's also a fact that the smaller the group, the higher percentage are willing to work. God doesn't need great numbers to do His work. See on :36.

Out of 22,000 Levites, a total of 8580 were apparently between 20 and 50 years old and able or willing to serve. This is a reasonable proportion if we accept these numbers as literal. But the numbers are so rounded that one suspects that as often, the term "thousand" is used not as a number but as a reference to a group; and likewise a "hundred" and a "fifty". See on Num. 3:21.

Num 4:45 These are those who were numbered of the families of the sons of Merari, whom Moses and Aaron numbered according to the commandment of Yahweh by Moses-
"These are those" could suggest that a written list was produced of all the names, although it is not included in the inspired record at this point.

Num 4:46 All those who were numbered of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron and the princes of Israel numbered, by their families, and by their fathers' families-

Although Moses was personally commanded to number the Levites, seeing they were his own tribe, he may have used the princes of the other tribes of Israel to participate or be present, to provide a level of integrity to his counting. This wasn't commanded, but it was typical of his humility that he did this.

Num 4:47 from thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered in to do the work of service, and the work of bearing burdens in the Tent of Meeting-
38,000 Levites were numbered by David in 1 Chron. 23:3, although "thousand" may mean a division rather than a literal 1000. At the time of Num. 4:47,48 there were only 8,580. And Levite males from a month old were 22,000 in Num. 3:39 and 23,000 at the time of Num. 26:62. This suggests a great increase in the number of Levites by David's time; or perhaps he more generously counted who was a Levite, because he wanted to have as many as possible involved in his grandiose plans for the temple services. There was no need for such large numbers of Levites in order to serve God effectively, for there were far fewer Levites at the time of the figures given in the book of Numbers, and the sanctuary and Divine service still continued.

Num 4:48 even those who were numbered of them, were eight thousand five hundred and eighty-
As discussed on :40 and Num. 3:22,39,43, this numbering of families rather than individuals could suggest that the "thousands" we read of refer to a level of clan rather than literal numbers, and likewise "hundred".

Num 4:49 According to the commandment of Yahweh they were numbered by Moses, everyone according to his service, and according to his burden. Thus were they numbered by him, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
Each man having his own burden to bear is an idea picked up in the New Testament (Gal. 6:5). We are each asked to carry the cross of Christ, and yet that cross is articulated in unique ways for each of us. Just as each Levite had some specific part of the tabernacle to carry.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 5

Num 5:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,
Numbers 5 contains three related pieces of legislation: 1) Removing lepers from the camp 2) Making reconciliation to your brother 3) The trial of jealousy. Chapter 4 is about the numbering of the Levites, and chapter 6 goes on to a new topic- the Nazarite vow. We are therefore to understand the three pieces of legislation in Numbers 5 as related

to each other. The common theme they all have is that interpersonal issues must be addressed- the lepers who had been concealed in the camp were to be removed, brethren reconciled with, and unfaithfulness or jealousy issues faced up to and permanently resolved. Time never really heals but rather does it allow issues to fester until major spiritual and inter-personal breakdown occurs. That's one simple and very relevant lesson to take from this chapter.

Num 5:2 Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, and everyone who has an issue, and whoever is unclean by the dead-
The fact the people responded by removing such persons from the camp (:3) suggests that those who concealed their skin diseases or the fact they had touched dead relatives had somehow been allowed to remain within the camp. The theme of the chapter is that such private issues must be faced and openly resolved.

Those suffering with the "discharge" are parallel with 'lepers' in Num. 5:2 as needing to be put out of the camp. I suggested on Lev. 13:1 that "lepers" doesn't refer to those with Hansen's disease, but to those struck down by Divine judgment. Those with a "discharge", literally a 'flowing', were in the same category. In neither case is involuntary disease or human bodily situation a reason for moral uncleanness. Just as human nature of itself doesn't separate between God and man; for all we posit about human nature, we say about the undefiled Lord Jesus who fully had that same human nature.

Num 5:3 Both male and female you shall put outside of the camp that they not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell-
The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorossa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Num 5:4 The children of Israel did so, and put them out outside of the camp; as Yahweh spoke to Moses, so did the children of Israel-
Israel's obedience was mainly when it came to disciplining others, giving materially and

making things. But the Pentateuch emphasizes their disobedience when it came to personal morality, internal spirituality and worshipping God alone rather than any idols. We must analyze our own acts of obedience and see if they follow a similar pattern. To be externally religious isn't difficult, indeed we can rather enjoy being like that.

Num 5:5 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
See on :1 for the connection between the three pieces of legislation in this chapter.

Num 5:6 Speak to the children of Israel: 'When a man or woman commits any sin that people commit, so as to trespass against Yahweh, and that soul is guilty-
The trespass was "against Yahweh"- but the sins in view were against other members of God' people; :7 makes it clear that it was individuals who had been trespassed against. Sin against each other is sin against God; how we treat each other is how we treat God. This sets the scene for the trial of jealousy section which follows. We would expect to read in :7 that reconciliation must be achieved with the offended person *and* an offering made to God. But assuming :7 refers to an offering to be made only if there was no living person to reconcile with, that is not stated here- because the impression we are left with is that sin against another is sin against God, and reconcilliation with man is in that sense reconcilliation with God.

Num 5:7 then he shall confess his sin which he has done, and he shall make restitution for his guilt in full, and add to it the fifth part of it, and give it to him in respect of whom he has been guilty-
Both confession and restitution were required. These two elements are still required if we are to truly resolve broken relationships. Praise is related to the realization that sin has been forgiven. Hezekiah's praise on realizing God's mercy to him was expressed in a desire to walk in quiet fellowship with God for the rest of his life. There is no suggestion that praise was some kind of ecstatic exuberance of emotion. The normal Hebrew word translated "praise" is also translated "confess" in the context of confessing sin (Lev. 5:5; 16:21; 26:40; Num. 5:7). Contrition of heart because of appreciating our own failures is therefore one way of praising Yahweh's Name. So often does the word "praise" occur in the context of praising the *Name* of Yahweh, or the praising of "the God of Israel", i.e. Yahweh.

The idea of restitution for guilt could mean that once the sin had been dealt with, so had the guilt. There need be no abiding sense of guilt if we believe in forgiveness. David's later Psalms have little indication of any such sense of abiding guilt concerning his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah.

Num 5:8 But if the man has no kinsman to whom restitution may be made for the guilt, the restitution for guilt which is made to Yahweh shall be the priest's; besides the ram of the atonement, by which atonement shall be made for him-
"When a man or woman commits any sin... he shall confess... the man" (:6-8) is proof that the Bible often uses the masculine singular to mean 'any person', of either gender. As discussed on :7, it is important to note that atonement is intended to deal with guilt. Indeed, Divine forgiveness is really the only way to ultimately deal with guilt.

Num 5:9 Every heave offering of all the holy things of the children of Israel, which they present to the priest, shall be his-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Num 5:10 Every man's holy things shall be his: whatever any man gives the priest, it shall be his'-
The emphasis here upon how the priest represented God is to pave the way for the manifestation of God in the priest which we will read of in the next section about the trial of jealousy.

Num 5:11 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
There were various possibilities for how a man should respond in this situation. He could have his wife stoned; divorce her; put her through this 'trial of jealousy'; or simply forgive her. We too have a range of options open to us when wrong is done to us or when we suspect it has been. The very existence of these options encourages us to think through our responses, and surely inspires us to choose the way of grace over the way of personal revenge or justification.

See on :1 for the connection between the three pieces of legislation in this chapter. See on :1 for the connection between the three pieces of legislation in this chapter.

Num 5:12 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them: 'If any man's wife goes astray, and is unfaithful to him-
AV "And commit a trespass against him". The whole trial of jealousy tends to assume guilt, hence the water is described immediately as "bitter water" (:18), even though the

water only *became* bitter if she was guilty (:24). There were various teachings in the Law of Moses about sexual immorality- the woman could have been killed (Lev. 20:10), but the varying options were to encourage thoughtful response. It would be facile to think that there can only be one disciplinary response to sexual failure in the church today. We have options, and the process of choice is to exercise our grace.

Num 5:13 and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and is kept close, and she is defiled, and there is no witness against her, and she isn't taken in the act-

If a man's wife committed adultery he could have her killed; *or* he could put her through the trial of jealousy of Num. 5, with the result that she would become barren; or he could divorce her (Dt. 22:19; 24:1 RV; Lev. 21:14; 22:13). Within a Law that was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), unsurpassed in it's righteousness (Dt. 4:8; and let us not overlook these estimations), there were these different levels of response possible. But there was a higher level: he could simply forgive her. This was what God did with His fickle Israel, time and again (Hos. 3:1-3). And so the Israelite faced with an unfaithful wife could respond on at least four levels. This view would explain how divorce seems outlawed in passages like Dt. 22:19,29, and yet there are other parts of the OT which seem to imply that it was permitted. It should be noted that there were some concessions to weakness under the Law which the Lord was not so willing to make to His followers (e.g., outside the marriage context, Dt. 20:5-8 cp. Lk. 9:59-62; 14:18,19). He ever held before us the Biblical ideal of marriage.

Num 5:14 and the spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife, and she is defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife, and she isn't defiled;-

Jealousy is not sinful of itself- God portrays Himself as a God jealous over us. It is a function of deep love. The Law of Moses upheld the position of women far more than contemporary legal codes. The man who falsely accused his wife would've been deeply shamed- see on :31. The innocent woman had the promise [or was it a command?] of :28 that she would conceive seed- the greatest honour for any Hebrew woman. As to why the woman had no power to accuse the man- that remains a difficult question, but I would suggest that in a society where polygamy was accepted and even seen as desirable by women [as it is in many parts of Africa today], the fact her husband slept with another woman was not necessarily seen as it is in Western society today. I have personally heard middle aged African women boasting of how many young women their husband gets to sleep with.

This provision for the trial of jealousy appears to have been a concession to human weakness, in this case, male weakness. For the New Testament outlaws envy (the

Hebrew word translated “jealousy” here has this sense): Rom. 1:29; Phil. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:4; Tit. 3:3. It could be that James 4:5 alludes to the spirit of male jealousy which this legislation sought to make a concession to (:14). The simple lesson for us can be that God does indeed make concessions to our human weakness; but we are to use them sparingly, and realize that their very existence is actually intended to inspire us *not* to make use of them but to serve God on the highest level we can.

Num 5:15 then the man shall bring his wife to the priest, and shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal. He shall pour no oil on it, nor put frankincense on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of memorial-
Oil and frankincense made the offering smell attractive and gave the flame a pleasant colour. But these were not to be added- because this was a jealousy offering. The hint was that this was not pleasing to God. He allowed, and still allows, men to act in their hot blooded jealousy regarding others' actual or perceived sins against them. But He is warning that this is not pleasing to Him; just as we can operate a policy of forgiving others only if they repent, but this is a lower level compared to forgiving without repentance, and operating such a policy puts us in an impossible position. The man who made use of Numbers 5 likewise put himself in a lose-lose position. We note here that there appears no historical example of the legislation ever being used in practice, perhaps exactly because of this.

Bringing iniquity to memory- Time and again, these Hebrew words are used in appeals to God *not* to bring our sin to remembrance (Ps. 79:8; Is. 64:9; Jer. 31:34). And Paul surely alludes to the same idea in teaching that the way of love does not keep a record of wrong, it doesn't bring others' sin to remembrance (1 Cor. 13:5). By offering this sacrifice, the man was asking that God would remember her sin against her. And he had to bring the offering for her. No spiritually minded man would want God to remember sin against anyone. The whole structure of the legislation is geared against the man doing these things.

Num 5:16 The priest shall bring her near, and set her before Yahweh-
The language of being brought near and set before Yahweh is precisely that of the priests being anointed and consecrated (Num. 3:6; 16:9; Ez. 44:15). The idea may be to suggest her acceptability before God in His service if she were innocent. Being before Yahweh may mean that she as a woman was allowed to come right up to the door of the tabernacle- something a chauvinist ancient society would have struggled with. Again, everything in this legislation is really geared against the man treating the woman like this.

Num 5:17 and the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel; and of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water-
The earthen vessel and dust are references to the creation of man and woman from the dust. Perhaps this was to serve as a gentle reminder to all involved that we are all but dust. Dust and water are all that a human being is- the woman was to have the curses for her sin removed not on the basis of the shedding of blood, for she had committed a sin requiring death- but the punishment for that sin could be obliterated on the basis of her humanity. We are being taught here to cut others some slack, even when they have sinned, and certainly when we merely suspect them of sin, on the basis that they [along with us] are merely dust and water, human.

Num 5:18 The priest shall set the woman before Yahweh, and let the hair of the woman's head go loose, and put the grain offering of memorial in her hands, which is the grain offering of jealousy. The priest shall have in his hand the water of bitterness that brings a curse-
A woman's hair was seen as her glory, and a covered head was associated with shame. It could be argued that the woman was being treated as innocent until proven guilty, and even invited to openly display her glory. The uncovering of the woman's head was a form of shaming (as in 1 Cor. 11:5,6). She had to be shamed whether or not she was guilty; and this led the man to a lose-lose scenario. If she was innocent, then he had needlessly shamed him, she would likely not love him in future, and he had to bear the sin of doing that (:31). If she were guilty, then he had to support a barren wife for the rest of her life, seeing the curses about killing or divorcing her were to be blotted out.

The allusion here in 1 Cor. 11:5,6 is only one of several such allusions to Numbers 5 in 1 Corinthians 11. The idea there of drinking unto condemnation or blessing / justification simply has to be understood in the Numbers 5 context. And it is no accident that the language of a woman having an uncovered head also occurs. What's the connection and the bigger picture? I suggest that what was happening in Corinth was that members who had sinned were being publically shamed before the congregation by e.g. the sinful sisters being made to sit in the meeting with uncovered heads. In Middle Eastern societies today, forcing a woman to uncover her head is a source of shame. Paul is saying that paradoxically, such misbehaviour in the Corinth ecclesia was actually 'shaming' those demanding it; "I speak this to your shame" (1 Cor. 6:5; 11:22; 15:34). The allusions to Numbers 5 would therefore be saying: 'You are publically shaming some sisters by making them remove their veils / head coverings in your meetings; and by the way in which you eat the Lord's supper, you are also purposefully shaming some (:22). Instead, *you* should be the ones in shame for your behaviour. By doing so, even if indeed those sisters have sinned, you are acting like the husband who uses the Numbers 5 legislation. Instead, whenever you drink the cup, examine *yourselves* and

not others, and remember that you are the one who is being tested by the Lord's cup- either to your condemnation or justification'.

Num 5:19 The priest shall cause her to swear, and shall tell the woman, If no man has lain with you, and if you haven't gone aside to uncleanness, being under your husband, be free from this water of bitterness that brings a curse-
Many primitive societies have some such ritual. In Islam in such a case, the suspected woman must vow that if she is guilty, then she will die and lose her children, preferably going to Mecca to make the vow. In some African societies, a woman must jump into water etc. The existence of the law of jealousy was therefore a concession to human weakness and psychological need.

Num 5:20 But if you have gone astray, being under your husband, and if you are defiled, and some man has lain with you besides your husband-
The man is described as having lain with the woman, rather than the woman laying with the man. Even though a woman is spoken of as taking sexual initiative in 'laying down with' a partner in Lev. 20:16. So again we get the impression that the legislation somehow pities the woman, describing her as having gone astray and implying her sexual partner had taken the initiative.

Num 5:21 then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing, and the priest shall tell the woman, Yahweh make you a curse and an oath among your people-
God prefers not to condemn people, but to allow them to condemn themselves in their own words. For sin is its own condemnation. His passion rather is to save.

When Yahweh allows your thigh to fall away, and your body to swell;-
This phrase is notoriously difficult to interpret. The swelling of the belly could mean that even though she had avoided getting pregnant by her adultery, her body would swell in an imitation pregnancy- but she would not have a child. The NEB seems to get it right in rendering it 'have a miscarriage'. This would appear to be the meaning of the idiom. If the woman was visibly pregnant and her husband wondered how the child could be his, then he would naturally feel jealous. The immorality in view had been hidden from him (:13), so the only reason he would have to doubt her was when she was noticeably pregnant. Most women who are say 4 months pregnant (i.e. visible) carry their pregnancy to term, so the loss of the child would've been seen as the direct curse of God. Women in those days were surely stronger than today, therefore the termination of a pregnancy after four months from natural causes would've been most unusual and seen as God's hand. This of course provides yet another of many windows onto the vexed question of abortion. It was not that the dusty water itself made her lose the child- the loss of the child was from God's hand. And yet it was her husband who was

responsible for the decision, because there were a variety of ways prescribed in the Law for dealing with sexual failure. He didn't have to put her through the trial of jealousy- indeed, Hosea did not when Gomer bore Lo-Ammi ['not my people']. He forgave her, rather than using the Numbers 5 legislation.

Num 5:22 and this water that brings a curse will go into your bowels, and make your body swell, and your thigh fall away. The woman shall say, Amen, Amen-
"Thigh", "bowels" and "body" appear to refer to her reproductive organs; barrenness was to be the judgment for her sin. Perhaps we can infer from this that she had slept with another partner in order to get pregnant, as perhaps her husband was apparently infertile or impotent. So her motive may not have been simply sexual lust. Therefore the judgment was bareness- appropriate to the nature of her sin, seeing she had slept with the other partner specifically in order to get pregnant. The jealous husband would have to be married for the rest of his life to this barren woman, which was seen as a terrible situation to be in; it would be better, therefore, not to make her barren, and not to go down the path of this trial of jealousy. But rather to simply forgive her.

Num 5:23 'The priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall blot them out into the water of bitterness-
The curses were that if a woman committed adultery, she could be killed or divorced. But if the jealous husband made use of this legislation, then those curses were removed. If she was guilty, he could not kill or divorce her. She would be barren, but he would have to support her for the rest of her life. And their relationship would not be up to much because of the public humiliation. And if she was innocent, then he had alienated her by shaming her, and (:31 implies) he would have to bear his iniquity for the rest of his life. So to apply the Numbers 5 legislation was a lose-lose scenario. The idea was that the only sensible way out was to curb the hot blood of jealousy, and forgive, whether the sin was real or imagined. This is a powerful lesson to us.

The water *became* bitter only if the woman was guilty (:24). The curses of condemnation were written by the priest [an interesting incidental reference to the literacy of at least some in early Israel]- but removed by the bitter water. The implication could be that condemnation is removed by condemnation; we must face our sins and be condemned for them in this life if we are to be saved from condemnation. If we would condemn ourselves in this life, we shall not be condemned at the last day. The serpent on the pole was a symbol of sin, and yet it was this which leads to our salvation from condemnation. The whole trial of jealousy is often alluded to by God in His jealousy over unfaithful Israel; He promises to "blot out" their sin after they have experienced condemnation (Is. 43:25). The *curses* written in the *book* were to be given to Israel

because God was *jealous* (Dt. 29:20); this is another allusion to these laws, showing that God is the ultimately jealous husband of Israel.

Num 5:24 He shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that causes the curse; and the water that causes the curse shall enter into her and become bitter-
The water at that stage was only water, it "*became* bitter" to her if she was guilty. There is surely some connection with our drinking the Lord's cup. To drink a cup of wine from the Lord is elsewhere used as a metaphor of condemnation. This is the great paradox of the breaking of bread meeting- by accepting the cup of condemnation, it becomes the cup of blessing to us. The Corinthians were told that they would “provoke the Lord to jealousy" by breaking bread and yet also worshipping idols (1 Cor. 10:22). This is surely an allusion to the “trial of jealousy". A curse was recited and then the believer drunk a cup; if they were unfaithful, they drunk to their condemnation. Paul’s allusion suggests that each day we break bread and drink the cup, we as the bride of Christ are going through the trial of jealousy. Brutal honesty and self-examination, and not merely of our lives in the last few days, is therefore crucial before drinking the cup.

Num 5:25 The priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy out of the woman’s hand, and shall wave the grain offering before Yahweh, and bring it to the altar-
For "wave", see on :9. "Out of..." can as well be translated "above". The idea seems to be that the priest placed his hands upon her hands as they swung the offering before Yahweh. It all sounds like a kind of peace offering. Perhaps the idea was that the woman was to be at peace with God whatever happened- either through being declared innocent, or through repentance.

Num 5:26 The priest shall take a handful of the grain offering, as its memorial, and burn it on the altar, and afterward shall make the woman drink the water-
The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Num 5:27 When he has made her drink the water, then it shall happen. If she is defiled, and has committed a trespass against her husband, that the water that causes the

curse will enter into her and become bitter, and her body will swell, and her thigh will fall away; and the woman will be a curse among her people-
This is all the language of infertility. See on :22. If the woman became widely known as a curse, this was really bringing the name of her husband into dishonour. Again, it seems all is geared against the man subjecting his wife to this process- if he didn't forgive her, he stood to lose so much himself.

Num 5:28 If the woman isn't defiled, but is clean; then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed-
A prophecy or a command? If a command, then this would require her husband to resume relationship with her after his outbreak of baseless jealousy.

Num 5:29 This is the law of jealousy, when a wife, being under her husband, goes astray, and is defiled-
The Corinthians were told that they would "provoke the Lord to jealousy" by breaking bread and yet also worshipping idols (1 Cor. 10:22). This is surely an allusion to the "trial of jealousy". A curse was recited and then the believer drunk a cup; if they were unfaithful, they drunk to their condemnation. Paul's allusion suggests that each day we break bread and drink the cup, we as the bride of Christ are going through the trial of jealousy. Brutal honesty and self-examination, and not merely of our lives in the last few days, is therefore crucial before drinking the cup.

Num 5:30 or when the spirit of jealousy comes on a man, and he is jealous of his wife; then he shall set the woman before Yahweh, and the priest shall execute on her all this law-
The Hebrew word translated "zeal" in the context of God's zeal for us (Is. 9:7) really means the jealousy which flares up in a man for a woman (the same word is in Num. 5:14,15; Prov. 6:34; Song 8:6 etc.). That jealousy burning like fire (Ps. 79:5) is His passion for us His people. He is a jealous God in His zeal for us; and therefore any other relationships with the things of this world cannot be contemplated by us. That zeal of God will be poured out upon us at the second coming, resulting in a consummation with Him as the wife of His covenant (Is. 42:13,14; 64:1).

Num 5:31 The man shall be free from iniquity, and that woman shall bear her iniquity'-
What was the man's iniquity? The implication is that if the woman was innocent, then the husband was guilty of sin. But what sin? I can only conclude: 'The sin of slandering someone on the basis of jealousy'. The hint is that until she were proven guilty, then he was guilty of this sin of slander. Only her being proven guilty released him from that guilt. So often, slander is on the basis of jealousy. The legislation ends at this point;

there is no demand for a sacrifice from him. If he was genuinely repentant, he could of course offer a freewill offering and seek to obey the spirit of the earlier legislation in this chapter about personal offence against another (:6-8). The silence of the record about this perhaps implies that if a person does create slander against another on the basis of jealousy, then they have to go away and live with that, and there is no specifically prescribed, enforced ritual of atonement for it.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 6

Num 6:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Any Israelite could vow him or herself to special service to God; we too shouldn't see our service to God in terms of doing the minimum. Realizing the wonder of His grace and the certainty of our eternal life in His Kingdom, we should be moved to special devotions. In this vow, the ordinary Israelite willingly submitted to some of the regulations specific to the priests on duty. The growing of long hair could be seen as an imitation of the High Priest's mitre. They were not to see the priesthood as something reserved just for specialists, those born into it; nor were they to see the High Priest as so distant from themselves that he could never be imitated, in spirit at least. We likewise can take to ourselves some aspects of the personal work of the Lord Jesus; for all that is true of Him becomes true of us who are baptized into Him. As He was the light of the world, so are we to be.

Num 6:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them: 'When either man or woman shall make a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to Yahweh,-
See on Dt. 6:23. The vow of Naziriteship was voluntary, and yet Am. 2:11 says that God raised up young men to be Nazirites. Here we see the profound interplay between human freewill and Divine intervention, setting up possibilities for our freewill response which are effectively a calling to specific acts of freewill obedience. And the most well known Nazirites, Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11) and Samson (Jud. 13) were chosen to be Nazirites before their birth.

A woman could also be a Nazirite. For a woman to shave her head was otherwise understood as an act of shame (cp. Num. 5:18; 1 Cor. 11:6). But making this freewill commitment involved them doing something which in the eyes of society was shameful and foolish. The essence of that is seen to this day- to give your savings to another is seen as foolish, to fellowship with the despised and rejected is seen as shameful.

Num 6:3 he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of fermented drink, neither shall he drink any juice of grapes, nor eat fresh grapes or dried-

This was the requirement for priests on duty (Lev. 10:9). Through Naziriteship, the ordinary Israelite, including women, could act as the priests. And further, the long hair recalled the High Priestly mitre- the invitation was to act in the spirit of the High Priest, just as we are asked to replicate the essence of the saving, mediatorial work of Jesus in our lives and service. The word for the "crown" of the High Priest is from the same root, *nzr*, as the word 'Nazirite'.

The Nazarite was separated *from* wine, because he was separated *unto* the Lord (Num. 6:2,3). The meaning of 'holiness' is both to be separated *from* and separated *unto*. Separation isn't only something negative; it's more essentially something positive. We are separated *from* this world because we are separated *unto* the things of God's Kingdom; the separation *from* is a natural, unpretended outcome of our involvement in the things of God's Kingdom. It's not part of a cross which the believer must reluctantly, sacrificially bare.

Num 6:4 All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is made of the grapevine, from the seeds even to the skins-
See on :3. The grapes had no alcohol content. The same is true of the seeds or skins. But here is the classic fence around the law, forbidding something which is not wrong of itself in order to prevent developing even the mental association with the sinful / forbidden, or the suggestion of it. And here we see a bridge across the centuries to our age- in seeking to avoid temptation or disobedience, we are to carefully avoid those things which may suggest the temptation to us. What we watch or read therefore becomes no innocent choice for any of us. The same fence around the law is seen in the command to Samson's mother not to drink wine because her son was to be a Nazirite and bound by the same law. The behaviour of the mother in pregnancy was therefore seen as a possible influence upon the behaviour of the as yet unborn child (Jud. 13:7).

To view these regulations are irritating fences around a law is however somewhat negative, true enough as it is. Making vows was part of most of the surrounding religions, many of which involved extreme asceticism, with those making the vows seeking to outdo each other with the extremity of their self-denial. It has never been God's intention that serving Him should mutate into religious extremism and fanatic asceticism. The regulations upon the Nazirite could therefore be seen as a wise limitation upon the human tendency towards religious extremism. In comparing with other religious vows of the time, they nearly all involved abstinence from sex and time spent daily in religious devotions and rituals. It's significant that the Nazirite vow contrasts sharply with this- for there is a notable absence of any such regulations or demands. God intended that the spirit of special devotion to Him should be lived out within the course of normal, daily human life- rather than some special hived-off existence with a focus upon ritual and externalities.

Num 6:5 All the days of his vow of separation no razor shall come on his head, until the days are fulfilled, in which he separates himself to Yahweh. He shall be holy-
The word for 'Nazirite' can mean 'crowned' and the long hair on the crown of his head was to be seen as a connection with the mitre / crown of the High Priest. This ability to rise up to the spirit of the High Priest himself looks ahead to our ambition to be as the Lord Jesus in this world- devoted to bringing about the salvation of others. The height of the calling is far beyond mere religion, whereby we are mere spectators at a show. We are to have the spirit of Christ, to be as Him to this world.

He shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long-
LXX "cherishing the long hair of the head". Samson ultimately cherished or valued his relationship with Delilah above the hair of his Nazirite vow. The Hebrew can imply 'growing wild'. Hair styling was important for ancient people; the idea was that what looks unattractive to man is often what is attractive to God, and the sign we are dedicated to Him. And that is an abiding principle.

Num 6:6 All the days that he separates himself to Yahweh he shall not go near a dead body-
The Nazirite was not only to not touch a corpse, but not to go near one, because they were acting like priests (Lev. 21:10-22); likewise they were not only to not drink wine, but to not drink grape juice nor eat seeds or skins of grapes, from which wine is made. This is the classic 'hedge around the law'- forbidding something not because it is unlawful of itself but because the associations may lead to breaking an actual law. We in Christ are freed from all legalism and casuistry; and yet in our daily struggle against temptation, it's no bad idea to remove far from us those things, subliminal associations, images etc. which may stimulate temptation and the power of sin. However we note that Samson touched dead bodies and yet his Nazirite vow was apparently not thereby broken. Constantly we see that the spirit of the law overrode the letter of it.

Num 6:7 He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die-
The Nazirites is again under the same legislation as the High Priest (Lev. 21:11), to whom he was aspiring. We too are asked to aspire to the Lord Jesus; the veil was torn down so that we might enter in to the most holy, just as the High Priest did. And we do so as he did, for the sake of seeking the salvation of others. The usual form of mourning involved embracing the corpse of the deceased. Hence this would make the person unclean. The Lord seems to allude to this in Mt. 10:37. Devotion to Him must come before family relationships. It's as if He saw the spirit of the Nazirite vow as characterizing all who would believe in Him. We are all to go forward and serve God on our own initiative.

God doesn't advertise His concessions to human weakness (and neither should we). He leads men to attempt life on the highest level. And so Num. 6:7 speaks as if a man *couldn't* make himself unclean and end his vow, whereas in fact there was legislation which allowed him to take this lower level. But the Father doesn't want us to be minimalists, serving Him at the lowest level; quite to the contrary.

Because his separation to God is on his head-
A woman could also be a Nazirite. So she was to wear her hair in such a way that indicated she was allowing her hair to grow long. This was a sign she was consecrated to the Lord; and Paul seems to reapply this to Christians in 1 Cor. 11:10, assuming that all God's people were effectively Nazirites. The Christian woman in Corinth was to have long hair as a sign she was under devotion to her husband, who represented the Lord Jesus.

Num 6:8 All the days of his separation he is holy to Yahweh-
Paul was called to be a preacher of the Gospel, and yet he speaks of his work as a preacher as if it were a Nazarite vow- which was a totally voluntary commitment. Consider not only the reference to him shaving his head because of his vow (Acts 18:18; 21:24 cp. Num. 6:9-18), but also the many descriptions of his preaching work in terms of Naziriteship: Separated unto the Gospel's work (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15; Acts 13:2); "I am not yet consecrated / perfected" (Phil. 3:12)- he'd not yet finished his 'course', i.e. his preaching commission. He speaks of it here as if it were a Nazarite vow not yet ended. Note the reference to Paul's 'consecration' in Acts 20:24. His undertaking not to drink wine lest he offend others (Rom. 14:21) is framed in the very words of Num. 6:3 LXX about the Nazarite. Likewise his being 'joined unto the Lord' (1 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 14:6,8) is the language of Num. 6:6 about the Nazarite being separated unto the Lord. The reference to having power / authority on the head (1 Cor. 11:10) is definitely some reference back to the LXX of Num. 6:7 about the Nazarite. What are we to make of all this? The point is perhaps that commitment to active missionary work is indeed a voluntary matter, as was the Nazarite vow. And that even although Paul was called to this, yet he responded to it by voluntarily binding himself to 'get the job done'. And the same is in essence true for us today in our various callings in the Lord's service.

Num 6:9 If any man dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles the head of his separation, then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing. On the seventh day he shall shave it-
LXX "And if any one should die suddenly by him, immediately the head of his vow shall be defiled; and he shall shave his head in whatever day he shall be purified: on the seventh day he shall be shaved". The idea seems to be that he sinned in connection with the death of the person, "the things wherein he sinned respecting the dead body" (:11

LXX). I suggest the idea is that he touched a dead body in ignorance. The 'sin' was like the sin of ignorance- he had promised a certain period of service, and he couldn't fulfil it. The idea is that sins of ignorance are still sins; and this is an abiding principle, which inspires us to ever seek to know the Lord's mind and will the more. Although in this case we note that he didn't have to offer an animal for a sin offering but just birds (:10). We wonder however whether Samson's contact with dead bodies negated his Naziriteship; for he told Delilah that he had always been a Nazirite. It seems Samson thought that he was within the spirit of the law in this matter although he broke the letter of it. That was true, as it was with David acting as a priest... but unrestrained, that principle led both Samson and David into actual sin.

Num 6:10 On the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the Tent of Meeting-
Even within the bird offerings there was a gradation. Turtledoves were larger than pigeons and more valuable, but they are only in Israel at certain times of the year; whereas pigeons are in Israel all year round, were easier to catch and were therefore cheaper. The various possible levels within God's law reflect our opportunities to serve on different levels, just as the good soil of the sower parable brings forth different amounts. Some will make more of God's truth than others. The very existence of these levels, rather than a simple binary demand of obedience / disobedience, pass / fail, of itself inspires us to serve God as extensively as we can. For who can be a minimalist in response to His love.

Num 6:11 The priest shall offer one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned by reason of the dead, and shall make his head holy that same day-
It hardly sounds sinful for a person who has made a special dedication to God to be made unclean by a person unexpectedly falling dead next to him or her. But in this legislation God is seeking to teach us how sensitive He is to uncleanness. This principle can carry over into our lives today; if we love to view, read and talk about unclean things, even if we don't do them, then we are not respecting the distance which God seeks to set between the clean and unclean, right and wrong, good and evil.

Num 6:12 He shall consecrate to Yahweh the days of his separation, and shall bring a male lamb a year old for a trespass offering; but the former days shall be void, because his separation was defiled-
This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel

were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Num 6:13 This is the law of the Nazirite: when the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the Tent of Meeting,-
The laws concerning breaking the Nazirite vow are detailed, and the sacrifices required were expensive with no legislation allowing a cheaper offering if the Nazirite was poor. The lesson can simply be that the fact we make what appears to be an 'extra' commitment to God's service doesn't thereby free us from being obedient to His principles in other areas. Our commitments are all the same to be governed by His principles. The costly sacrifice required at the end of the Nazarite vow was perhaps to teach that the person wishing to take the vow must take this into account to begin with when considering making the vow- hence the teaching that a vow should not be made rashly (Prov. 20:25). The sin offering (:14) suggests the principle of Lk. 17:10 was being taught here- "When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants". There was to be no spiritual pride in commitment made apparently over and above God's minimal requirements. The language of "have done all those things which are commanded" recalls the language of the priests and Moses doing all things which were commanded them under the old covenant (Ex. 29:35; Lev. 8:36; Dt. 1:18). Lk. 17:10 would therefore be hinting that even complete obedience to God's law was not of itself enough to make a man profitable unto God, which was something Job likewise concluded (Job 22:2). And the legislation about concluding the Nazarite vow was teaching the same. Over Israel's extra-Biblical history, the Nazirite vow became abused into part of a bargain with God. Josephus records: "It is customary for those suffering from illness or other affliction to make a vow to abstain from wine and to shave their head during the thirty days preceding that on which they must offer their sacrifices" (*Wars* 2.15.1). And our mentality can be the same- we do freewill work or commitment to the Lord but with the unspoken understanding that if we do this, then He is somehow bound to help us in our need. But the spirit of the vow is of voluntary devotion to the Lord from a pure motive of gratitude.

Num 6:14 and he shall offer his offering to Yahweh, one male lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb a year old without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to

us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). So this looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Num 6:15 and a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering, and their drink offerings-
These points are laboured, lest the Nazirite think that because he had made a freewill devotion to God, he was somehow free to make the offerings at the end of the period in a slapdash way. This is quite a theme of the Mosaic law, and is an abiding principle- that freewill 'extra' devotions to the Lord don't free us from observing His standards and requirements.

Num 6:16 The priest shall present them before Yahweh, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering-
The need for a sin offering at the end of his period of dedication was maybe to remind him that his extra special devotion didn't take away his sin and need for grace; for relationship with God depends upon this rather than upon our works and special efforts. Again, we can take that principle to ourselves in our age.

Num 6:17 He shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings to Yahweh, with the basket of unleavened bread. The priest shall offer also its grain offering, and its drink offering-
Judaism allowed people to enable others to be Nazirites by bearing the expenses of these sacrifices. It could be argued that this was a departure from the letter of the law here. But Paul went along with it (Acts 21:23-26) because it was in the spirit of the law.

Num 6:18 The Nazirite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the Tent of Meeting, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of peace offerings-

"*The* fire" refers to the fire of the altar which was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

Num 6:19 The priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them on the hands of the Nazirite, after he has shaved the head of his separation-
The idea is that the priest's hands were to be over the hands of the offerer when these things were waved or swung before Yahweh; see on :20.

Num 6:20 and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before Yahweh. This is holy for the priest, together with the breast that is waved and the thigh that is offered. After that the Nazirite may drink wine-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Num 6:21 This is the law of the Nazirite who vows, and of his offering to Yahweh for his separation, besides that which he is able to put his hand on. According to his vow which he vows, so he must do after the law of his separation'-
The implication might be that a person was to do as undertaken in the Nazirite vow. Likewise we read of detailed consequences if a person vowed to Yahweh and then changed their mind. Commitment to Him was not to be entered into lightly, and never for the sake of mere appearance before men.

Num 6:22 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Within the Pentateuch, the idea of blessing creation paves the way for God promising to "bless" the children of Abraham, and the blessings upon them with which Deuteronomy concludes (see too Lev. 9:22; Num. 6:22-24). The pagan creation stories sometimes

spoke of the things created by the gods then blessing *them*. The Sumerians recorded that at 'creation', "The whole universe, the people in unison, to Enlil in one tongue gave praise". But the true God, the God of all grace, not only creates His people and other creatures, but then blesses *them*! And the spirit of that grace should be seen in all our relationships. The Sumerian and Babylonian myths speak of people being created in order to serve the gods, "to bear the yoke of the gods" (S.G.F. Brandon), to relieve them in their everyday work. But the Genesis creation has God creating man and giving him great freedom, and blessing him.

Num 6:23 Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This is how you shall bless the children of Israel'. You shall tell them-
Prayer is no simply specific words of request to God. When the priests in Hezekiah's time blessed the people, "their prayer came up to (God), even unto heaven" (2 Chron. 30:27). But the blessing of the people was not a prayer to God, but words spoken by the priests to the people: "(May) The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make his face shine upon you..." (Num. 6:24,25). Yet God saw these words of the priests as a prayer. It's rather like us saying 'God bless you' to a brother as we leave his house; God may read this as a prayer, and do something about it. But this isn't how *we* conceive of prayer. Consider too how the faithful speaking spiritually *to each other* was treated by God as a prayer to Him (Mal. 3:16).

The following blessing could be understood as a specific blessing upon the Nazirite, and yet it appears a standard blessing of all the people. This was because it was God's intention that all the people should be as Nazirites to Him. And the allusions to the Nazirite vow in the New Testament likewise suggest all Christians are to live in the spirit of the Nazirite vow.

Num 6:24 'Yahweh bless you-
Blessing is so often associated with forgiveness of sins, and 'keeping' often refers to being kept in the way to life. We see here the possibility of forgiveness for the sake of the prayer and blessing of a third party, in this case the priests who were blessing the people. There's another example in Mk. 2:5; James 5:20. It could be that the reference to blessing is a desire for the promised blessings to Abraham to come true, and they involved keeping Israel in the way to the Kingdom, and giving them grace. This is how those promises are often interpreted in the New Testament.

And keep you-
This is the word so often used for "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an

actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Num 6:25 Yahweh make His face to shine on you, and be gracious to you-
God's face shining suggests fellowship and acceptance with Him. The receipt of God's grace can therefore be possible on account of the work and wish of a third party; see on :24. This has huge implications for our pastoral work and prayer life in connection with others.

Moses couldn't see the direct glory / face of God, he was covered by God's hand and only saw God's back. Perhaps this in turn is reflected by how God hid His glory from Israel through the veil on Moses' face. But thereby they were encouraged to aspire to the place of Moses on the mountain, hidden from God's full glory but nonetheless seeing some of it. It cannot be that the High Priestly blessing lacks reference to Moses' shining face: “May Yahweh make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you” (Num. 6:25). The shining of His face spoke of the experience of grace, just as the revelation of God's Name and physical glory to Moses had spoken of His grace to Israel, forgiving the impenitent, those who had committed adultery on their wedding night to Yahweh. And He thereby gave them peace, the peace from knowing His grace and forgiveness. Ps. 80:4 connects the shining of God's face with restoration and salvation- which is the exact context here, where the covenant has been restored by grace and Israel saved from destruction as God's people: “O God, restore us! And make your face shine that we might be saved!”. But the vision of that face, that grace, was veiled to them. The High Priestly blessing was therefore a wish that they would see beyond the veil to Yahweh's actual glory, and not be scared by grace. This wish and intention comes to full term in our beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord Jesus, far greater than the glory Moses saw.

Num 6:26 Yahweh lift up His face toward you, and give you peace’-
Peace is so often peace with God through forgiveness, as a result of which Yahweh's

face can as it were be felt. But this was due to the blessing of third parties, the priests. See on :24,25. Moses had been shown that Yahweh's face could not be seen. But here and in :25 there is the promise of beholding His face. Perhaps there is therefore implicit in this language the promise of being blessed and directed on their daily journeys to the end that finally, in the Kingdom, they would literally behold His face. This is the end destination of our every step through the wilderness.

Num 6:27 So they shall put My name on the children of Israel; and I will bless them-
As noted on :24-26, the priests were wishing for Israel to be blessed with forgiveness and thereby fellowship with God, and His final salvation- seeing His face. But this would only be due to righteousness being imputed to them. All the great things of His Name, His characteristics, were to be counted to them, through His Name being placed upon them. We experience the same through baptism into the Name and abide in it.

The vulnerability and sensitivity of God is reflected in the way that He is concerned that His covenant people, His wife, who bears His Name, might profane His Name (Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11). His repeated concern that His Name be taken in vain doesn't simply refer to the casual use of the word "God" as an expression of exasperation. God is concerned about His people taking His Name upon themselves (Num. 6:27) in vain- i.e., marrying Him, entering covenant relationship with Him, taking on His Name- but not being serious about that relationship, taking it on as a vain thing, like a woman who casually marries a man who loves her at the very core of his being, when for her, it's just a casual thing and she lives a profligate and adulterous life as his wife. When God revealed His Name to His people, opening up the very essence of His character to them, He was making Himself vulnerable. We reveal ourselves intimately to another because we wish for them to make a response to us, to love us for what we revealed to them. God revealed Himself to Israel, He sought for intimacy in the covenant relationship, and therefore was and is all the more hurt when His people turn away from Him, after having revealed to them all the wonders of His word (Hos. 8:12).

NUMBERS CHAPTER 7

Num 7:1 It happened on the day-
"Day" can mean the general time; because the tabernacle was first set up on the first day of the first month of the second year after the exodus (Ex. 40:2). In this case, these events would follow on from the end of Lev. 9:24. We note from Num. 1:1 that the events in Numbers apparently occurred after this point; but Hebrew writing is rarely chronological in a linear sense. But the Rabbis like to think that it was erected several

times, and even claim that the tabernacle at this point assembled itself. Heb. 8:2 could perhaps allude to that belief.

That Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, and had anointed it and made it holy, with all its furniture, and the altar with all its vessels, and had anointed and sanctified them-
Raising up or setting up the tabernacle is an idea used by the Lord Jesus with reference to His resurrection (Jn. 2:19). Just as the setting up of the tabernacle elicited freewill offerings, recorded in great detail in this chapter, so we should likewise respond with freewill offerings because of His resurrection. This continues the theme of Num. 6 which is also of freewill devotion. The imagery of setting up a tabernacle could suggest that Israel were now the bride of God beneath the marriage canopy.

Num 7:2 that the princes of Israel, the heads of their fathers' families, offered. These were the princes of the tribes. These are they who were over those who were numbered-
Continuing the voluntary spirit of the Nazirite vow explained in chapter 6, we read that the heads of the tribes now offered a voluntary offering. They weren't commanded to bring these things; they chose to bring them. The constant repetition of chapter 7 can seem boring, but the point is that God remembered their freewill offerings, in every detail; and recorded and preserved them for millennia. He likewise remembers all our sacrifices for His sake (Ps. 20:3). These princes of the tribes were the same officers over Israel who were beaten by the Egyptians for failing to produce the required number of bricks.

Num 7:3 and they brought their offering before Yahweh, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen - a wagon for every two of the princes, and for each one an ox - and they presented them before the tabernacle-
The six rather than twelve wagons could be a reflection of the difficulty in making wheels and wagons given their limited resources in the desert. "Before Yahweh" is parallel with "before the tabernacle"; to come 'before Yahweh', as we learn in Job 1, doesn't refer to Heaven itself. His representatives and place of manifestation are 'Him', although not He Himself in person. Hence the Lord Jesus functioned as God's representative and presence, the true tabernacle which God pitched and not man (Heb. 8:2), without being God Himself in a Trinitarian sense.

Num 7:4 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
"Accept these..." (:5) could be a signal from God that the wagons could be used for transporting parts of the tabernacle, rather than always carrying everything on poles on shoulders. For most parts of the tabernacle were designed to be carried on poles [not just the ark]. But that concession to human weakness, as so often, was abused by

David and Uzzah when the ark was brought to Zion. And that is the problem of making eager use of concessions to human weakness.

Num 7:5 Accept these from them that they may be used in doing the service of the Tent of Meeting; and you shall give them to the Levites, to every man according to his service-
This suggests the wagons were used to carry the heavier items, because they were according to the ministry needs of the Levites. And yet the ark was not to be carried on a wagon but on poles carried on the shoulders. Perhaps David willfully misinterpreted this as allowing him to transport the ark upon a wagon.

Num 7:6 Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them to the Levites-
The same words for wagon and oxen are used of how David allowed the ark to be carried on a wagon pulled by oxen (2 Sam. 6:3), and was judged harshly for this. See on :9. The Philistines also used wagon and oxen to transport the ark (1 Sam. 6:8-14) but there is no recorded judgment upon them for doing so, although this was not God's requirement. The ark was to be carried, not placed on a wagon (:9). We see here the principle that knowledge brings responsibility to Divine judgment.

Num 7:7 He gave two wagons and four oxen to the sons of Gershon, according to their service-
They had fewer wagons because they 'only' had to carry the curtains and hangings (Num. 4:25). God foresees the needs we will have in doing our intended service for Him, and provides- but He provides what is needed and not a luxurious life.

Num 7:8 and he gave four wagons and eight oxen to the sons of Merari, according to their service, under the direction of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest-
They had more wagons because they had to carry heavier items (Num. 4:31,32). See on :7.

Num 7:9 But to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because the service of the sanctuary belonged to them: they carried it on their shoulders-
Significantly, David carried the ark on a wagon rather than have it carried on shoulders as commanded. One wonders whether his slip in this matter was because the Kohathites had resented seeing how their brothers got to transport their parts of the tabernacle in wagons, whereas they had to carry their parts on their shoulders; and therefore they began to use wagons, because their brother did. We can also too easily do what our brothers do, and for us it can become sin, because we each have an

individual calling. What may be permissible for them may not be for us. The fact they do it doesn't mean we can, because our context and calling is different from theirs.

Num 7:10 The princes gave offerings for the dedication of the altar in the day that it was anointed, even the princes gave their offerings before the altar-
See on :10. They originally all wanted to offer on the altar on that same first day. The altar had been anointed and sanctified by God (:1); they desired to dedicate it by responding to that. It's not that it was not sanctified without their offerings. It was ready for use. God doesn't require sacrifice in that sense; all was prepared. But our response to that it is to sacrifice.

Num 7:11 Yahweh said to Moses, They shall offer their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedication of the altar-
The implication could be that they all wanted to offer their offering on the altar on the same day; but God didn't want there to be a group psychology in devotion to Him, and so He made them each offer quite separately from each other, on separate days. We must ask how much group psychology there is in our Christian lives. Did we get baptized because a whole group did? Did we pledge financial support to an appeal because others were doing so? Do we attend church because that is what our social group do?

Num 7:12 He who offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah-
He was brother-in-law of Aaron (Ex. 6:23), and yet also married to Rahab in order to be the ancestor of David and the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:4). He was one of the points at which the lines of Judah and Levi converged in the Lord's genealogy, appropriate for Him as a king-priest.

Num 7:13 and his offering was: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering
The "plate" was more likely a bowl, full of flour.

Num 7:14 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
The word for "spoon" also means a censer, which is why it had incense in it. But gold was not a good material for a censer. Yet they wanted to serve God to as high a quality as possible. This would be another instance of where the materials of the tabernacle, such as acacia wood and gold censers, were not the most functional by secular standards. But this isn't how God operates. He uses the dysfunctional, the hard to work

with, in order to do His work in this world. Just look at you and me if you need any more evidence of that.

Num 7:15 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Num 7:16 one male goat for a sin offering-
Just as the Nazirite had to make a sin offering at the end of his period of devotion (Num. 6:16). The need for a sin offering at the end of the special freewill devotion was maybe to remind them that their extra special devotion didn't take away the reality of sin and need for grace; for relationship with God depends upon this rather than upon our works and special efforts. Again, we can take that principle to ourselves in our age.

Num 7:17 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nahshon the son of Amminadab-
The usual order of offering was sin offering, then burnt offering [speaking of subsequent dedication to God for His grace in forgiving the offerer] and then the peace offering to celebrate peace with God. But here the order is different. The burnt offering was representative of the freewill gift being made to God; but then there was to be the sin offering, reminding them of the reality of human sin regardless of our freewill devotion to God; and then the peace offering celebrating peace with God on that basis.

Num 7:18 On the second day Nethanel the son of Zuar, prince of Issachar, gave his offering-
'God has given' suggests that he was named in faith that the promised land would indeed be given to Israel.

Num 7:19 He offered for his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the

sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
The plate / dish and bowl were full of flour. This was offered on their initiative. But they were perhaps out of step with how in the tabernacle, the beakers, cups and vessels on Yahweh's table remained empty (Ex. 25:29); the wine was poured out onto the sacrifices and vaporized; the priests ate the shewbread. There was no pretence that Yahweh was a hungry god who needed to be fed by His worshippers. To the pagan mind, this would've meant that if He didn't eat, He wasn't actually around nor powerful. Again, the difference and similarities were intentional, in order to point up the need for faith in the power and existence of Yahweh. Yahweh had a "table". The Mesopotamian gods likewise had a table (*passuru*) upon which food was placed as a meal for the god (as in Is. 65:11), on the assumption that their god was hungry.

Num 7:20 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
It could be that they brought to the altar all the various categories of things which would be offered to God in the tabernacle.

Num 7:21 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
The princes all offered identical offerings, perhaps because God wanted them to understand that they all had a sense of equal gratitude to Him.

Num 7:22 one male goat for a sin offering-
If as suggested on :23 each prince resourced these offerings themselves, then the identical offerings were commanded by God- lest there should arise any competition between the princes, with one prince offering more than another.

Num 7:23 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Nethanel the son of Zuar-
It could be reasoned from "this was the offering of..." that the princes made these offerings not on behalf of the tribes, but from their own wealth.

Num 7:24 On the third day Eliab the son of Helon, prince of the children of Zebulun-
We note how most of the names feature the 'El' suffix and not 'Yah' or 'Iah'. This is understandable, for Moses declared the Name of Yahweh to the people after most of these men had been born. This kind of artless internal corroboration is to me one of the strongest arguments for the Divine inspiration of the Bible.

Num 7:25 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was a hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both

of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
The idea of the bowl may have been that it could later be used for receiving the blood of the sacrifices. But Yahweh had stipulated precisely all that was needed for His tabernacle. This was at this initiative.

Num 7:26 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
If the various gifts were all representative of the kinds of gifts which would be offered upon the altar they were now dedicating (:11), we wonder why they brought incense- because that was only to be offered upon the altar of incense, not that of burnt offering. Perhaps they were suggesting that incense would also be offered with the sacrifices made on the altar of burnt offering, an example of going beyond the letter of the law to a higher level.

Num 7:27 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
Had all the animals been offered on the same day as the princes initially desired (:10,11), then these animals would not have all been eaten by the serving Levites as there would have been too many. Pointless huge generosity is not particularly what God is looking for; He wanted the Levites to eat well over this 12 day period in symbol of His acceptance of His people and fellowship with their offerings.

Num 7:28 one male goat for a sin offering-
A goat being chosen for the sin offering tempts us to think of the Lord's usage of sheep and goats as representing the righteous and the sinners. The Lord Jesus, the ultimate sin offering, was in one sense the spotless Passover lamb of God; in another sense, He was totally identified with the goats- sinful, rejected humanity. Likewise He was represented by the serpent lifted up on the pole.

Num 7:29 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliab the son of Helon-
Each prince offered 21 animals in total, and there were 12 princes, making a total of 252 animals. When the princes rebelled, the 250 rebellious princes were asked to bring their censers before Yahweh, along with the censers of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:17), making a total of 252 censers. That this number is again associated with the princes of Israel cannot surely be chance. There is the simple message that the hand of God was present throughout the whole narrative. See on :62.

Num 7:30 On the fourth day Elizur the son of Shedeur, prince of the children of Reuben-
"Elizur", 'God is my rock', is a name indicating faith that God would indeed be a rock to

Israel. And probably these were names which were taken by choice rather than birth names. But Israel turned back from entering Canaan; their leaders had the names of faith but in reality their faith was weak. And we must ask ourselves whether that is the case with us, having a name that we spiritually live when we are dead.

Num 7:31 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
There were various definitions of a shekel; our valuation and weighting of things is to be by His standards and not those of the secular world.

Num 7:32 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
Incense represented prayer (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4), which is to accompany all our freewill offerings and initiatives in God's service.

Num 7:33 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
According to Num. 28:14 these would have been accompanied by "Half a hin of wine for a bull, and the third part of a hin for the ram, and the fourth part of a hin for a lamb".

Num 7:34 one male goat for a sin offering-
The extreme repetition in the record is perhaps reflective of God's sensitivity to freewill offerings; and perhaps this is why the account concludes with the otherwise apparently disjointed account of His speaking from the mercy seat with His own voice (:89) in response to all this.

Num 7:35 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elizur the son of Shedeur-
The order in which the tribes offered is according to their encampment around the tabernacle, passing east, south, west and finally north: Judah, Issachar, Zebulun (East), Reuben, Simeon, Gad (south), Ephraim, Manasseh, Benjamin (west), Dan,
Asher and Naphtali (north).

Num 7:36 On the fifth day Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai, prince of the children of Simeon-
"God's peace" son of "The Almighty is my rock" could reflect a faithful family, especially considering that Israel were idolaters in Egypt, and carried the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:6-8) and also the tabernacle of Moloch as well as that of Yahweh, the star of Remphan as well as the standards of their tribes (Acts 7:43).

Num 7:37 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
130 shekels weighed only 3.2 lbs. (1.5 kg.), so it was a relatively small plate / dish.

Num 7:38 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
Ten shekels weighed only 2 lbs. or 100 grams. So this refers to the weight of the incense not the spoon.

Num 7:39 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
The lamb was to be male because the male was of higher value on the secular market- not because God Himself valued females less. Likewise the bull was to be "young", not because God values older things or people less, but quite simply the young bull was worth more in secular terms than an older bull.

Num 7:40 one male goat for a sin offering-
AV "one kid of the goats". "Of the goats" continues the common Mosaic theme, that the animal was not to be raised specially for sacrifice but was to be taken out of the herd, it was one "of" them. This looks ahead to the human nature of the Lord Jesus as one of us, taken "of" the herd of humanity.

Num 7:41 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai-
If we take the order of the tribes as listed in this chapter [which follows the order of encampment], the meaning of their names makes a sentence, which H.P. Mansfield suggests as follows: "Praise Him! for the reward of dwelling with Him, in seeing the Son, of hearing him in company of firstborns (double fruit), who forgetting the flesh join the Son of the right hand. At the judgment he will confer blessings upon those who have wrestled successfully".

Num 7:42 On the sixth day, Eliasaph the son of Deuel, prince of the children of Gad-
Deuel is better Reuel as in Num. 2:14. The Hebrew letters for 'D' and 'R' are easily confused; so here we have an example of slight copying errors in the original texts. But these in no way negate the overall Divine inspiration of the texts.

Num 7:43 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and

thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
70 shekels weighed only 1.7 lbs. (0.8kg.), so it was a relatively small bowl.

Num 7:44 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
The incense, representing prayer (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 8:3,4), would have been burnt on the incense altar. The smell would have come through to the most holy place, where Yahweh dwelt between the cherubim. This symbolized how prayer enters into heaven itself, into the very presence of God. Passing through the veil suggests the role of the Lord Jesus in our prayers (Heb. 10:20).

Num 7:45 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
We must remember that "In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure" (Heb. 10:6). Perhaps God came to change His attitude about the sacrifices as time went on and Israel refused to learn from them. Or perhaps He felt like this all along, but only instituted them as a concession to the weakness of Israel's religious conscience. They were used to religion, having lived so long in Egypt; and He wished to give them something which met their religious conscience and desire to sacrifice, even if it was far from what He Himself personally wished for. Such is His sensitivity and deep concession to human weakness.

Num 7:46 one male goat for a sin offering-
The male element in sacrifice was not because God considered the female as lesser. The fact was, male animals were worth more than female, and so God goes along with that and they offer the more expensive to Him. Just as we are to offer what is seen as best within our own worldview and social situation.

Num 7:47 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Eliasaph the son of Deuel-
Apart from what is noted on :46, the male nature of the sacrifices could be because they pointed forward to the Lord Jesus.

Num 7:48 On the seventh day Elishama the son of Ammihud, prince of the children of Ephraim-
This day, or at least one of these days, would have been the Sabbath. But God is no literalist nor legalist, and there is no note to the effect that this work was not done on the Sabbath.

Num 7:49 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
As noted on :37,38,43, these items were not that heavy nor large. The princes of the tribes were making moderate offerings, because God didn't want huge amounts of things, but rather sincere heartfelt freewill from a person, regardless of their wealth.

Num 7:50 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
The continual burning of incense, night and day, was a reminder that prayer (cp. incense, Rev. 8:3,4) was a way of life, not only specific statements. David's references to making constant prayer (e.g. Ps. 88:1) may allude to the constant rising up of the incense. We cannot be literally praying all the time, but our basic spirit of life can rise up as a prayer to God constantly. Our lives are, in a sense, our prayer.

Num 7:51 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
How are we to square God's apparent pleasure in sacrifices with Heb. 10:6 "In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure"? God did require them and was pleased they were given, but He had no desire for them in response to David's sin. David is everyman, worthy of death because of our wretched failure, with no animal sacrifice or ritual to save us. God did want sacrifices, but not for the sins David had committed concerning Uriah and Bathsheba. Heb. 10:8 explains further: "First he said: Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor did You have pleasure in them (all of which are offered according to the law)". Paul perceives that firstly, there was the statement that God did not desire animal sacrifices of themselves in order to remove sin; and secondly, the Lord Jesus came to do God's will, in a way which animals simply could not do. This division into first and second is pressed into a similarity with the first and second covenants, as noted on Heb. 9:1. God's desire was that sacrifice should be offered under the Old Covenant, but this could not take away sin of itself. What He desired far more ['not A but B' can mean 'not so much A as B'] was the sacrifice of the One who did His will perfectly.

Num 7:52 one male goat for a sin offering-
See on :51.

Num 7:53 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Elishama the son of Ammihud-
Elishama was Joshua's grandfather (1 Chron. 7:26). "God who hears" reflects Moses'

message that God had indeed heard the crying of the Israelites in Egypt. This was likely a name change after acceptance of Moses' teaching.

Num 7:54 On the eighth day Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur, prince of the children of Manasseh-
"Gamaliel" is 'God is my reward', named in hope that the promised reward of the Kingdom would indeed be given.

Num 7:55 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
The spoon of "incense" which is described as following this (:56) may have been required in the spirit of Lev. 2:1: "When anyone offers an offering of a grain offering to Yahweh, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it". Frankincense was a type of incense which would have given a pleasing smell to the burning flour. This represented how pleased God was with the offering even of a handful of flour (see on :67). Small sacrifices please Him immensely. And they are what comprise daily life.

Num 7:56 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
*T*he commands for making this incense were very strict: "Yahweh said to Moses, Take to yourself sweet spices, gum resin, and onycha, and galbanum; sweet spices with pure frankincense: there shall be an equal weight of each; and you shall make incense of it, a perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy: and you shall beat some of it very small, and put some of it before the testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be to you most holy. The incense which you shall make, according to its composition you shall not make for yourselves: it shall be to you holy for Yahweh. Whoever shall make any like that, to smell of it, he shall be cut off from his people" (Ex. 30:34-38). We wonder whether the princes really followed this in their enthusiasm to offer an impressive offering. But God still accepted their offering.

Num 7:57 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
As noted on :49, the items were not that heavy nor large; nor were the collective numbers of sacrifices that huge, and nothing compared to the huge slaughter of animals made by Solomon when he dedicated the temple. The princes of the tribes were making moderate offerings, because God didn't want huge amounts of things, but rather sincere heartfelt freewill from a person, regardless of their wealth. Solomon failed to realize this, and can be read as wanting to purposefully far exceed what was offered here when the tabernacle was first dedicated.

Num 7:58 one male goat for a sin offering-
The Hebrew for "sin offering" is the same word translated "punishment". Atonement theories involving punishment, substitution etc. often go wrong and fail to adequately reflect the extent of God's grace. But it must never be overlooked that sin does require response; and the punishment for the sin was indeed placed upon the goat as a kind of substitute for the sinner in Old Testament times. But the far more effective sacrifice was that of the Lord Jesus, who died for sinners as a representative rather than a substitute.

Num 7:59 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur-
The Rabbis suggest Gamaliel may mean 'God liberated me from prison'. Manasseh was a grandson of Joseph, so perhaps his experiences are in view, as well as the liberation of Israel from Egypt.

Num 7:60 On the ninth day Abidan the son of Gideoni, prince of the children of Benjamin-
The names associated with the leadership of Benjamin and Naphtali (:78) stand out as not having any spiritual reference in them. Israel were very spiritually weak as they left Egypt and it is likely that the more spiritual names we read of in this list were the result of name changes. But the leaders of these two tribes didn't do that.

Num 7:61 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
Such high value tableware may well have been given to the princes when they left Egypt. Whatever wealth they were then given was given them by God, and they were to give it back to God through the service of the tabernacle. And it's the same with whatever we may pick up from Egypt / the world.

Num 7:62 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
If indeed "spoon" effectively means a censer, then we have another connection between the princes, censers and incense- which all came to a head in their rebellion of Num. 16. See on :29.

Num 7:63 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
The Hebrew for "burnt offering" means literally 'a going up'. The word is used nearly 1000

times for people 'going up' in various ways. There were surely other words which could have been used to convey the idea of a burnt offering. But this one is used because it was ever God's intention to lead His people towards the understanding that the offerings represented them. Like us today, they were to be as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1,2).

Num 7:64 one male goat for a sin offering-
The attitude of the Lord Jesus was that "Sacrifice and offering You did not want, but a body did You prepare for me. In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then said I: Behold, I come (in the roll of the book it is written about me) to do Your will, O God. First he said: Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor did You have pleasure in them (all of which are offered according to the law)" (Heb. 10:5-8). This is strong language considering God did in fact require such offerings, and in practice He did offer forgiveness in response to them. Perhaps God came to change His attitude about the sacrifices as time went on and Israel refused to learn from them. Or perhaps He felt like this all along, but only instituted them as a concession to the weakness of Israel's religious conscience. They were used to religion, having lived so long in Egypt; and He wished to give them something which met their religious conscience and desire to sacrifice, even if it was far from what He Himself personally wished for. Such is His sensitivity and deep concession to human weakness.

Num 7:65 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Abidan the son of Gideoni-
Although peace offerings were completely voluntary, the legislation stressed they were not to think that therefore they could not respect God’s holiness and give Him that which was second best (Lev. 3:6 etc.) or offer it where they liked. Many of the sacrifices we make to God are likewise not compulsory, but the spirit of giving God the best which permeates the Law of Moses should remain with us. We may be able to deduce that peace offerings could be offered in other places, and there appear to be examples of that in later scripture; but if a lamb was offered, it must be "before Yahweh", seeing that the lamb particularly looked ahead to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus "before Yahweh".

Num 7:66 On the tenth day Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai, prince of the children of Dan-
"Ammishaddai" means 'People of the Almighty', using the term *shaddai* which is often associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He may well have been one of the faithful few who kept perceiving the vital separation of God's people from Egypt, whereas the

majority in their hearts returned to Egypt and wished to assimilate with them in order to escape persecution and have what they imagined was a good life.

Num 7:67 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
Lev. 2:3 notes: "That which is left of the grain offering shall be Aaron's and his sons'. It is a most holy thing of the offerings of Yahweh made by fire". The language of "most holy" is juxtaposed against the fact that this was referring to a simple grain offering, a 'little something' offered by literally anyone within Israel (see on Lev. 2:1). But such tiny offerings were "most holy" to God; we think of the Lord's attitude to the widow offering her two small coins. See on :55.

Num 7:68 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
The higher value of gold perhaps means that the spoons or censers with incense in them were of more value to God than the utensils for sacrifice which were donated; for they were made of silver. Because prayer is to Him of more value than sacrifice.

Num 7:69 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
The burnt offerings were to be of "a male without blemish" (Lev. 1:3). No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). The thoughtful Israelite would have perceived that all the animas offered were not totally without blemish- for none was, upon minute examination. The requirement for a male sacrifice was not because God considered the female gender inferior; rather was it because He was asking that they offer their most valuable animal to Him, and not their least valuable. And male animals were more valuable than female.

Num 7:70 one male goat for a sin offering-
The sin offering required that the offerer placed his hand upon the head of the goat. But 'to lay the hand upon' is a phrase which means more than merely touching the head, but implies leaning upon or pushing upon. It is rendered "lean his hand [upon a wall]" (Am. 5:19). It was an act of very conscious identity. The same phrase is used of how God's hand upholds those who spiritually fall (Ps. 37:24). So we see the mutuality of relationship between God and man. We strongly place our hand upon the offering of the Lord Jesus, and God places His hand upon us. Paul may have this idea in view when he speaks of how he grabs hold of Jesus and is grabbed hold of by Jesus (Phil. 3:12); just as the Lord seized hold of Peter drowning in the lake, as Peter grabbed hold of Him. That

incident surely was a mini parable of our redemption.

Num 7:71 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai-
The peace offering was the "food (also translated "bread") of the offering made... unto the Lord" (Lev. 3:11). The peace offering was therefore God's food, or bread. Yet the offerer was invited to eat the bread of God. This implied that when the offerer sat down to eat the food, as it were, God was sitting with him, also eating of it. This was symbolized in human terms by the fact that the priest, as God's representative, ate part of the peace offering, while the offerer ate the other part. Presumably they sat down together to do this. The closeness of God which this implies is almost beyond our comprehension. We are invited to see the exquisite beauty of true fellowship with God. The idea of eating the bread of God, the sacrifice which represents His son, and thereby having fellowship with Him, should send our minds forward to John 6. "The bread of God is He which comes down from heaven", i.e. our Lord Jesus (Jn. 6:33). Not for nothing do some Rabbis speak of 'eating Messiah' as an expression of the fellowship they hope to have with Him at His coming.

Num 7:72 On the eleventh day Pagiel the son of Ochran, prince of the children of Asher-
Pagiel ['accident of God'] was son of Ochran, 'muddler'. As discussed on :78, people had multiple names and were known by the 'name' they carved for themselves in life, and the attitudes they had. God makes no accidents; so maybe in depression and bitterness this man felt like this, and was known for it. Hardly a great example to the tribe he was supposed to be leading. And indeed Asher all but disappears from Israel.

Num 7:73 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
Paul writes of the church in Corinth that God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mixed" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made.

Num 7:74 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
The higher value of gold perhaps means that the spoons or censers with incense in

them were of more value to God than the utensils for sacrifice which were donated; for they were made of silver. Because prayer is to Him of more value than sacrifice.

Num 7:75 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
The burnt offering was to be "without blemish" (Lev. 1;3). "Without blemish" was how Noah was (s.w. Gen. 6:9), and how God wished Abraham and all his seed to be (s.w. Gen. 17:1). We all fail to be perfect; blemishes remain. So perhaps the idea was that the animal represented how the offerer wished to be; but it was only an animal, not a man. And therefore the thought would have arisen that it must surely look forward to some perfect, unblemished human who was the representative of all men. And that was the need which was met in the death of the Lord Jesus. Lev. 1:3 continues about the burnt offering- the offerer personally "shall offer it at the door of the Tent of Meeting, that he may be accepted before Yahweh". The offerer personally was to bring it. It was not to be brought by someone else, for sacrifice was to involve personal engagement and not be performed as mere tokenistic ritual through a third party. And that is an abiding principle. The offerer firstly had to enter through the gate into the court, before approaching the altar. The height of the gate meant that most would had to bow their heads. Humility was the first requirement, and this is what made sacrifice acceptable.

Num 7:76 one male goat for a sin offering-
The sin offering required that the offerer placed his hand upon the head of the goat. But 'to lay the hand upon' is a phrase which means more than merely touching the head, but implies leaning upon or pushing upon. It is rendered "lean his hand [upon a wall]" (Am. 5:19). It was an act of very conscious identity. The same phrase is used of how God's hand upholds those who spiritually fall (Ps. 37:24). So we see the mutuality of relationship between God and man. We strongly place our hand upon the offering of the Lord Jesus, and God places His hand upon us. Paul may have this idea in view when he speaks of how he grabs hold of Jesus and is grabbed hold of by Jesus (Phil. 3:12); just as the Lord seized hold of Peter drowning in the lake, as Peter grabbed hold of Him. That incident surely was a mini parable of our redemption.

Num 7:77 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Pagiel the son of Ochran-
The peace offering was "the food of the offering made by fire to Yahweh" (Lev. 3:11). The metaphor invites us to see the altar as God's table, at which He as it were ate the sacrifices. At the breaking of bread service, we come to the table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21); the offering we bring is ourselves. And yet God has placed on the altar, on the table before us, the sacrifice of His Son, and invites us to eat with Him there. Eating with someone was understood as a sign of religious fellowship. At the breaking of bread, we are therefore celebrating our living fellowship with God Himself.

Num 7:78 On the twelfth day Ahira the son of Enan, prince of the children of Naphtali-
What mother would have named her child Nabal (fool), or Ahira (brother of evil), or 'sickness' or 'wasting' (Mahlon and Chilion)? These names were either given to them by others and the use adopted by God, or simply God in the record assigned them such names. The names associated with the leadership of Benjamin and Naphtali (:60) stand out as not having any spiritual reference in them. Israel were very spiritually weak as they left Egypt and it is likely that the more spiritual names we read of in this list were the result of name changes. But the leaders of these two tribes didn't do that.

Num 7:79 gave his offering: one silver plate, the weight of which was one hundred and thirty shekels, one silver bowl of seventy shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering-
The continual stress upon the usage of oil [*shehmen*] in the grain offerings (Lev. 2:7 etc.) may look ahead to the *meshiach*, the Christ, the anointed one. All aspects of the offerings looked ahead to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Num 7:80 one golden spoon of ten shekels, full of incense-
The higher value of gold perhaps means that the spoons or censers with incense in them were of more value to God than the utensils for sacrifice which were donated; for they were made of silver. Because prayer is to Him of more value than sacrifice.

Num 7:81 one young bull, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering-
The laws about the offerer of a burnt offering in Lev. 1:6 were presumably followed: "He shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into pieces". Every part of our lives, including our most inward parts, are to be offered to God. The process of splitting the offering into its parts speaks of our self-examination, defining each part of our lives and offering them to God consciously.

Num 7:82 one male goat for a sin offering-
The sin offering required that the offerer placed his hand upon the head of the goat. But 'to lay the hand upon' is a phrase which means more than merely touching the head, but implies leaning upon or pushing upon. It is rendered "lean his hand [upon a wall]" (Am. 5:19). It was an act of very conscious identity. The same phrase is used of how God's hand upholds those who spiritually fall (Ps. 37:24). So we see the mutuality of relationship between God and man. We strongly place our hand upon the offering of the Lord Jesus, and God places His hand upon us. Paul may have this idea in view when he speaks of how he grabs hold of Jesus and is grabbed hold of by Jesus (Phil. 3:12); just as the Lord seized hold of Peter drowning in the lake, as Peter grabbed hold of Him. That

incident surely was a mini parable of our redemption.

Num 7:83 and for the sacrifice of peace offerings, two head of cattle, five rams, five male goats, and five male lambs a year old. This was the offering of Ahira the son of Enan-
David rejoiced in God's mercy to him, perhaps in the context of his sin with Bathsheba. He asks: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his (spiritual) benefits toward me?". He decides that he will offer a peace offering: "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving (the peace offering; Lev. 7:12)... I will take the cup of salvation... I will pay my vows... in the presence of all his people... in the courts of the Lord's house". As we sit "before the Lord" at the memorial meeting, beholding the cross of Christ and the blood of Calvary, we should be intensely aware of God's great benefits towards us: our salvation assured, sin forgiven, peace with God. Our response should be to renew our vows joyfully, in the ecclesia, God's house, in the presence of His people, as we eat the peace offering, the sacrifice of thanksgiving. As the peace offering was to be offered publicly, "before the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev. 3:13), so in the sight of each other we too renew our vows and express our peace with God. And if we are all at peace with God, we should therefore be at peace with each other.

Num 7:84 This was the dedication of the altar, on the day when it was anointed, by the princes of Israel: twelve silver plates, twelve silver bowls, twelve golden spoons-
The higher value of gold perhaps means that the spoons or censers with incense in them were of more value to God than the utensils for sacrifice which were donated; for they were made of silver. Because prayer is to Him of more value than sacrifice.

Num 7:85 each silver plate weighing one hundred and thirty shekels, and each bowl seventy; all the silver of the vessels two thousand four hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary-
The extreme repetition in the record is perhaps reflective of God's sensitivity to freewill offerings; and perhaps this is why the account concludes with the otherwise apparently disjointed account of His speaking from the mercy seat with His own voice (:89) in response to all this.

Num 7:86 the twelve golden spoons, full of incense, weighing ten shekels apiece, after the shekel of the sanctuary; all the gold of the spoons weighed one hundred and twenty shekels-
They were either very small spoons, or the weight refers to the amount of incense rather than the spoons themselves. Ten shekels of the sanctuary weighed only 2 lbs. or 100 grams.

Num 7:87 All the cattle for the burnt offering: twelve bulls, the rams twelve, the male lambs a year old twelve, and their grain offering; and the male goats for a sin offering twelve-
The apparent tension with the statements that God took no pleasure in animal sacrifice is discussed on :44,45,51.

Num 7:88 and all the cattle for the sacrifice of peace offerings: twenty-four bulls, the rams sixty, the male goats sixty, the year old male lambs sixty. This was the dedication of the altar, after it was anointed-
The apparent tension with the statements that God took no pleasure in animal sacrifice is discussed on :44,45,51.

Num 7:89 When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Yahweh, he heard His voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim: and He spoke to him-
The blood of Christ speaks a message, better than that of Abel. It is a voice that shakes heaven and earth (Heb. 12:24,26). This is after the pattern of how the commanding voice of Yahweh was heard above the blood sprinkled on "the atonement cover of the ark of the Testimony" (Num. 7:89 NIV). It shows forth, as a voice, God's righteousness (Rom. 3:25,26 RV).

The blood of atonement, pointing forward to the blood of Christ, was permanently on the mercy seat, i.e. the cover of the ark of the covenant, with the Angel-like cherubim peering down onto it. There in that most Holy of places, God spoke. The fact that the voice of God was associated with the blood which represented the blood of His Son is alluded to in Heb. 12:24-26, which likens the blood of Christ to a voice more powerful than the sound which accompanied the shaking of Sinai. God's word becomes powerful to us over the blood of Christ in that beholding Him there, we cannot walk away passively. We are spurred to action. Yet as we behold His blood in our mind's eye, in our reconstruction of how it all maybe happened on Golgotha, we face an insistent question: What can I do, what must I do, in response to this? That question is answered in God's word, and it is in this sense that His word becomes of especial power to us over the blood of Christ. In this sense He is that word made flesh, supremely in His time of dying.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 8

Num 8:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
This commandment to the tribe of Levi follows straight on from the description in Num.

7 of the other tribes dedicating the altar. Now the tribe of Levi were to play their part.

Num 8:2 Speak to Aaron, and tell him, 'When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lampstand'-
The lampstand faced towards the most holy place. There was no natural light in the tabernacle. The lampstand is used as a symbol of the church in Rev. 1:20. We are "the light of the world" in that we provide light which points men towards entrance into the holiest. Hence the lamps were to give light "in front of the lampstand", pointing toward the holiest and the veil which was later brought down at the Lord's death. Now the tabernacle had been set up, this command to light the lamps was equivalent to "Let there be light" at creation.

Num 8:3 Aaron did so. He lit its lamps to light the area in front of the lampstand, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
"The candlestick" or menorah is only ever spoken of in the law of Moses in the singular, but in 1 Chron. 28:15 David decided there were to be multiple such candlesticks. By doing so, he ignored the symbolism of the one candlestick, the one people of God; such was his obsession with mere religion. The lampstand represents God's people (Rev. 1:20), and it had seven lamps; the six branches and the central stem, upon which there was also a lamp. Seven is the number of wholeness and completion. Perhaps the idea is that there is to be a complete manifestation of God through the witness of His people, burning the oil of the Spirit. Each component member witnesses to Him in a slightly different way, not only in this life but throughout the generations of God's people. Likewise the body of Christ in the same way manifests Christ to the world. The *menorah* or "candlestick" is from a root meaning to yoke. In the Christian context, the yoke, the uniting power, is the Lord Jesus (Mt. 11:30). He is the unique power which binds together His otherwise disparate people into one candlestick. Thereby Christian unity becomes a witness to the world, at least that is the intention. All disunity between believers therefore causes the candlestick not to function, and the light of witness is thereby the less.

Num 8:4 This was the workmanship of the lampstand, beaten work of gold-
The candlestick represents the assembly of believers (Rev. 1:20). It was made of beaten work, representing how all those in the true church will be beaten into a shape through which they can be lights for God. "Hammered" or "beaten" suggests that through blow by blow on material heated in the furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10), God works out a place where His glory may be revealed. And that place is our lives.

From its base to its flowers, it was beaten work: according to the pattern which Yahweh had shown Moses, so he made the lampstand-

The lampstand represents God's people (Rev. 1:20), but it is presented here as a tree with branches, buds and blossoms (Ex. 25:33). In this sense the ecclesia, the community of believers, is to be as the tree of life to others by their words (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 15:4).

The "flowers" were almonds (Ex. 25:33). The almond is the first tree in Palestine to bud, so it means literally the watching tree, as if it were alive and eager to come to life. So it is appropriate for the candlestick, which represented God's people. Jeremiah sees the branch of an almond tree and is comforted that "I watch over My word to perform it" (Jer. 1:11,12). The word translated 'hasten' or "watch over" is very similar to the word for 'almond'. Almonds are associated with God's eyes; the bowls of the lampstands were almonds (Ex. 25:33,34). Zech. 4:2 talks about these almond bowls on the candlestick, and Zech. 4:10 interprets them as the "eyes of the LORD which run to and fro through the whole earth". 2 Chron. 16:9 talks about the Angels in the same way; "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him". Similarly in Rev. 4:5 the lamps in the bowls of almond are equated with the "seven spirits (or Angels) of God". Rev. 5:6 equates the seven eyes with the seven spirits. Thus the almond rod which Jeremiah saw represented God's eyes or Angels who would watch over the word of God which Jeremiah was to speak to perform it. And He does likewise with the witness of all those represented within the candlestick.

Num 8:5 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
This gives more detail about the dedication of the Levites in Num. 3:5-13.

Num 8:6 Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them-
The Levites and priests weren't part-timers. They gave their lives to God in recognition of the fact that God had saved the lives of the firstborn at the Passover and Red Sea deliverance (Num. 3:12). Our deliverance from the world at baptism was our Red Sea. We have been saved. Those firstborns represent us, the ecclesia of firstborns (Heb. 12:23 Gk.). We are now being led towards that glorious Kingdom, when by rights we ought to be lying dead in that dark Egyptian night. The wonder of it all demands that like the Levites, we give our lives *back* to God, in service towards His children.

Num 8:7 You shall do this to them, to cleanse them: sprinkle the water of cleansing on them, let them shave their whole bodies with a razor, and let them wash their clothes, and cleanse themselves-
Washing and becoming like new born children, with no body hair, looks forward to baptism. We're not baptized just for the sake of it; we do this so that we may be made holy or separated unto the service of God. We are God's, just as they were (:14).

The water of cleansing is literally "water of sin", i.e. ‘water that washes away sin’. We note that the Levites were only sprinkled, whereas the priests were completely washed (Ex. 29:4; Lev. 8:6). The idea may be that the more public was the ministry, the deeper sense of personal sin was required.

Num 8:8 Then let them take a young bull, and its grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil; and another young bull you shall take for a sin offering-
Just as the Nazirite had to make a sin offering at the end of his period of devotion (Num. 6:16), and the princes who offered voluntary offerings had to add a sin offering to them (Num. 7:16). The need for a sin offering at the end of special devotion was maybe to remind them that their extra special devotion didn’t take away the reality of sin and need for grace; for relationship with God depends upon this rather than upon our works and special efforts. Again, we can take that principle to ourselves in our age.

Num 8:9 You shall present the Levites before the Tent of Meeting. You shall assemble the whole congregation of the children of Israel-
Now that the tabernacle had been erected, the Levites were now to come out from the various other tribal encampments where they had been living (:6), and establish their tents around the newly erected tabernacle. But firstly they stood as a group before the tent.

Num 8:10 You shall present the Levites before Yahweh. The children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites-
God intended Israel to be "a Kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6). “All the people of Israel” were the builders of the spiritual house of God, i.e. His people (Acts 4:10,11). All Israel were to lay their hands on the Levites to show that they were truly Israel’s representatives (Num. 8:10). When Israel were rejected, they were told that they as a nation could no longer be God’s priest (Hos. 4:6). By baptism, we become spiritual Israel; and this idea is relevant to us too. Peter picks up these words in Exodus and applies them to every one of us: "You also are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

"Come near before Yahweh" is usually translated "offer [sacrifice] before Yahweh", and is translated that way multiple times. Although rarely (Ex. 16:9; Lev. 9:5) it is used of the congregation coming near before Yahweh. But the congregation didn't generally want to come before Yahweh, and so He chose just the Levites to come before Yahweh (Num. 8:10; 16:9 s.w.). It was God's intention that all Israel should be His servants, a nation of priests. But He changed and ammended His approach, and chose just the Levites for this. We see here how open God is to change, so that by all means He may have relationship with His people. Under the new covenant, all believers are part of a royal

priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) as He initially intended even under the old covenant. And yet there is always the tendency to leave the priestly work to specialists rather than perceiving our personal call to do it.

Num 8:11 and Aaron shall offer the Levites before Yahweh for a wave offering, on the behalf of the children of Israel, that it may be theirs to do the service of Yahweh-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Num 8:12 The Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, and you shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering to Yahweh, to make atonement for the Levites-
The sin offering always preceded the burnt offering. Dedication to God, represented by the burnt offering, is on the basis of our recognizing first of all our sinfulness and need for His grace. This is why the sin offering always precedes the burnt offering in the Mosaic rituals. We too have been cleansed by the blood of Christ in order to serve Him and His Father (Heb. 9:14; 1 Thess. 1:9).

Num 8:13 You shall set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them as a wave offering to Yahweh-
The idea of all believers being a living sacrifice alludes here (Rom. 12:1,2). For we are all called to be the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5).

Num 8:14 Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine-
The Levites were God's (Num. 3:12,13,45; 8:14), and the Lord alludes to this: "I pray not for the (Jewish) world, but for them (the disciples, cp. the Levites) which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (Jn. 17:9). The Levites represent us (Jn. 17:6 = Dt. 33:9); the relationship between Moses and the Levites represents that between Christ and us. Moses' thankfulness that they remained faithful during the golden calf crisis, that sense of being able to rely on them, will be reflected in the Lord's feelings toward the faithful.

Num 8:15 After that, the Levites shall go in to do the service of the Tent of Meeting: and you shall cleanse them, and offer them as a wave offering-
Although the Levites had been set apart for Divine service immediately after God's meeting with Israel at Sinai, as outlined in Leviticus and Numbers, it seems that not until Aaron died at the end of the 40 years wandering did they actually in practice begin to serve as intended (Dt. 10:8). It could be that the reason was that the Levites were ever slow to accept their responsibilities. And they generally failed in their calling over Israel's history, climaxing in the priests arranging the murder of God's own Son.

Num 8:16 For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; instead of all who open the womb, even the firstborn of all the children of Israel, I have taken them to Me-
The Levites were separated unto God's service; it wasn't so much that they were separate *from* others in a negative sense; rather they were positively separated *unto* God's service. We shouldn't see holiness as negative- that we can no longer do certain things; but instead focus on what positively we have been separated *unto*.

Num 8:17 For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both man and animal. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified them for Myself-
It had been God's intention that the Levites were "His" from Passover night. But it was their actions at the time of the golden calf which as it were operationalized this, so that this intended "blessing" of being sanctified for God was realized in practice: "The sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. Moses said, Consecrate yourselves today to Yahweh, yes, every man against his son, and against his brother; that He may bestow on you a blessing this day" (Ex. 32:28,29). And this is how God works with us. A potential blessing and sanctification unto Himself is planned, but we have to consecrate ourselves in order to realize that potential. And so much potential is wasted and left unrealized. By so many people, and by us in so many aspects of our potential ministry.

Num 8:18 I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel-
"The men which You gave me out of the (Jewish) world... they have kept Your word" (Jn. 17:6) compares with the Levites being "given" to Aaron / the priesthood out of Israel (Num. 3:9; 8:19; 18:6); at the time of the golden calf they "observed thy word, and kept thy covenant" (Dt. 33:9), as did the disciples. The relationship between Moses and the

Levites was therefore that between Christ and the disciples- a sense of thankfulness that at least a minority were faithful.

Num 8:19 I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the Tent of Meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come near to the sanctuary-
The spiritual and physical wellbeing of others can depend upon third parties, in this case the faithfulness of the Levites. Others can suffer because of our lack of diligence; it's not that if we don't do our part for them, then God will raise up others to do what we ought to have done. He *may* do this, as He was prepared to at the time of Esther, but He wishes us to see the eternal consequence of our actions upon others.

Num 8:20 Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel did so to the Levites. According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so the children of Israel did to them-
What Israel did to them is recorded in :10,11. They placed their hands upon the Levites as if they were their representative sacrifice.

Num 8:21 The Levites purified themselves from sin, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them for a wave offering before Yahweh; and Aaron made atonement for them to cleanse them-
This reference to purification could refer to a ritual purification. But the word for "purified themselves" is used of actual rather than general sin (Lev. 19:22). I have noted earlier that the small size of the tribe of Levi is one of a number of indications that they were not spiritually strong at this time. Seeing that idolatry was rife in Israel at this time (Ez. 20:6-8; Acts 7:43), it could be that there is reference here to something more than a purification ritual- an actual separation from idolatry or other sin which required a personal atonement to be made for them.

Num 8:22 After that, the Levites went in to do their service in the Tent of Meeting before Aaron, and before his sons, as Yahweh had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so they did to them-
"After that" connects with the repentance and forgiveness of the Levites in :21. it demonstrates that acceptable service to God is only possible once personal sin and failure has been faced and dealt with.

Num 8:23 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying,-
David numbered the Levites from 30 years old (1 Chron. 23:3), in accordance with the

law which said Levites were to serve between the ages of 30 and 50 (Num. 4:3,23,35,39). But in 1 Chron. 23:24 we are told that David numbered the Levites from 20 years old. We note in Num. 8:23 that there appeared some flexibility within the Mosaic law; the Levites could be numbered from 25 years old. This is one of many examples of how the Mosaic law was not set in stone. It was principle and spirit rather than letter of the law, and within it there are examples of where one law overrode another, or one principle overrode letter of the law. The law was not designed as a simple test of obedience, for it was far more detailed than that. It was designed to inculcate a spirit of living which looked forward to the spirit of the Lord Jesus. And so David felt free to number the Levites from 20 years old, even though we also read that he numbered 'the Levites from 30 years old', suggesting that this was a technical term rather than a literal description. This would go toward explaining why 38,000 Levites were numbered by David, although "thousand" may mean a division rather than a literal 1000. At the time of Num. 4:47,48 there were only 8,580.

Num 8:24 This is that which belongs to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall go in to serve in the service in the work of the Tent of Meeting-
"This is that which belongs to the Levites" is a reference to the fact the Levites had no possessions of land within Israel. What belonged to them was the honour of serving God; whether or not we own property in this present age, our eternal possession is the honour of being God's servants. To be a servant, in a world where perceived 'freedom' is so cherished, is to be our greatest possession.

Num 8:25 and from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting on the work, and shall serve no more-
The Levites were counted as fit for service from 30 years old in Num. 4:3, here from 25 to 50, and later from 20 years old with no maximum age (1 Chron. 23:27). We see here how the law of Moses was not a set of statutes which were set in stone for all time. There was constant flexibility of the letter of the law, in harmony with the spirit of the law. All suggestions that God's statutes once given can never be changed are simply failing to actually read the law of Moses and spot the intentional conflicts between the letters of the law. God is not a legalist nor a literalist, and His law was open to interpretation and ammendment, as we see in the 'second law' given in Deuteronomy. This was because He wanted His people to thoughtfully reflect upon His statutes, and to see them not as chain or leash, but as a springboard to personal relationship with Him.

Num 8:26 but shall minister with their brothers in the Tent of Meeting, to perform the duty, and shall do no service. You shall do thus to the Levites concerning their duties-
"Service" is the word for military service; as "To wait upon the service" (:24) is literally "to war the warfare". The Levites were to see themselves as on constant, active service for

Yahweh in the endless battle against sin and the flesh- which with their help was to move constantly towards the ultimate victory in the Lord Jesus.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 9

Num 9:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying-
This was therefore before the census which was taken, and is evidence that the book of Numbers [as much of the historical record] is not strictly chronological. Possibly it is arranged around geographical themes rather than chronological.

Num 9:2 Moreover let the children of Israel keep the Passover in its appointed season-
This may have been to clarify the earlier statements that they were to keep Passover in the land of promise (Ex. 12:25; 13:5). In which case we note that God's law was ever open to interpretation and clarification. But it could be that it was God's intention that Israel left Egypt and immediately journeyed to Canaan and kept the next Passover there, within 12 months of Passover night in Egypt. But again, His purpose is open ended and flexible; He perceived that they weren't ready for this, and especially after the apostacy with the golden calf, they needed more time to prepare them. This same principle accounts for the flexible date of the Lord's second coming, and all attempts to construct sequences of latter day events are all doomed because of this failure to accept that God's program is flexible and responsive to human response to it.

Num 9:3 On the fourteenth day of this month, at evening, you shall keep it in its appointed time. According to all its statutes, and according to all its ordinances, you shall keep it-
This raises the question as to where Israel got so many lambs from in the desert. Clearly in their situation they kept the spirit of it, and this was counted as keeping it according to all the legal requirements of it. Perhaps the commandments to "keep it" were given because of the logistical concerns as to whether they were able to keep it precisely as they had done on leaving Egypt.

Num 9:4 Moses spoke to the children of Israel, that they should keep the Passover-
See on :2,3 for reasons why they had to be encouraged to keep it.

Num 9:5 They kept the Passover in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening, in the wilderness of Sinai. According to all that Yahweh commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did-

The people of Israel as a body were going through the death and resurrection experience of the Lord Jesus, through the process of the Passover and Exodus through the Red Sea. Israel ate Passover (Ex. 12:6) [14th Abib], as the Lord died on the cross as the Passover lambs were slain; Israel left Egypt the next day (Num. 33:3) [15th Abib] and journeyed three days (Ex. 8:27) [15th-17th Abib], and the Lord Jesus was three days in the tomb. Israel then came through the Red Sea [17th Abib], connecting with the Lord's being resurrected. As we come out of the baptismal water, we really are united with the resurrected Lord- a new creation. His newness of life, His deliverance and successful exodus from the world- all this becomes ours.

Num 9:6 There were certain men, who were unclean because of the dead body of a man, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day, and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day-
Perhaps these men were Mishael and Elizaphan, who had recently (Lev. 9:1; 10:4) been defiled by burying their cousins Nadab and Abihu. These men are similar to us. We wish to keep the Passover, which for us is the breaking of bread service (1 Cor. 5:8), but we feel the burden of our uncleanness. But this is no barrier to God; He found a way for them to keep it, so eager was He for fellowship with His people. In our times, God has likewise found a way- and that way is through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus which cleanses us and enables us to legitimately have fellowship with God. This desire of God to 'find a way' for His weak people to approach Him is found throughout the Law of Moses, e.g. in the possibility for a very poor person to offer a flour sacrifice rather than a blood one requiring an animal. This is a comfort to us, and should also be a pattern for us in how we deal with the weakness of others.

There is a telling allusion to the provision of Numbers 9 in 2 Chron. 30:3, which states that the majority of people came to keep Passover in the second month "because they could not perform it at that time". This is repeating the essence of Num. 9:6, "and they could not perform the Passover on that day" because they were unclean from touching a dead body. But Hezekiah extrapolates further, and prays that those who were actually unclean could still acceptably partake of the Passover. This is not to say that we can extrapolate the essence of things to allow anything. But clearly we are meant to see that even being unclean doesn't stop fellowship with God, and His desire to fellowship the unclean. His beloved Son likewise broke His bread with the unclean.

This is not the only concession to weakness within the Mosaic law. The intention was that there would be a single sanctuary where sacrifices were to be brought and offered. But there is also provision for local sacrifice of animals (Dt. 12:20–28; compare Ex. 20:22–26; Lev. 17:1–7); and tithes could be sold for money and that money used to buy sacrifices nearer to the sanctuary (Dt. 14:22–26). The overall impression is of a God eager if not desperate for His people to engage with Him, even if His ideal principles and

intentions are compromised. We think of the Lord's teaching that the one talent man should've lent his money out on interest, even though that was contrary to the teaching of the Mosaic law. And that God hasn't changed to this day.

Num 9:7 Those men said to him, We are unclean because of the dead body of a man. Why are we kept back, that we may not offer the offering of Yahweh in its appointed time among the children of Israel?-
"Kept back" in Hebrew has the idea of "diminished". The subtext of these men may be that they considered it unreasonable that God had diminished them by the death of their relatives (see on :6), and now as it were added insult to injury by forbidding them participation in the Passover because they had buried their relatives and were therefore unclean. They of course need not have touched the dead bodies of their relatives; they could have put Passover importance in first place. They chose not to. And yet God graciously allows them a way to still keep the Passover, despite recognizing their uncleanness. See on :9. Their attitude was perhaps not the best- they knew the unclean couldn't eat Passover, but they challenge this, having made themselves unclean. But still God finds a way.

Num 9:8 Moses answered them, Wait, that I may hear what Yahweh will command concerning you-
The command had in a sense already been given- they were unclean, and so were not to partake. But Moses senses that God is beyond legalism and literalism, and is open to fellowship with all- including the difficult and the unclean. And He is aware that God's law is open to reinterpretation and reapplication, and is not at all 'set in stone'.

Num 9:9 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Joseph of Arimathea personally took the Lord's body down from the cross and buried it. His contact with the body meant that he couldn't keep the Passover (Num. 9:9,10). The people would have watched incredulous as one of the leaders of Israel openly showed his preference for the crucified Nazarene as opposed to keeping the Mosaic Law. The phobia for cleanliness at Passover time would have meant that everyone was extremely sensitive to what Joseph did. And these men could have done what he did and accepted that they therefore couldn't partake of the Passover. But they appear to have had another agenda and an objection to God's ways.

Num 9:10 Say to the children of Israel, 'If any man of you or of your generations is unclean by reason of a dead body, or is on a journey far away, he shall still keep the Passover to Yahweh-
It seems from Num. 9:10,13 and the examples of Hezekiah and Josiah's Passovers, that it was more important to keep the Passover even if not everything was being done

exactly in order, even if there was a sense of unworthiness, than to not do it at all. This should be borne in mind when some feel 'unworthy' to take the emblems, or where there are genuine problems in obtaining wine.

Unintentional defilement and also consciously choosing not to keep the feast, by going on a journey at that time, are covered here. After all, the travellers could've just planned not to be on a journey at Passover time. God wanted to make a way for both conscious and unconscious failure. He by all means wants to find a way to as it were break bread with us. That stands in sharp contrast to the way so many churches use access to the bread and wine as a form of judgment and reserve it only for their most tried and trusted members.

Rituals were typically associated with specific dates- and if the date was missed, the ritual was not valid. There was no point, to a religious mindset, of keeping the ritual on another date or in an ammended way. We see here how even within the structure of the Mosaic law, spirituality and the essence of things trumped religion and externalities. After all, Passover was to be the beginning of Israel's year. “This month is hereby for you the first of the months; it is the first, for you, of all the months of the year" (Ex. 12:1). Content triumphed over form, whereas in 'religion', form so often eclipses content. Otherwise, it would have been taught that anyone who missed Passover was to be cut off from his people. We think of how Hezekiah held a delayed Passover in 2 Chron. 30, and asked the Lord to pardon those who kept it "other than it is written", including those who kept it unclean. By contrast, Hittite law specifically forbad keeping any ritual on any other date, for example, if a man was "on a journey": "You who (are) the temple officials: If you do not perform the festivals at the time of the festivals; (if) you do the spring festival in fall, (or) the fall festival in spring, (or) if the right time for doing the festival (has) arrived, and he who is to do it comes to you… and he seizes your knees, (saying) “The harvests (are) before me,” or a marriage *or a journey or some other matter*. “Let me off. Let that matter finish for me, and when that matter is finished for me, I will do the festival thus”: Do not do according to the wishes of (that) man. He must not persuade you. Do not conduct business concerning the will of the gods" [“Instructions to Priests and Temple Officials, 9,” *in* The Context of Scripture, Volume One: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World (ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr.; trans. G. McMahon; Leiden: Brill, 2003) pp. 217–21].

"He shall still keep the Passover" implies the person was to keep it individually. Yet some aspects of the Passover legislation required a collective, communal setting in order to be obeyed. Not least the command to take a lamb large enough for the entire household, to search the family home for yeast etc. We can only conclude that such an individual keeping of Passover was not therefore going to involve strict obedience to all the legislation. The breaking of bread is the new covenant equivalent to Passover. We see here an insight into how God wants man to perceive the essence of things, and to

personally engage with this personal remembrance of salvation. It's why it's quite legitimate to break bread alone, even to baptize oneself. Only the religious and unspiritual mindset will protest against such ideas. None of this takes away from the ideal requirement stressed in Num. 9:2, to keep the feast at the “appointed time... the appointed meeting... in the appointed place". God's ideal intentions must never be forgotten.

We may note that impurity by a dead body could have been dealt with another way. "Those who touch the dead body of any human being shall be unclean seven days. They shall purify themselves with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, and so be clean" (Num. 19:11,12). But here in Numbers 9, this possibility is apparently not mentioned. The idea perhaps is that a recognition of impurity was required- and then the Passover could be kept a month later. Following another ritual in order to get clean... isn't actually required, at least it isn't mentioned.

So we see God so eager to not let human weakness stop His engagement with man. And yet He does ask that the Passover be kept according to its ordinances. We must never allow any kind of reductionism, reducing to the essence, to lead us to think that His demands need not be taken seriously. The men were likely unclean because of a relative's death and burial. The Lord Jesus told the man who wanted to first attend his father's funeral: "Let the dead bury their dead". And demanded the man pick up the cross and follow Him. On one hand, God is very demanding. On the other, He asks for the essence and not the letter.

Num 9:11 In the second month, on the fourteenth day at evening they shall keep it: they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs-
The Passover, as the prototype breaking of bread, featured bitter herbs to remind Israel of their bitter experience in Egypt (Ex. 1:14). The breaking of bread should likewise focus our attention on the fact that return to the world is a return to bondage and bitterness, not freedom. Israel didn't learn this lesson, they forgot the bitterness of Egypt, and longed to return to it. The idea was that the sweetness of the lamb's roasted meat was to assuage the bitterness of the herbs; and we see here prefigured the intended effect of the Lord's sacrifice.

Num 9:12 They shall leave none of it until the morning-
Ex. 12:10 adds: "You shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; but that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire".
There is the possibility of living before God on different levels. Hence nothing was to remain, but God foresaw that some would allow part of the sacrifice to remain. This was a concession to human weakness, and reflects God's awareness of human liability to failure.

Nor break a bone of it. According to all the law of the Passover they shall keep it-
Jn. 19:36 stresses that not a bone of the Lord Jesus was broken when He was crucified. We are the Lord's body, of His flesh and bones (Eph. 5:30). Crucifixion was designed to torture the bones; and yet none was broken. We suffer in Him, but shall not be finally broken. As the Passover lambs were being killed, the Lord died; and it was critical that not a bone of the Passover lambs be broken (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12). John seems so keen to point out that the Lord died as the Passover lamb, and Paul perceives this when stating that He is "our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7). For no bone of the Lord to be broken, the nails driven through His hands [the Greek can refer to the arms or wrists too] would not have been large, and would probably have been driven through the 'Destot gap', the set of nerves in between the large wrist bones. The pain would have been intense at that point. The rough hammering of the nails through that point would have paid no attention to detail; but those hammer blows were Divinely guided so that no bone broke. And this would have been even more amazingly guided for the nails driven through the feet not to break a bone. It was only by the Lord refusing to relieve the pain by pushing down on the sedile that He avoided breaking any bones.

The stress upon the Lord's unbroken bones and His garment not being rent contrasts with the language of crushing, breaking, bruising etc. found in Is. 53, and the breaking of the bread as the symbol of His body broken for us (1 Cor. 10:16), prefigured in the breaking of the bread to feed the multitudes. That breaking, therefore, refers to the breaking of the Lord's heart and mind. He thereby becomes the focus for all the broken hearted.

Num 9:13 But the man who is clean, and is not on a journey, and fails to keep the Passover, that soul shall be cut off from his people. Because he didn't offer the offering of Yahweh in its appointed time, that man shall bear his sin-
There are no examples of God slaying those who didn't keep the Passover. So this cutting off was in His mind. But we note how seriously He viewed not keeping Passover. Those who exclude others from the breaking of bread [the equivalent of Passover under the new covenant] must ponder the position in which they place those whom they cut off. They are hurting them, perhaps eternally. "Shall bear his sin" means to suffer the consequences of his sin (Num. 18:22,32; Lev. 19:17; 20:20; 22:9; 24:15; Ez. 23:49). But the consequence of that sin was in the mind of God, even if it was not shown at the time. Does this mean that those who don't break bread, as the new covenant equivalent of Passover, are rejected by Him? Not necessarily. But the essence of Passover is indeed critical to salvation, and that is, to consciously remember the price paid for our redemption. Otherwise we are trying to bear our sin ourselves, rather than accepting that the blood of the Lamb bears that sin. For clearly it is the Lord on the cross, to whom the Paschal lamb pointed forward, who is the sin bearer. Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate

leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33). Here, being cut off from the people meant 'bearing his sin'- at the last day, before God.

Num 9:14 If a foreigner lives among you, and desires to keep the Passover to Yahweh according to the statute of the Passover, and according to its ordinance, so shall he do. You shall have one statute, both for the foreigner, and for him who is born in the land'- The Passover was open to Gentiles who wished to identify themselves with Israel, and to see in the Red Sea deliverance something of their own deliverance from this world. We should not be exclusive but rather inclusive when it comes to the breaking of bread service which was typified by the Passover. It has been argued that the breaking of bread is the equivalent of the Jewish Passover, and Ex. 12:48 says that only the circumcised could eat of it. Here are a few comments:

- Whatever interpretation we wish to place upon Ex. 12:48, we have to reconcile it with the above evidence for the openness of the Lord Jesus with regard to His table fellowship, using it to bring people to Him, rather than as a test of fellowship or intellectual / moral purity of understanding or living.
- Peter ate with the uncircumcised- and got into trouble with the Judaist brethren exactly because the Law had forbidden the uncircumcised from eating the first Passover (Acts 11:3). The Jews had put a [very large!] hedge around this law by forbidding Jews from eating with Gentiles period. Yet Peter was taught that this was wrong- and he ate with

Gentiles, it seems even before they were baptized. But the point is, he had been taught by the vision that all the old Mosaic category distinctions of clean / unclean, circumcised / uncircumcised, had now been ended. It seems this was as large a challenge to the church in the 1st century as it is in the 21st.
- Although the Passover and memorial meeting are related, the relation is at times by way of contrast rather than only similarity; e.g. in the first Passover, the families were to provide a lamb; whereas in the antitype, the Lord Jesus is the lamb of Divine and not human provision. The Paschal lamb of God takes away the whole world's sin, rather than just providing blood for the temporal redemption of Israel's firstborn, etc.
- Circumcision under the new covenant doesn't refer to anything outward, visibly verifiable. For now "he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. 2:29)- seeing we can't judge the secret things of others' hearts, how can we tell who is circumcised in heart or not? The 'sealing' of God's people today, the proof that they are the Lord's (2 Tim. 2:19), is not anything external, but the internal matter of being sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), or being sealed with a mark in the mind / forehead, as Revelation puts it (Rev. 7:3; 9:4).
- The Gentiles in Israel, circumcised or not, could keep the feast of unleavened bread (Ex. 12:17-20) which was related to the Passover.
- If Ex. 12:48 is read on a literalistic level, i.e. that only the circumcised could eat the Passover, this would surely mean that no female could eat it? Yet this was not the case.
- It's Num 9:14 which speaks in more general terms of whether or not a Gentile could partake of the Passover- and here it's made clear that yes he/she could, and no mention is made of being circumcised: "And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the Passover unto the Lord; according to the statute of the Passover, and according to the ordinance thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one statute, both for the stranger, and for him that is born in the land".
- Commands that were intended for subsequent generations often include the kind of rubric we meet in Ex. 12:14,17: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord: throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever... therefore shall ye observe this day throughout your generations by an ordinance for ever". But we don't meet that 'throughout your generations' with regard to the uncircumcised men not being allowed to eat it.
- Israel were told specifically that the Passover lamb must be roasted and not boiled (Ex. 12:9 uses two distinct words for 'boiled' and 'roasted'.). But the word used in Ex. 12:9 for "boiled" is that used in Dt. 16:7 of how the Passover could be boiled, although many Bible versions misleadingly translate the word there as "roast". The translators need not have feared such contradiction. For it is the contradiction of grace. Here we have another example of where the Passover regulations given in Exodus were specific only to that time at the exodus. Thus a foreigner was not allowed to eat of that sacrifice, but foreigners were welcome to eat of the Passover later.
- So my suggestion is that the command of Ex. 12:48 that no uncircumcised could eat of

the Passover, and that the Gentiles amongst the people should be circumcised if they wanted to eat it, was specific to that first Passover. As Israel and the mixed multitude that went with them sat in Egypt under threat of losing their firstborn sons, they could find salvation by keeping the Passover and entering into covenant with God through circumcision. Both Jewish tradition and the implication of Moses not circumcising his sons is that the Jews in Egypt weren't circumcised; yet "all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised" (Josh. 5:5). Implication would be that many were circumcised in order to keep the first Passover according to the command given them in Ex. 12. We could therefore take Ex. 12:48 as a specific command for those who kept the first Passover to be circumcised, rather than an ongoing principle. The Jewish sage Maimonides (A Guide For The Perplexed Vol. 3 ch. 46) explains: "The reason of the prohibition that the uncircumcised should not eat of it (Exod. xii. 48) is explained by our Sages as follows: The Israelites neglected circumcision during their long stay in Egypt".

- This approach would explain why Num. 9:14 doesn't demand that Gentiles be circumcised to keep future Passovers; why there's no comment that the exclusion of the uncircumcised should be kept "throughout your generations"; and why Ex. 12:50 speaks as if Israel fully obeyed the command about circumcision and Passover eating in a once-off sense when they kept that first Passover. And of course this is the reason for many branches of Judaism welcoming uncircumcised Gentiles to the Passover celebration- for they don't understand Ex. 12:48 to preclude it, but rather Num. 9:14 encourages it.
- This approach also helps answer a difficult question: Why was the lamb or kid kept for four days (Ex. 12:2,6)? If the effects of circumcision take three days to wear off (Gen. 34:25), it could be that the uncircumcised males were intended to circumcise themselves, chose the lamb, and then keep the Passover four days later. Some Jewish commentators claim that God fell in love with Israel whilst she was still in her blood (Ez. 16:6) in that some Jews circumcised themselves at the time of the first Passover- hence one Rabbi speaks of the blood of circumcision and the blood of the first Passover running together.

Num 9:15 On the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, even the Tent of the Testimony, and at evening it was over the tabernacle as if it were the appearance of fire, until morning-

This was "the cloud" which had covered Sinai (s.w. Ex. 24:15,16). Both holy place and most holy were filled. The glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle when it was erected (Ex. 40:34), as it would later fill the temple (2 Chron. 7:1). But it was God's intention that His glory should fill all the earth; the same words are used in Num. 14:21. The apparently intense manifestation of Himself in a specific place was only a foretaste of what He wished to bring about in "all the earth". And yet Judaism misread this as meaning that

His glory was there alone in a specific holy place. They failed to perceive that it was merely a localized foretaste of His intention to make this a universal experience, and the tearing down of the veil at the Lord's death was evidence enough of the progression of this plan. When exiled from the sanctuary, David in his Psalms often perceives that God's glory fills and shall fill all the earth (Ps. 72:19; Hab. 2:14).

Num 9:16 Thus it was continually. The cloud covered it, and the appearance of fire by night-
See on :21. The “pillar of fire” was only “as it were the appearance of fire” (Num. 9:15) but the record elsewhere speaks of it as “fire”, because that’s what it looked like to the Israelites. The Scriptures speak of how a pillar of fire was with Israel in the wilderness (Ps. 105:39). But actually when it first appeared, it was described as “*the appearance* of fire” (Num. 9:15). It wasn’t fire, it appeared as fire. And yet it’s spoken of later simply as “fire”. There’s no inspired footnote reminding us that, well, actually, it wasn’t really fire. Likewise “the mount [of Sinai] burnt with fire” (Dt. 9:15). The mountain didn’t catch fire. But that’s how it looked to the Israelites from a distance; and so that’s how it’s described.

Num 9:17 Whenever the cloud was taken up from over the Tent, then after that the children of Israel took their journey; and in the place where the cloud remained, there the children of Israel encamped-
"Took their journey" is Heb. 'to pull up', alluding to the pulling up of tent pegs. The process of moving onward would have been a major, regular upheaval. They would've preferred to stay where they were. And this is a feature of our wilderness journey after our Red Sea baptism; we are always being moved on further, in various ways. And this goes right against the conservativism which is such a major part of the human condition.

Num 9:18 At the commandment of Yahweh the children of Israel travelled, and at the commandment of Yahweh they encamped. As long as the cloud remained on the tabernacle they remained encamped-
The pillar of cloud was vertical as it stood above the tent of meeting when they encamped, but was spread out as a plume over them as they travelled, shielding them from the desert heat. We could deduce from Num. 10:34,35 that the cloud rose up when Moses commanded it to. They journeyed according to Yahweh's commandments to Moses, and it was he who in turn uttered that commandment to Israel and to the cloud: "The cloud of Yahweh was over them by day, when they set forward from the camp. It happened, when the ark went forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Yahweh" (Num 10:34,35). It wasn't therefore the case that Moses had no idea as to when they were to travel, and that he only knew when the cloud lifted up and went forward. It was rather he

who commanded the cloud to do that. Representing the Lord Jesus, he was in this sense in a position of control over the Angel within the cloud. The idea was that their journey was in response to God's spoken word of command. And we must ask how much our Bible reading influences actual decision making and choices and directions on our journey.

Num 9:19 When the cloud stayed on the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept Yahweh's command, and didn't travel-
To not do something, to sit still, perhaps in a place they would rather leave, is presented as active obedience to a commandment. And in a sense our faithfulness to the Lord Jesus and His return is in some way a waiting game. And we are to wait faithfully.

Num 9:20 Sometimes the cloud was a few days on the tabernacle; then according to the commandment of Yahweh they remained encamped, and according to the commandment of Yahweh they travelled-
The mention of such short stays at one place (here and in :21) was in praise of their obedience. For the work of setting up tents and the tabernacle was significant. To set them up and then immediately have to take them down involved huge effort. There weren't many times during the wilderness journey when this happened; "sometimes" is an example of the generosity of the Divine record towards His people. It was in fact very rare throughout the 38 years wandering.

Num 9:21 Sometimes the cloud was from evening until morning; and when the cloud was taken up in the morning, they travelled: by day and by night, when the cloud was taken up, they travelled-
Ex. 13:21 says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at night, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)? When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud* of *fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:15-17; Dt. 5:22).

Num 9:22 Whether it was two days, or a month, or a year that the cloud stayed on the tabernacle, remaining on it, the children of Israel remained encamped, and didn't travel; but when it was taken up, they travelled-
There was no prior warning how long they were to remain in any one place; sometimes they stayed a year in one place, at other times they had to travel even by night. This was all at the commandment or word of the Lord. If the Red Sea deliverance represents our baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), the wilderness journey is like our journey through life towards the promised land of God's Kingdom. We are led by an Angel, and the path we take is determined by God. Sometimes we are suddenly and unexpectedly asked to move forward; sometimes quickly, travelling by night, as it were; other periods of our lives can appear static and leading nowhere. But in all these situations we are still being led- if we remain obedient to the word of God. They didn't know their itinerary ahead of time, each day and night they would've wondered whether they'd be called to move on or not. Their lives in this sense had no stability. If the Red Sea crossing represents our baptisms then this speaks of our lives afterwards being under God's leadership and guidance, we in that sense cannot map out how we would wish our journey to be.

Num 9:23 At the commandment of Yahweh they encamped, and at the commandment of Yahweh they took up their journey. They kept Yahweh's command, at the commandment of Yahweh by Moses-
A very large community of people would've been very hard to organize; setting up and breaking camp demanded a huge amount of time and effort. When they only remained a short time, even a day, in one place, the tendency would've been to complain 'Must we really break camp and move on so quickly?'. We too are tempted to resent the unstable nature of our lives; for those whose lives are led by the Spirit, as the Angel was in a sense the Spirit of God (Ps. 104:4), life will never be static and boring; even if we geographically remain in one place all our lives, we are being actively led forward by God's direction.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 10

Num 10:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The exercise of prayer is for our benefit. Israel were told to blow trumpets at their feasts, representing prayer, in order that God would hear their prayer and sacrifice, and remember them / take notice of them (Num. 10:10). The blowing of the trumpets didn't of itself remind God about His people; it was an exercise for their benefit. And the God who knows before we ask evidently doesn't need our prayers as a means of information transfer.

Num 10:2 Make two trumpets of silver. You shall make them of beaten work. You shall use them for the calling of the congregation, and for the journeying of the camps-
"Calling of the congregation" is LXX *ekklesia*. This is the word rendered "church" in the New Testament. We could reason from this therefore that "church" specifically refers to a gathering of God's people. At that time and during those moments, they are a church. When the entire community of believers is referred to as "church", this is how God views them- as if they are all gathered together at a gathering or convocation before Him. The word in its Biblical usage therefore doesn't refer to what we might call a denomination or fellowship. The trumpets weren't necessarily identical- see on :3.

The sons of Aaron were to blow the trumpets (:8). There were only two sons of Aaron left at this time, Eleazar and Ithamar. So that might explain why there were only two. In the time of Joshua and David there were seven trumpets used by the priests (Josh. 6:4), and 120 trumpets in Solomon's time (1 Chron. 15:24; 2 Chron. 5:12). So again we see that the command to make two trumpets was not set in stone. It was a principle open to interpretation and development. For again we must note that the law was not a leash, a chain, but rather a springboard towards serving God on our own initiative and interpretation of His basic principles. Although not of course in contradiction to those principles.

Num 10:3 When they blow them, all the congregation shall gather themselves to you at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
The idea is that both of them were blown (cp. :4). This would have made a different sound to just one of them being blown, so we can conclude the trumpets were not identical in sound, and when blown together, produced a very distinctive sound.

Num 10:4 If they blow just one, then the princes, the heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves to you-
"Thousands" is again not a literal numerical term but means "families". This fact means that the 600 "thousands" of men who left Egypt may not mean 600,000. If there were a congregation totalling a few million, two trumpets would not have been heard by them all. I have argued elsewhere that the size of the congregation was much smaller than that.

Num 10:5 When you blow an alarm, the camps that lie on the east side shall go forward-
Lead therefore by Judah who was effectively the firstborn, and from whom the Lord Jesus was to come.

Num 10:6 When you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that lie on the south side shall go forward. They shall blow an alarm for their journeys-

LXX adds "And when you blow the third alarm, the camps on the west shall begin their march; and when ye blow the fourth alarm, the camps on the north shall begin their march".

Num 10:7 But when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but you shall not sound an alarm-
"Blow" here implies short, staccato notes. This looks ahead to the blowing of the trumpet associated with the gathering together of all God's people at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:52), and moving forward into the Kingdom.

Num 10:8 The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets. This shall be to you for a principle forever throughout your generations-
See on :2. If Israel were obedient, they were promised that they would live *in their land* in peace with no oppressors; they would only be oppressed if they were disobedient. So here we have another reflection of God's sensitivity to the weakness of His people; the very structure of His law foresaw their likely weakness, and offered a way out. In this case, it was through the blowing of the trumpets. The perceptive Israelite would have seen that the same blowing of trumpets was what had been done to command Israel to move forward during their wilderness journey (:5). Even in the settled existence in Canaan, they were to still see themselves as on a wilderness journey- just as we should in our settled lives. And when we fail, we are to rally ourselves and move onwards, rather like a 'Play on!' command in some sports, when a player has tumbled and fallen. We have to move on, as quickly as possible.

Num 10:9 When you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets. Then you will be remembered before Yahweh your God, and you will be saved from your enemies-
The "memorial portion" of the offerings was to serve as a reminder to God, as it were, of the covenants which He "remembered". He of course doesn't forget His covenant but ever remembers it (Ps. 105:8 etc.), yet He is presented in human terms as having His memory rekindled, as it were, by human prayer, faith, situations and sacrifices so that He "remembers the covenant" (Gen. 8:1; 9:15; Ex. 2:24; 6:5; Lev. 26:42,45; Num. 10:9 and often). The regular sacrifices were such a "memorial" or 'reminder'- both to God and to His people. The place of prayer, regular sacrifice of giving, breaking of bread at the "memorial meeting" etc., are all equivalents for us under the new covenant.

Num 10:10 Also in the day of your gladness-
The trumpet call was an appeal to God. It wasn't only to be made in times of crisis (:9),

but in good times too. We shouldn't treat God as someone we rush to only in times of crisis, but should share with Him our good times as well as the bad times. The day of gladness could specifically refer to the days when they offered the burnt and peace offerings. Because of its association with the celebration of the forgiveness of sins, the peace offering brought together a variety of emotions, blending joy, sober recognition and gratitude. We therefore find it being offered in both days of gladness and solemnity (Num. 10:10). But normally there is at least some mention of joy connected with the records of the peace offering (2 Chron. 29:35,36; Dt. 27:7).

And in your set feasts, and in the beginnings of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be to you for a memorial before your God. I am Yahweh your God-
Moses speaks in Ex. 18:16 of how "I judge between a man and his neighbour, and I make them know the statutes of God, and His laws". Those laws were not given at the time of Ex. 18, so the passage there is out of chronological order. For the people only arrived at Horeb ("the mountain of God", Ex, 18:5) at the time of Ex. 19:1,2. It was only when they left Horeb on the 20th day of the 2nd month of the 2nd year that Moses established the system of judges as Jethro had advised (Dt. 1:12-15). At the time of Num. 10:11,29, Moses asks Jethro ["Hobab"] to remain with the people as a guide through the desert. I suggest that the events of Ex. 18 should be inserted after Num. 10:10 and before Num. 10:11. In this case the argument between Moses, Aaron and Miriam about Zipporah in Num. 12:1 would have occurred after Zipporah had been accepted again by Moses as his wife.

Num 10:11 It happened in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, that the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of the testimony-
The tent of meeting is sometimes called the tent of the "testimony", a reference to God's word on the tables of stone which were within the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place. Out of all the tabernacle furniture, the symbol of God's word was seen as central. God's word- the Bible, in our times- is to be utterly central to our lives and collective sense of community.

Num 10:12 The children of Israel went forward according to their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud stayed in the wilderness of Paran-
"The LORD came from Sinai and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of His saints (Angels): from His right hand (i.e. the Angels- they ministered the Law) went a fiery law for them" (Dt. 33:2); whilst earlier we only read "And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran" (Num. 10:12). The passage in Dt. 33 almost seems a direct comment on this earlier description.

Num 10:13 They first went forward according to the commandment of Yahweh by Moses-
I will discuss on :34,35 how Yahweh commanded Moses whenever they had to move on or rest, and he as it were commanded the Angel in the cloud. The cloud therefore rose up and then rested over the tent of meeting at the command of Moses, who was repeating the commandment of Yahweh to him.

Num 10:14 First, the standard of the camp of the children of Judah went forward according to their armies. Nahshon the son of Amminadab was over his army-
He was brother-in-law of Aaron (Ex. 6:23), and yet also married to Rahab in order to be the ancestor of David and the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt. 1:4). He was one of the points at which the lines of Judah and Levi converged in the Lord's genealogy, appropriate for Him as a king-priest.

Num 10:15 Nethanel the son of Zuar was over the army of the tribe of the children of Issachar-
'God has given' suggests that he was named in faith that the promised land would indeed be given to Israel. Although the inheritances for the location of the tribal cantons were drawn by lot, it is clear the hand of God was in it. For the inheritances were appropriate to the people given them. Issachar's lot for possession of the land was next to Judah and Zebulun (Josh. 19:17), with whom Issachar had lived and journeyed side by side during the wilderness years (Num. 2:5; 10:15). This opens up the question as to whether we should also draw lots in this age. For God worked through them clearly enough in Joshua's time.

Num 10:16 Eliab the son of Helon was over the army of the tribe of the children of Zebulun-
We note how most of the names feature the 'El' suffix and not 'Yah' or 'Iah'. This is understandable, for Moses declared the Name of Yahweh to the people after most of these men had been born. This kind of artless internal corroboration is to me one of the strongest arguments for the Divine inspiration of the Bible.

Num 10:17 The tabernacle was taken down, and the sons of Gershon and the sons of Merari, who bore the tabernacle, went forward-
The visual image of the tabernacle being taken down stuck in the Lord's mind, and He saw it as a picture of His death on the cross (Jn. 2:19). And the raising up of the tabernacle was to be true in the restoration of "the temple of His body" (Jn. 2:21). We think of Joseph of Arimathea bearing away the Lord's body from the cross.

Num 10:18 The standard of the camp of Reuben went forward according to their armies. Elizur the son of Shedeur was over his army-
"Elizur", 'God is my rock', is a name indicating faith that God would indeed be a rock to Israel. And probably these were names which were taken by choice rather than birth names. But Israel turned back from entering Canaan; their leaders had the names of faith but in reality their faith was weak. And we must ask ourselves whether that is the case with us, having a name that we spiritually live when we are dead.

Num 10:19 Shelumiel the son of Zurishaddai was over the army of the tribe of the children of Simeon-
"God's peace" son of "The Almighty is my rock" could reflect a faithful family, especially considering that Israel were idolaters in Egypt, and carried the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:6-8) and also the tabernacle of Moloch as well as that of Yahweh, the star of Remphan as well as the standards of their tribes (Acts 7:43).

Num 10:20 Eliasaph the son of Deuel was over the army of the tribe of the children of Gad-
Deuel is better Reuel as in Num. 2:14. The Hebrew letters for 'D' and 'R' are easily confused; so here we have an example of slight copying errors in the original texts. But these in no way negate the overall Divine inspiration of the texts.

Num 10:21 The Kohathites set forward, bearing the sanctuary. The others set up the tabernacle before they arrived-
"The sanctuary" is put for the especially holy items of furniture within it; for the actual structure of the sanctuary was carried by others (:17).

Num 10:22 The standard of the camp of the children of Ephraim set forward according to their armies. Elishama the son of Ammihud was over his army-
Elishama was Joshua's grandfather (1 Chron. 7:26). "God who hears" reflects Moses' message that God had indeed heard the crying of the Israelites in Egypt. This was likely a name change after acceptance of Moses' teaching.

Num 10:23 Gamaliel the son of Pedahzur was over the army of the tribe of the children of Manasseh-
"Gamaliel" is 'God is my reward', named in hope that the promised reward of the Kingdom would indeed be given.

Num 10:24 Abidan the son of Gideoni was over the army of the tribe of the children of Benjamin-

The names associated with the leadership of Benjamin and Naphtali (:24,27) stand out as not having any spiritual reference in them. Israel were very spiritually weak as they left Egypt and it is likely that the more spiritual names we read of in this list were the result of name changes. But the leaders of these two tribes didn't do that.

Num 10:25 The standard of the camp of the children of Dan, which was the rear guard of all the camps, set forward according to their armies. Ahiezer the son of Ammishaddai was over his army-

"Ammishaddai" means 'People of the Almighty', using the term *shaddai* which is often associated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He may well have been one of the faithful few who kept perceiving the vital separation of God's people from Egypt, whereas the majority in their hearts returned to Egypt and wished to assimilate with them in order to escape persecution and have what they imagined was a good life.

Num 10:26 Pagiel the son of Ochran was over the army of the tribe of the children of Asher-

Pagiel ['accident of God'] was son of Ochran, 'muddler'. As discussed on :27, people had multiple names and were known by the 'name' they carved for themselves in life, and the attitudes they had. God makes no accidents; so maybe in depression and bitterness this man felt like this, and was known for it. Hardly a great example to the tribe he was supposed to be leading. And indeed Asher all but disappears from Israel.

Num 10:27 Ahira the son of Enan was over the army of the tribe of the children of Naphtali-

What mother would have named her child Nabal (fool), or Ahira (brother of evil), or 'sickness' or 'wasting' (Mahlon and Chilion)? These names were either given to them by others and the use adopted by God, or simply God in the record assigned them such names. The names associated with the leadership of Benjamin and Naphtali (:24,27) stand out as not having any spiritual reference in them. Israel were very spiritually weak as they left Egypt and it is likely that the more spiritual names we read of in this list were the result of name changes. But the leaders of these two tribes didn't do that.

Num 10:28 Thus were the travels of the children of Israel according to their armies, and they went forward-

LXX "These are the armies of the children of Israel; and they set forward with their forces". The military analogies are continual. It was God's ideal intention that they should now march to Canaan and enter it as an army. The fact they turned away from

this potential was tragic. So much Divine hope and carefully prepared potential was wasted, just as it is in so many lives. We marvel at His patience in continuing to try with so many people.

Num 10:29 Moses said to Hobab, the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying to the place of which Yahweh said, 'I will give it to you'. Come with us, and we will treat you well; for Yahweh has spoken good concerning Israel-
Num. 10 and 11 seem to portray Moses in weakness. He pleads with his brother in law not to leave them, because without him they would not know where to camp in the wilderness; "thou mayest be to us instead of eyes". Yet the Angels are God's eyes, they were seeking out resting places for Israel in the wilderness; the record reminds us of this straight afterwards (Num. 10:33). Jethro elsewhere suggested that Moses needed more help in leading the people because otherwise fading thou wilt fade away' (Ex. 18:18 A.V.mg.); at the end of his days, the record seems to highlight the untruth of this by commenting that his natural strength was not faded (Dt. 34:7). So Jethro's advice wasn't always spiritual.
10:31 suggests Moses saw Jethro's knowledge of the desert as better than the Angelic " eyes" of Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3) who were going ahead of the camp to find a resting place (Num. 10:33 cp. Ex. 33:14 cp. Is. 63:9). It seems Moses recognized his error in this on the last day of his life, when he admits Yahweh, not Jethro's wisdom, had led them (Dt. 1:33). Likewise Paul in his final communication comments on the way that Mark with whom he had once quarelled was profitable to him (2 Tim. 4:11).

Num 10:30 He said to him, I will not go; but I will depart to my own land, and to my relatives-
There's something very sad about this; Hobab could've identified himself with Israel and shared a place in the promised land with them, if he had travelled with them through the wilderness. But he preferred his own family rather than God's family, and so he turned back. We too invite people to share our future hope, but they turn back, even if they journey with us for a while as Hobab did with Israel. See on :32.

Num 10:31 He said, Don't leave us, please, because you know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you can be to us instead of eyes-
This may have been a moment of weakness in Moses, for the Angel went before Israel to find them camping places (:33), and the Angels are God's eyes (2 Chron. 16:9; Rev. 4:6-8). Like Moses, we tend to seek for human guidance in our wilderness journey, rather than trusting in God's Angelic Spirit guidance of us.

In this time of final spiritual maturity, Moses was keenly aware of his own spiritual failings (as Paul and Jacob were in their last days). This is one of the great themes of

Moses in Deuteronomy. He begins his Deuteronomy address by pointing out how grievously they had failed thirty eight years previously, when they refused to enter the good land. He reminds them how that although God had gone before them in Angelic power (Dt. 1:30,33), they had asked for their spies to go before them. And Moses admits that this fatal desire for human strength to lead them to the Kingdom "pleased me well" (Dt. 1:23). It seems to me that here Moses is recognizing his own failure. Perhaps he is even alluding to his weakness in wanting Jethro to go before them "instead of eyes", in place of the Angel-eyes of Yahweh (Num. 10:31-36). Moses at the end was aware of his failures. And yet he also shows his thorough appreciation of the weakness of his people. Moses admits at the end that Israel's faithless idea to send out spies "pleased me well"- when it shouldn't have done (Dt. 1:23,32,33). He realized more and more his own failure as he got older.

Num 10:32 It shall be, if you go with us, yes, it shall be, that whatever good Yahweh does to us, we will do the same to you-
Rom. 11:22 may allude here: "Towards you goodness, if you continue in His goodness". The context is likewise- Gentiles being invited to share in the goodness planned for Israel. And refusing it, for the most part, as Hobab did. See on :30.

Num 10:33 They set forward from the Mount of Yahweh three days' journey. The ark of the covenant of Yahweh went before them three days' journey, to seek out a camping place for them-
Both the ark and the cloud with the Angel in it went before them. The Angel was clearly personally associated with the shekinah glory between the cherubim over the ark, and the departure of the glory from the temple in Ezekiel's time is described in terms of the Angel cherubim leaving. See on :29; Ps. 132:8. The Angels have worked out every victory for us in prospect- we have to have the faith to go ahead and act, believing that they have acted, even when there is no visible evidence. Our works must therefore repeat those which our Angels have done previously- hence their great interest in us. The Angel brought Israel "forth out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them" (Ez. 20:6); the Angel in the ark "went before them in the three days journey to search out a resting place for them" (Num. 10:33). Yet Israel still had to send out human spies, and carefully "describe the land in a book" (Josh. 18:4-8).

But the Angel and the glory of Yahweh clearly looked ahead to the Lord Jesus. He didn't exist at that time, and was greater than Angels; Heb. 1 is clear that He was not an Angel. "I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:1,2) clearly alludes to the scene here. The Lord went to the cross, and thence to Heaven, to prepare us the rest / camping place which Joshua couldn't ultimately give Israel in Canaan (Heb. 4:8). "Camping place" is s.w. "rest", used of Canaan (Dt. 12:9; Gen. 49:15). The ultimate resting place of God's glory, in those days manifest in an Angel, will be in the Kingdom of God upon earth at the

Lord's return (s.w. Is. 11:10 "His rest shall be glorious"; Is. 32:18). But even in this life, the resting place of God is in hearts which have come under the dominion of the King, becoming thereby His Kingdom (s.w. Is. 66:1).

In their faithlessness, Israel failed to learn the lesson from the ark and cloud going before them to search or spy out their resting place. They wanted human eyes to "spy out" the land (Num. 13:2). "Spy out" is the word used of how the ark and Angel in the cloud were ever going before Israel to "search out a resting place" (Num. 10:33; Dt. 1:33), and that resting place ultimately referred to the inheritance of Canaan. It was God Himself who had spied out the land for them (Ez. 20:6 s.w.). But they insisted upon empirical, human spying out. This insistence upon empirical evidence is not the stuff of faith, and led to their spiritual failure in this context. "Of every tribe" excluded Levi, because they were not going to inherit any land possession.

The cloud was both in front of them and over them (:34), because it was over the ark which moved in the midst of them; just as Yahweh is both in the present and in the future, as His Name suggests. "Camping place" is literally "rest", a term used for inheritance of the Kingdom and land. Deuteronomy often speaks of Israel entering their "rest". The entire journey through the desert, every step of the way, every point of the itinerary, was intended to lead Israel to enter their "rest". The fact they chose not to enter the rest was therefore a waste of all the work the Lord had done with them on the journey.

Num 10:34 The cloud of Yahweh was over them by day, when they set forward from the camp-
The pillar of cloud was vertical as it stood above the tent of meeting when they encamped, but was spread out as a plume over them as they travelled, shielding them from the desert heat. We could deduce from Num. 10:34,35 that the cloud rose up when Moses commanded it to. They journeyed according to Yahweh's commandments to Moses, and it was he who in turn uttered that commandment to Israel and to the cloud: "The cloud of Yahweh was over them by day, when they set forward from the camp. It happened, when the ark went forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Yahweh" (Num 10:34,35). It wasn't therefore the case that Moses had no idea as to when they were to travel, and that he only knew when the cloud lifted up and went forward. It was rather he who commanded the cloud to do that. Representing the Lord Jesus, he was in this sense in a position of control over the Angel within the cloud. This command over the Angel was part of the same theme that we see in how Moses negotiated with God over the salvation of Israel. See on :36.

Num 10:35 It happened, when the ark went forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Yahweh-
David thought that the bringing of the ark to Zion could have been its' final

homecoming- although Solomon his son let everything down in reality. “Arise O Lord into Your rest” in Ps. 24:8 alludes to “Rise up, O Lord” in Num. 10:35. The travelling of the ark was intended to have come to a permanent rest in the sanctuary. But David and Solomon failed to appreciate that God preferred to keep on the move, and not to be tied down by mere religion.

It's unclear if the final verses of this chapter refer just to the initial journey of Israel with the ark until they came to the borders of the land. It's tempting to see them as a general statement of what happened throughout the 38 years journey. In which case we marvel at God's grace- that the condemned were still led by the cloud, their feet didn't swell, they were still protected from the sun by day and the cold at night. How God treats the condemned is truly the measure of Him.

And let your enemies be scattered! Let those who hate you flee before you!-
The fleeing of the Egyptians from Israel in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27) was to be repeated in all Israel's conflicts with their enemies; every time, the essence of the Red Sea deliverance [which was by grace alone, as Israel then were so weak spiritually] was to be repeated throughout the history of God's people (Num. 10:35; Dt. 28:7).

We would rather there were a third way. But *as far as God is concerned*, there is none. None would say they hate God; not even the atheist. Yet God sees those who love the world as hating Him. Likewise the Bible speaks of the world as being sinful and actively hating God, whereas to human eyes the world is for the most part ignorant. Thus the Canaanite nations did not know much about the God of Israel, and yet they are described as actively hating Him (Num. 10:35 NIV; Ps. 68:1).

Num 10:36 When it rested, he said, Return, Yahweh, to the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel-
As discussed on :34, this could be read as Moses commanding the spread out cloud which went before them to return to the camp and make them rest there. But they journeyed "at the commandment of Yahweh" to Moses, and his commanding the Angel in the cloud to stop and start was therefore reflective of the commandment he had received from God.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 11

Num 11:1 The people started complaining in the ears of Yahweh-
The phrase "the people" is almost always used about Israel in their weak sinfulness. This is a classic example. Which highlights God's grace in telling Pharaoh "Let My people go... he did / did not let the people go". Weak as they were, God was still intent on delivering them.

They doubtless grumbled amongst themselves. But what we say secretly, as we think, to ourselves and to each other is spoke right into the ears of God Himself. What they said is recorded in Ps. 78:19,20, although this is probably the record of how God interpreted their thoughts, rather than their actual words, which is what He does to us to, looking to the implication of our positions: "They spoke against God. They said, Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, so that waters gushed out, and streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Will He provide flesh for His people?". For sure they didn't think they were whispering this in God's ears. You speak in another's ear when you are privately whispering. They whispered to each other in their "murmuring in their tents", but God saw this as whispering in His ear. This is how closely God listens to every conversation and secret thought. This lack of ultimate privacy is a great comfort to the spiritual person. We have His ear, we have the intimacy of someone who knows another well enough to whisper a private thought into their ear.

Their complaint was that they had no meat. But this is related to their wilful memory that they had eaten flesh to the full by the flesh pots of Egypt. Their complaint wasn't so much that they wanted a more varied diet, but that they wanted the life and food of Egypt (:20), and were looking for any excuse to legitimize the fact that they had in their hearts returned to Egypt.

When Yahweh heard it, His anger was kindled; and Yahweh's fire burnt among them, and consumed some of those in the outskirts of the camp-
The implication could be that it was those who camped furthest away from the tabernacle who complained. An encampment of very many people (:21) would've been large, and for them to walk to the tabernacle would've been quite a journey. If we are wholeheartedly devoted to God, we won't want to be on the edge of God's people, just peripherally associated with the things of God. The fire represented their own lust. They were consumed with their lusts, and their consumption by Divine fire mirrored that.

Num 11:2 The people cried to Moses, and Moses prayed to Yahweh, and the fire abated-
The people cried... Moses prayed- and the Divine plague ceased. This is exactly the sequence of activity during the plagues- Moses had learnt previously about such intercession for others suffering the result of sin, and now that lesson was being used in the personal growth plan God had for Moses. We too find that situations are arranged by providence to test what we learnt at some earlier point. In this case, however, the people of the Lord were acting the same as Pharaoh and the Egyptians. The thoughtful Israelite would've perceived this, and realized that Israel's salvation was grace indeed, seeing that they were behaving in the same way as the Egypt which they had been saved out of.

AV "the fire was quenched". Fire which is *not* quenched represents total destruction in condemnation (Is. 66:24; Jer. 17:27; Mk. 9:43). The idea therefore is that thanks to

Moses' intercession, these people were saved from what would otherwise have been eternal condemnation. Those whose faith is commended for quenching fire (Heb. 11:34) are those who quenched what would otherwise have been permanent condemnation of others. We therefore conclude that to some extent, some can be saved from a condemnation they would otherwise experience- by the intercession of others (Jude 23). It was because of the faith of the friends that the paralyzed man was forgiven his sins (Mk. 2:5). In some cases, we can play the critical factor in saving a person from eternal condemnation as Moses did here.

Num 11:3 The name of that place was called Taberah, because Yahweh's fire burnt among them-
As explained on :2, the burning of Yahweh's fire represented condemnation. And third parties can save others from this- in some cases, by Yahweh's grace.

Num 11:4 The mixed multitude that was among them lusted exceedingly; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who will give us flesh to eat?-
This group are spoken of as if they were separate from "Israel". The Israelites camped according to their tribes, and therefore this group perhaps camped and travelled separately. But their attitude rubbed off upon the main Israelite group. For this incident is spoken of as the lust of *Israel* (Ps. 78:30). The lusts [Heb. 'coveting'] of others became the lusts of Israel. And we see a clear bridge over the centuries to our own day, where the fads and passions of our fellows so easily come to be ours. The essence of their complaint was seen as effectively saying "Why did we leave Egypt?" (:20). Their complaint about a boring diet was essentially a desire to return to Egypt. And in any case, they are recorded as having huge herds when they left Egypt (Ex. 12:38; 17:3) and also when they entered the land (Num. 32:1). At Sinai they were warned not to let their herds come near the mountain (Ex. 19:13; 34:3). They had meat to eat. But they were saying they expected it from God. They were making an excuse to return to Egypt.

Num 11:5 We remember the fish-
"Remember" is nearly always used of remembering Yahweh and His work in Egypt, and of His remembrance of Israel. But memory is selective, and they preferred to "remember the fish", one of the few good experiences out of a host of awful experiences in Egypt. They were commanded instead to "remember" their affliction in Egypt (s.w. Dt. 5:15; 7:18; 8:2; 15:15; 16:3). But out of that mass of memories, they chose to "remember" the fish and they forgot their God. Perceptions are selective, and those who turn away from God do so because they focus upon one small aspect of experience or memory, and ignore the vast majority of the data. God's commandments to "remember" their affliction rather than "the fish" indicates that we are not powerless in the formation of memory and understanding. We can play a conscious role in the formation of our

own memory and understanding- if we have a heart for God and His ways rather than for Egypt.

Which we ate in Egypt for nothing-
It was only free because they were given it to eat in their slave camps whilst doing brutal labour. This is as bizarre as a concentration survivor remembering the 'free' food they were given whilst incarcerated. Truly, human beings tend to focus on one aspect and forget the rest. They weren't even given straw to make bricks, so it was only a highly selective memory that focused on some occasion when they got free fish in Egypt. The only other reference to fish in Egypt is when the river stunk with dead fish at the time of the plague of Ex. 7:17. Maybe the Hebrews ate them. But this is how wrong and faithless narratives are constructed in the human mind- focusing upon a single incident and extrapolating it to be a general rule of how things were or how a person was. Again, the Bible's psychological credibility and reality is remarkable.

We noted on :4 that the attitude of the "mixed multitude" spread to the Israelites. Perhaps it has been "well" for them in Egypt, and perhaps indeed they had eaten fish for free. But that wasn't the case for the Hebrews. But the Hebrews had adopted the narrative of the freeborn Egyptians as their own, because it was convenient for them and their own agenda of returning to Egypt. Again we see the psychological credibility of the text. For we see all around us individuals absorbing the narrative of others, and making it their own. Rather than facting their own actual historical narrative in the context of their relationship with their loving God.

The cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic;-
Their argument was that they missed the diversity of diet in Egypt. The singular "manna" stands in contrast to the diversity they liked to imagine they had experienced in Egypt. The argument for diversity is so often from the flesh- e.g. rather than monogamous marriage, the flesh argues for diversity of sexual experience. Rather than God's word being our ultimate standard of truth, the flesh wants a wide variety of 'truths'. See on 2 Pet. 2:1. They forgot their misery in the slave camps of Egypt, and imagined life had been much better there than it was. In our weakness, there are times on our wilderness journey towards the Kingdom when we look back to this world and think it was all far better than it was. The Passover was to be eaten with bitter herbs to remind them of the bitterness of Egypt / the world. But because they weren't living in the spirit of the Passover, they liked to imagine that Egypt had in fact not been bitter but instead spicy and sweet.

The illogicality of going back to the world is brought out by the illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses. Israel rejected Moses because it was easier to stay where they were. Such is the strength of conservatism in human nature; such is our innate weakness of will and resolve. They rejected the idea of leaving Egypt because they thought it was better than it was, they failed to face up to how much they were suffering (Num. 11:5).

And our apathy in responding to Christ's redemptive plan for us is rooted in the same problem; we fail to appreciate the seriousness of sin, the extent to which we are in slavery to sin- even though the evidence for this is all around us.

Num 11:6 but now we have lost our appetite-
This is typical whining. They had lost their appetite, and yet they considered the food of Egypt to be so desirable. They were insatiable, as spoilt children. AV "our soul is dried away" could imply the manna was dry. But this was just their pouting complaint, for it tasted creamy, like fresh oil (:8).

There is nothing at all except this manna to look at-
In the same way as Israel became ungrateful for the manna and became bored with it, so we can become bored with God's word in Christ which it represents (Jn. 6:63 and context). It all can become the same old scene- unless we remember the daily miracle God is performing in giving us His word and guiding us as Israel were daily guided by the fire and cloud, with His presence clearly amongst them. These things were soon taken for granted by them. We at times long for a more visible declaration of God's presence in our lives; but Israel had this daily, and yet it didn't result in their faith remaining. For faith isn't related to what we can see with our eyes (Heb. 11:1,2).

Num 11:7 The manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like the appearance of bdellium-
This description of the manna is an answer to their complaint that the manna was dry and not appealing visually (:6). It was moist, tasting like cream with fresh oil, and had a wonderful appearance. The idea may be that it was like a crystal, hard on the outside; but in fact soft inside (:8). The manna represents both the Lord Jesus and God's word; apparently hard on the outside to the eyes of the cynic, but in fact fresh oil within (:8). "Manna", literally "What is it?", suggests they never really grasped what it was. It was the revelation of Yahweh's grace to them, in that despite their deep apostacy and unbelief, He was daily feeding and saving them. And so the Lord Jesus likens Himself to the manna in Jn. 6, seeing that He was likewise not comprehended by Israel. The colour would have been as GNB "whitish yellow".

Num 11:8 The people went around, gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in mortars, and boiled it in pots, and made cakes of it. Its taste was like the taste of fresh oil-
The freshness of the taste was to demonstrate that it had been created specifically for them every morning. This is in commentary upon their complaint in :6 AV "our soul is dried away", which could imply the manna was dry. But this was just their pouting complaint, for it tasted creamy, like fresh oil.

Num 11:9 When the dew fell on the camp in the night, the manna fell on it-
The word for "fell" is that used of God Himself coming down (Num. 11:17,25; 12:5). They were rejecting God's coming down to them through His daily provision. To reject the manna was to reject God. "Fell on" is the idea used by the Lord Jesus when He speaks of how as the manna came down from Heaven, so did He. But just as the manna "fell [down]", so did the dew. And dew doesn't float down from Heaven, it is formed upon earth. So it was with the manna, and so also with the Lord Jesus. He was "from" Heaven in that He was sent from God, but He didn't personally pre-exist, and His 'coming down from Heaven' like the manna doesn't at all imply that He personally floated down from Heaven, nor that He existed physically before His birth.

Num 11:10 Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, every man at the door of his tent; and the anger of Yahweh was kindled greatly; and Moses was displeased-
The idea is as in GNB "Moses heard all the people complaining as they stood around in groups at the entrances of their tents. He was distressed because the LORD had become angry with them". The time of Num. 10 and 11 was a spiritually low period for Moses. Consider Num. 10:30; 11:11-13,22,23. Yet in these very chapters there seems almost an emphasis on the fact that God was manifest in Moses: “Moses heard the people weep”; but they wept in the ears of Yahweh (Num. 11:10,18); “it displeased the Lord; and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased” (11:1,10) shows the connection between them; God has asked Moses to carry Israel “as a nursing father... unto the land” (11:12), although Yahweh was their father who would carry them to the land (Dt. 32:6; Hos. 11:1). That Yahweh is manifest in His servants *even in their times of weakness* is both comforting and sobering. It is because of this principle that an apostate Israel caused Yahweh’s Name *which they carried* to be mocked in the Gentile world (Ez. 20:39; 36:20; 39:7; 43:8). Yahweh did not take that Name away from them the moment they sinned. Having been baptized into the Name, our behaviour in the world, whether they appreciate it or not, is therefore a constant exhibition of the Name.

Num 11:11 Moses said to Yahweh, Why have You dealt with Your servant so badly? Why haven’t I found grace in Your sight- for You lay the burden of all this people on me?-
Moses argues that because God had laid the burden of His people on his shoulders, this was such a curse as to disprove God's claim to have lavished grace upon Moses (Num. 11:11). But the language of God's people being laid upon a man's shoulders as a burden is in fact the language of the cross. Moses was therefore rejecting the cross. He bitterly complains that the people are God's, not his, and therefore it is unreasonable for God to expect Moses to carry them and feed them (:11-13). He didn't want to manifest God, nor

do the work of Messiah (Is. 40:11), even though he was intended to be the prophet like unto Messiah (Dt. 18:18).

Moses earlier had had the same doubt, as to whether he had really found grace in God's sight; and God had magnificently assured Moses that indeed he had (Ex. 33:13-17). Yet Moses still struggled to accept this; the complex difficulties of his life coupled with what appears to have been some form of depression led him to again doubt it. We too struggle with accepting our salvation by pure grace; one moment we may grasp it, but life's difficulties trigger again the old doubt. Only perhaps at the day of judgment, as he see ourselves as it were from outside of ourselves, standing in the promised land of God's Kingdom, shall we finally realize that all is ultimately OK, His grace to me is for real.

Earlier, Moses had complained about this burden, and the answer had been to follow Jethro's advice in appointing a huge number of elders and judges. The same word for "burden" is used in Dt. 1:12: "How can I myself alone bear your encumbrance and your burden and your strife?". He had felt in Dt. 1:9 that "I am not able to bear you myself alone. And so Jethro had advised Moses to appoint elders so that "they shall bear the burden with you" (s.w. Ex. 18:22).

Jethro had observed how stressed Moses was with the burdens of the people, and we get the sense that they were at constant strife amongst themselves. Moses' sense of inability to bear the effects of the sins of the people could be read as a desire for the Messianic figure who would bear those sins and their effects; which was to come to full term in the sin carrying of the Lord Jesus on the cross. For the "burden" was of sin (s.w. Ps. 38:4). These feelings of Moses were not of themselves to be read as frustration or weakness; for the same words are used of how God Himself was weary of bearing the "encumbrance" of His people (s.w. Is. 1:14). Moses was sharing God's feelings.

But Moses didn't respond to this burden as he might have done; for now in frustration he asks God to slay him, as he just couldn't bear the "burden" of the people (s.w. Num. 11:11). God responded at that point by giving 70 Spirit endowed elders to assist Moses (Num. 11:16), and we can assume this was because the sharing of the "burden" with a system of many elders (as suggested by Jethro and as described in Dt. 1:13-16) hadn't worked. Because those men were themselves weak and unspiritual.

Moses had asked the same question in Ex. 5:22. He struggled with God not doing what He promised straight away. He wanted it right away, and failed to see that any delay which allowed evil to continue could be legitimate. This question lurked within Moses, and it seems at times he only wanted to be part of God's plan if it was going to work out when and how he expected and assumed. This is why Israel rejected a suffering Messiah, and why so many stumble at God today. Because they lack the humility to

trust in God and accept their own assumptions of how things should be may be very wrong and short termist.

We note the continued complaint about "all this people". Moses uses the term in :11,12,13 and :14. He is again repeating the words of Jethro in Ex. 18:23, who urged Moses to appoint many judges so that "all this people" could have peace. But Jethro's advice was wrong and didn't work. Jethro had told Moses that he couldn't do it and would wear away... and now Moses feels like this. He allowed Jethro's perception of him to become reality, just as so many people do. In his maturity in Dt. 1:12 [see comments there], Moses accepts he had made the mistake of absorbing Jethro's view that he could not carry the people alone, and had become suicidal about it [as recorded here in Num. 11]. But later in Dt. 1 he glories in the way that *God* had "carried" the people. He ought to have trusted in him, rather than the impractical advice of his father in law. We note he likewise wanted Jethro to lead Israel through the desert and to be to them "instead of eyes"; when the Angel eyes of Yahweh were to guide them through the desert. He was clearly wrong influenced by this mere man, just as many are, and come to see themselves as others see them.

Num 11:12 Have I conceived all this people? Have I brought them forth, that You should tell me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing infant', to the land which You swore to their fathers?-
This very much sounds as if Moses sees himself as a childminder who is being unreasonably asked to bear with a difficult child. And he is handing back the child to the parent, as if to say "You get on with it, I'm done". Clearly he has the sense that Yahweh has been unreasonable in His expectations of Moses; and yet the next chapter will tell us Moses was earth's humblest man, or made humble, through such struggles with depression. His distancing from the people contrasts with how when *God* decides to disown His people, it is Moses who offers his own salvation for the people in order to change God's desire to destroy them. We see here the amazing mutuality between God and Moses. They each get to a point where they want to disown Israel and give up, and at that point they encourage each other to endure.

Moses is depressed by Israel complaining at how boring the manna was. He doubts God's earlier promises to him: "Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight (God said he had, in Ex. 33:17)... have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto them, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers (not "our"- notice the uncharacteristic separation between Moses and Israel). Whence should I give flesh unto all this people... if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in the sight (as God had earlier promised him that he had)" (Num. 11:12). God was the father and conceiver of Israel, the one who would carry them to the land (Ex. 19:4; 33:15; Dt.

32:11,12; Hos. 11:1); it is as if Moses is saying: They're your children, you look after them, don't dump them on me. Although compare this with his earlier love for them, willing to sacrifice himself for them. God then says that He will provide more food for Israel. But Moses almost mocks God: "Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them?". And the Angel angrily replied: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not". If he had faith, Moses surely would have realised that if God could provide manna, he could provide any food. Moses seems to have suffered from fits of depression and also high spirituality.

We note the alternative reading of the LXX, quoted in Acts 13:18: "as a nursing father He [God] carried them in the wilderness". It was God who carried the people, but Moses had been trying to do it in his own strength, without sharing it fully with God. We note how God is likened to a woman, a nursing mother, of a very difficult infant child; although as God He is presented as a "father". In those days it was common for a wealthy woman to employ another woman to be a 'nursing mother' for her infant child. But God likens Himself to such a woman, or to a poor woman who couldn't afford to hire such a woman.

Num 11:13 From where can I get meat to give to all this people? For they weep to me, saying, 'Give us meat, that we may eat'-
The disciples had the same question- from where to find food to feed a great multitude in the desert (Mk. 8:4). If their minds had been more spiritually attune, they would have perceived that they were in essence in the same situation as Moses- and God would likewise provide. The more we are familiar with Scripture, the more we will realize that our life situations and the crises we face have in fact been faced and overcome, in essence, in previous Biblical situations.

Num 11:14 I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me-
This complaint of Moses had supposedly been answered by Jethro's suggestion to appoint elders "to share the load with you" (Ex. 18:22); and I suggested that Ex. 18 is out of chronological sequence, and should be inserted between Num 10:10 and Num. 10:11 (see note there). But in reality, Jethro's secular advice hadn't worked. Moses accepts Jethro's advice on the basis that he will "surely wear away"; even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7), and God surely would not have asked him to do the impossible. So Jethro is presented as wrong on this point, and perhaps Moses need not have taken his advice. Jethro at this time seems to have seen Yahweh as only one of many gods; he was a pagan priest. He prophesied that if Moses followed his advice, "all this people shall go to their place in peace"(Ex. 18:23)- which they didn't.

Depression is not a sin. Moses was depressed and suicidal in Num. 11:14,17 but there is no word of rebuke from God. He saw why Moses was like that- because of an over-

extension of himself in doing his Father's work. Depression may bring about an inability to feel, which makes the prayers of David seem so far removed from us. Yet again, depression isn't a sin. It's how we are at some times. It shouldn't be allowed to hinder us from praying.

Num 11:15 If You treat me this way, please kill me right now, if I have indeed found grace in Your sight; and don't let me see my wretchedness-
"If You..." definitely uses the female rather than male form of "You", as the rabbinic commentaries note often. It seems Moses is saying that God has given birth to Israel, so He as their mother should carry them and not palm off the work onto Moses. To use the female form for God in this context is therefore highly sarcastic if not blasphemous.

Here we surely have Moses in depression; but God doesn't seem to rebuke him (although He does rebuke him for other failures at other times). He recognizes our humanity with incredible sensitivity; and depression isn't sin. Despite Moses' anger with God- GNB "so that I won't have to endure your cruelty any longer". God likewise overlooked similar statements by Job. We also need to cut folk some slack when they come out with such statements under duress.

Num 11:16 Yahweh said to Moses, Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you-
The Hebrew officers of Ex. 5:15 refused to beat their brethren and so were beaten. In Num. 11:16, a point soon after the time of the exodus in Ex. 5:15, there is the assumption that there was already a group of 70 elders or officers over Israel. Presumably these 70 were the 70 Hebrew officers who were placed over the Israeli team slaves. So their taking beating for their brethren became the qualification for eldership in the new Israel who emerged from the Red Sea. This is the real qualification for leadership...

Possession of the Spirit did not mean that someone was necessarily acceptable in God's sight, e.g. Saul possessed it for a time (1 Sam. 10:10) as did the judges of Israel (Num. 11:17) although they were not righteous; they did not believe the report of Joshua and Caleb and therefore were condemned to die like the other Israelites, despite their having the Spirit - Psalm 82:1-7 says as much.

The system proposed by Jethro didn't really work, because Moses again felt the burden was too great for him (see on Num. 11:11), and so these 70 Spirit filled elders were appointed (Num. 11:16). But this too didn't really work; because in Dt. 17:11; 21:5 we seem to read of the priests effectively being the judges, under the direct control of Moses and Aaron.

Num 11:17 I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit which is on you, and will put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you not bear it yourself alone-

In Rom. 8:26, Paul writes of how the Spirit "helps our infirmities". The Greek word for "helps" occurs in the LXX of Ex. 18:22 and Num. 11:17, where Moses is the one helped. Paul is suggesting that each believer can rise up to the pattern of Moses; he was no longer to be seen by Jewish believers as some distant, untouchable, stellar example of devotion. He was a pattern that through the Spirit could be realistically attained; although the point is being cleverly made that he too had weakness that needed Divine help.

When we read that God will not place too great a burden upon us, but will provide a way of escape so that we are able to bear the burden (1 Cor. 10:13), the allusion is clearly to Num. 11:17 LXX, where Moses is provided with helpers so that he will be able to bear the burden of the people.

Num 11:18 Say to the people, 'Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow, and you will eat flesh; for you have wept in the ears of Yahweh, saying, Who will give us flesh to eat? For it was well with us in Egypt. Therefore Yahweh will give you flesh, and you will eat-

This command to sanctify themselves may be somehow sarcastic. Because the flesh they were being given to eat was effectively their condemnation. They were given flesh to eat as they desired, and it was to be their destruction. This is typical of how God condemns people- He gives them what they themselves desire, so that they condemn themselves. For His focus is upon saving and not condemning. The Lord Jesus may allude here in saying that He was offering *His* flesh to eat, and through absorbing Him, there would be no hunger nor desire to please the flesh.

"It was well with us"- in a land where they been abused, raped and murdered. Here we see how human memory is so biased. We create narratives about the past, our own past and that of others, even a very recent past as in this example, which may be absolutely untrue. Yet we are utterly convinced of them. Moses has just stated that God intends to do "good", s.w. "well", to Israel (Num. 10:29,32). But they were perhaps sarcastically rebuffing the promise of the "good land" of Canaan, instead wanting to see Egypt as the "good" land. Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses urges them to see the land as "good" and God's intentions for them as "good"; whereas their Egyptian past was not "good" or "well". They were doing what many do today- despising their redemption. We noted on :4 that the attitude of the "mixed multitude" spread to the Israelites. Perhaps it has been "well" for them in Egypt, and perhaps indeed they had eaten fish for free. But that wasn't the case for the Hebrews. But the Hebrews had adopted the narrative of the freeborn

Egyptians as their own, because it was convenient for them and their own agenda of returning to Egypt.

Num 11:19 You will not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days-
This could be an idiom, for each figure is double that of the previous number. God would as it were add on continually, until they were overcome with this meat. But if we add up 30 [a month] +20 +10 +5 +2 we come to 67, the number of feast days in the sacred calendar of Israel, including the Sabbaths. "You will not eat one day" would then refer to the Day of Atonement, when they fasted. They ought to have eaten meat or special food sparingly and in order to celebrate on special occasions. But God gave them all that meat on consecutive days and it was finally nauseous to them (:20). If we constantly over indulge, then there is no sense of special celebration.

Num 11:20 but a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it is loathsome to you-
The idea is that the very smell of meat would make them nauseous. The implication of :33 is that immediately the people ate the flesh of the quails, they were smitten. This would mean that the intended period of one month eating quail was either figurative; or God cut short that particular plan and instead operated according to a different one, which was to slay them immediately. This would explain also why the people didn't apparently stay long at this place, but instead moved on quickly instead of being there for at least a month as required by a literal reading of :20.

Another idea may be that the plague caused by the quail meat resulted in chronic vomiting, so strong that vomit was ejected through the nose. "Loathsome" is translated "nauseating" in some versions e.g. NEB, GNB. This is how strongly they would come to hate that which they once lusted after. Hating the object of lust is absolutely psychologically credible, and we see it in the behaviour of Amnon, Potiphar's wife, Judas despitefully throwing down his silver pieces etc. It will be seen in the rejected of the last days, hating the objects of their materialism, casting their idols to the bats, which they now see had precluded them from salvation.

Because that you have rejected Yahweh Who is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why did we come out of Egypt?'-
GNB presents their words as more than a question: "This will happen because you have rejected the LORD who is here among you and have complained to him that you should never have left Egypt". Yahweh who was among refers to the Angel of the presence, whom Moses had begged to go "among them". Indeed God had originally said that the Angel of the Presence should not go amongst them exactly because of their provocative behaviour; and it was Moses who had begged for Yahweh's presence "among them". We

see therefore that God was almost as it were persuaded against His own will and better knowledge, rather like the Father in the parable of the prodigal.

Their rejection of the manna was effectively their rejection of Yahweh. The essence of their problem was the essence of so many such cries today- that God's provision for us in this wilderness journey isn't enough and is not to our taste.

Num 11:21 Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand men on foot; and you have said, 'I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month'-
The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Ex. 13:18 seems to say they marched five abreast. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on

Passover night. This would then make better sense of Ex. 23:30 GNB: "I will drive them out little by little, until there are enough of you to take possession of the land". This indeed sounds as if Israel were the smallest of the nations, and not a huge nation comprising several million people.

Num 11:22 Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, to be sufficient for them? Shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to be sufficient for them?-
Moses almost mocks God: "Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them?". And the Angel angrily replied: "Is the Lord's hand grown short? thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not". If he had faith, Moses surely would have realised that if God could provide manna, he could provide any food. Moses seems to have suffered from fits of depression and also high spirituality. But he was perhaps thereby made the humblest man on earth through his struggles with depression. There are similarities with the anger of the disciples with the Lord Jesus when He suggested feeding the crowd. This anger is because faith had been challenged; and we can find ourselves reacting likewise.

Moses may have been saying that even if they were given all possible meat, they would still not be "sufficed", their lust was such that it wouldn't be satisfied. Because their real agenda wasn't what was on the menu, but to return to Egypt. And a later Psalm confirms this, by noting that despite being fed with so much flesh, "they were not estranged from their lust".

Num 11:23 Yahweh said to Moses, Has Yahweh's hand grown short? Now you will see whether My word will happen to you or not-
The idea is that God's ability to act is somehow limited. The same phrase was used to the exiles (Is. 50:2; 59:1) who likewise disbelieved that God could bring about the salvation of Israel and bring them in to the promised land and Kingdom. Any disbelief that we will actually be brought into God's Kingdom is really a belief that God's hand is limited. Our lack of faith is not just a failure within our own minds; it is saying and implying something about God personally.

Num 11:24 Moses went out, and told the people the words of Yahweh; and he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them around the Tent-
Moses went out of the tabernacle, where this discussion had been happening. Presumably he went out when the cloud ascended; for the Angel in the cloud descends again in :25.

Num 11:25 Yahweh came down in the cloud, and spoke to him-
God Himself is spoken of as coming, descending etc. when He 'preaches' to humanity

(e.g. Gen. 11:5; Ex. 19:20; Num. 11:25; 2 Sam. 22:10). In Jer. 39:16, the imprisoned Jeremiah is told to "go, tell Ebed-melech..." a word from the Lord about him. Jeremiah couldn't have literally left prison to do so- but the idea is that a person encountering the Lord's word has as it were experienced the Lord 'going' to him or her. And in this sense the message of the Lord Jesus (in its essence) could 'go' to persons without Him physically going anywhere or even existing consciously at the time (1 Pet. 3:18-21).

And took of the Spirit that was on him, and put it on the seventy elders: and it happened that when the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did so no more-
This was presumably done in some visible way. They prophesied briefly as an external witness to the fact that they now had the Spirit. Such brief supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit are recorded several times in the New Testament, where again they are evidences of the receipt of the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is essentially an internal gift. Just as here, the Spirit given to the elders was to empower them in their minds to be able to lead the people and assist Moses in practically guide the people to Canaan.

We read no more of these 70 elders, although Judaism has laid great store on them. It appears to have been a one time event, because there is no mechanism for the 70 to pass on the Spirit to successors. They prophesied at this point and "did so no more" (:25; AV "and did not cease" is quite wrong here). I wonder if they were given to Moses in the same spirit as the quail were- Israel like Moses were given what they lusted after, but that wasn't actually the answer. The gift of quail was in fact together with Divine judgment. Trust in God and acceptance of His provision was the answer. We note the parallel- some of the 72 prophesied "in the camp" and others outside the camp, just as the quail fell both in the camp (Ps. 78:27) and outside it (Num. 11:31), if we compare the Numbers and Psalms comments. Both 'gifts' come from the *ruach* , the wind [for the quails], and the wind / Spirit [s.w.] for the 70 elders. The record of the gift of quail and of the 70 elders is absolutely interwoven. Just as Israel were given their lust in abundance, with heaps of quails, so Moses was given his desire- 70 "helpers" who I suggest didn't help at all to carry Israel through the desert. Moses in maturity in Dt. 1 reflects that he indeed could not bear / carry the people- but God did. Not the 70 elders. And in any case, the system of Levites and priests was God's answer to administrative issues, not these 70 elders. The point is, that sometimes we are given what we crave, so that we might learn that it is not the answer. As Israel were "not estranged from their lust" by gorging on the flesh. Giving in to lust isn't the path. We see in these things part of a major Biblical theme- that God in fact gives man what he wants, what is his heart's desire. The prodigal received what he asked for, Adam and Eve had their eyes opened. But often it is to man's curse. If our core heart desire is for the Kingdom, that likewise will be answered.

Num 11:26 But two men remained in the camp. The name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the Spirit rested on them; and they were of those who were written, but had not gone out to the Tent; and they prophesied in the camp-
Perhaps this incident happen to confirm Moses' desire expressed in :29 that all Israel would have the gift of the Spirit. He wanted to see the whole camp and not just the tabernacle area filled with the Spirit in people; and the fact two of them prophesied in the camp rather than in the holy space around the tabernacle was therefore indicative of what was potentially possible for all the people. "Eldad", 'loved by God', was perhaps to represent all the people. The concern of the young man in :27 was that in addition to the 70, now another two were prophesying. If God had given the Spirit to 70, then surely these other two were fake; they were "in the camp" and not where the Spirit had apparently been given to the other 70. But their prophesying was legitimate and they were counted amongst the prophets even though they received the Spirit differently. Their names alone are recorded. It's as if Israel were being taught that relationship with Him and receipt of His Spirit directly, and not just part of Moses' spirit, was possible. And possible outside the apparently 'religious' set up. They represented the possibility for all Israel, as Moses says in :29. We note the same confusion of 70 and 72 in the NT texts of the numbers of apostles sent out by the Lord Jesus.

Num 11:27 A young man ran, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!-
Joshua appears to have been only one of a group of Moses' "young men", who moved around the camp running his errands (Ex. 24:5; Num. 11:27,28); as a similar group did for Nehemiah and Paul years later. The young men of the New Testament were also characterized by their love of the word (1 Jn. 2:14). Moses would have had a special fondness for this generation who were to enter the land. A large part of the Law was concerned with Israel's behaviour after they had settled in the land; these would only have been relevant to that younger generation. It is fitting that both Moses and Caleb (and Joshua?) maintained their youthful vigour right up to their death (Dt. 34:7; Josh. 14:11). But it was particularly young men who were stricken down at this time because of their unbridled lust (Ps. 78:30). These young men contrast with those of :33. The lesson for youth is that you have to watch your friends, even amongst the people of God.

Num 11:28 Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his chosen men, answered, My lord Moses, forbid them!-
Joshua urged Moses to “forbid” or [Heb.] ‘imprison’ Eldad and Medad for prophesying (Num. 11:28). He fell into the mistake so many have done; shut up or silence a genuine man of God, for fear that the institution, the existing administration, would be

undermined. We see something similar in Mk. 8:38,39. Perhaps they were prophesying of Moses' death? Whatever, Moses' refusal to shut them up seems to indicate an openness to God's Spirit and way of working, even if it threatened to undermine his authority. He shows such a genuine spirit when he replies that he wished that all God's people were the spiritual leaders.

Num 11:29 Moses said to him, Are you jealous for my sake?-
GNB "Are you concerned about my interests?". Joshua wanted Moses to be the sole channel of the Spirit and to have no rival; but Moses in his great humility wanted the Spirit to be shared as widely as possible. These other two men had received the Spirit directly from God, whereas the 70 had received part of Moses' spirit. Joshua was concerned that Moses was being bypassed as a mediator, but Moses in typical humility realizes that he is not indispensable, but others can have direct connection with God apart from through him and without him as their spiritual mentor. A lesson that many authoritarian Christians need to learn.

I wish that all Yahweh's people were prophets, that Yahweh would put His Spirit on them!-
This incident has similarities with the disciples asking Jesus to forbid the disciples of John the Baptist from using the Spirit (Mk. 9:40). Because other believers aren't with us or in our group, we aren't to forbid them. This isn't to say that unity amongst God's people isn't important; but where there is fracture amongst them, this doesn't mean that God only works with one of the groups.

Num 11:30 Moses went into the camp, he and the elders of Israel-
They would obviously have done this anyway at some point. So it is recorded intentionally, and as discussed on :26 it could be that the idea is that Moses and the now Spirit filled elders walked around the camp demonstrating their Spirit given authority. And perhaps as an advertisement for the fact that actually anyone could be filled with the Spirit if they wished.

Num 11:31 A wind from Yahweh went out and brought quails from the sea-
Ps. 78:26 adds: "He caused the east wind to blow in the sky, by His power He guided the south wind". The idea may be that the quails were blown in by a south easterly wind. He had likewise caused the east wind to operate in bringing locusts upon Egypt and in causing the miracle at the Red Sea. The Hebrew idea of "spirit" and "wind" is connected, and God makes His Angels winds (Ps. 104:4). Clearly He was using Angels to bring about these miracles with winds; and the food is called the bread of Angels in Ps. 78:23.

And let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on the other side, around the camp-

"The quail was among the ancient Egyptians the emblem of safety and security". In which case we marvel at God's grace; assuring His rebellious people of their security at the very point of their rebellion against Him. Ps. 78:28 stresses that God thoughtfully made the birds settle immediately around their tents, interpreting "By the camp" as "in the midst of the camp"- as if delivering food to their door, showing such grace at the very time of their murmuring against Him.

We have noted how Angel-winds had brought the plagues and driven back and forth the waters of the Red Sea. They were being taught how the essence of God's previous work for them (at their deliverance from the world and Red Sea baptism) was continuing for them.

And about two cubits above the surface of the earth-
The idea may be that they were two cubits apart from each other, which apparently is how flocks of quail are when they land on the ground. GNB: "flying three feet above the ground", as if they flew literally into the outstretched hands of the people. They didn't have to even bend down to pick them up.

Num 11:32 The people rose up all that day, and all the night, and all the next day, and gathered the quails. He who gathered least gathered ten homers, and they spread them all abroad for themselves around the camp-
GNB "They spread them out to dry all around the camp". We get the impression of a mad abandon in amassing as much meat as possible. It was perhaps because of this unbridled lust that God decided to immediately judge them rather than after 30 days; see on :33. His intention had been that seeing so much meat would 'estrange' them from their lust (Ps. 78:30); but it didn't.

Num 11:33 While the flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed-
The implication of :33 is that immediately the people ate the flesh of the quails, they were smitten. This would mean that the intended period of one month eating quail was either figurative; or God cut short that particular plan and instead operated according to a different one, which was to slay them immediately. This would explain also why the people didn't apparently stay long at this place, but instead moved on quickly instead of being there for at least a month as required by a literal reading of :20.

Some have suggested the translation "before it ran out" instead of "before it was chewed". This enables us to stick with the idea that they ate for a month but before the quail supply was exhausted, they were struck down.

The anger of Yahweh was kindled against the people, and Yahweh struck the people with a very great plague-
Ps. 78:31 adds the detail that those who were killed were the “fattest”- those who

weren't really hungry, but simply wanted a better life in the wilderness with the delicacies of Egypt, rather than the basic provision of daily food which God had faithfully promised His people. This attitude can easily happen amongst us- discontent because we seek both eternity in the future, and the life of Egypt right now too. Jesus clearly teaches that we must carry the cross in this life before we can enter the eternal joys of His future Kingdom. It was particularly young men who were stricken down at this time because of their unbridled lust (Ps. 78:30). These young men contrast with those of :27. The lesson for youth is that you have to watch your friends, even amongst the people of God.

We note the goodness and severity of God. His grace [in judging them immediately rather than after 30 days as planned] was displayed at the same time as His wrath. But in the end, as we see in Hosea, His grace triumphs over His necessary wrath. Notice how His wrath is expressed at the very same time as His grace. Human wrath is typically expressed just as wrath; any amelioration of it, any apology, any rectification of the outburst of anger typically comes at a later point. But with God, His wrath and saving grace are fused perfectly together within the very texture of His being and personality. Exactly as expressed in the meaning of the Yahweh Name given in Ex. 34. We have another example of this in Num. 12:10.

Num 11:34 The name of that place was called Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who lusted-

1 Cor. 10:6 is clear that this speaks to us, that we should not lust after evil things as they lusted. It is a theme of the Bible that in essence, God gives men their own desires, just as the prodigal son was given what he wrongfully demanded. Here, Israel lusted (s.w. Ps. 78:29) and God gave them what they lusted after. Those who lusted for meat were given it; yet "they were not estranged from their lust" (Ps. 78:30 AV). Sin never satisfies. Giving in to temptation will not lead to the craving being permanently resolved. This is to point up the huge importance of our innermost desires, our heart, our dominant passions- being upon the things of God and His Kingdom. David could say that all his desire was for the things of God (s.w. Ps. 38:9; Is. 26:8). More than anything else we should desire to please Him and be in His Kingdom. And all who thus love the Lord's appearing will be eternally with Him (2 Tim. 4:8).

Num 11:35 From Kibroth Hattaavah the people travelled to Hazeroth, and they stayed at Hazeroth-

I suggested on :33 that they did not in fact stay as long in the area as originally planned, but God moved them on quicker. The resumed journey from Hazeroth is picked up in Num. 12:16, so this 'staying at Hazeroth' will now be explained in Num. 12 as relating to

the time needed to disciple Miriam. The delays in their wilderness journey were all related to their own sins, as in our own.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 12

Num 12:1 Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Cushite woman-

Moses' own law contains legislation that prohibits marriages to other nations (Dt. 7:1–3, 16; Ex. 34:16). He broke that law, and this was used as an excuse to question his authority. But Yahweh came to His rescue in very forthright fashion. He simply hates this kind of politics. Miriam considered her sister in law as outside the people of God- but because of that, she herself is placed outside the camp for seven days.

The tensions between Aaron and Moses were already apparent. Aaron had been appointed the spokesman of Moses, but Moses himself soon speaks for himself and Aaron is redundant. Then at the incident of the golden calf, Aaron gives in to the masses and isn't faithful to Moses nor Yahweh, making very lame excuses to Moses. Then in Lev. 10 we read of how Moses snaps at Aaron after Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu are killed for offering strange fire; Moses complains that Aaron's other sons Eleazar and Ithamar hadn't eaten the sin offering and had left it to burn to ashes; and he puts the blame for that on Aaron, who replies that it wasn't an appropriate thing to do given the context. In the immediate context, Moses has complained in Num. 11 that he has nobody to help him. Aaron as High Priest and Miriam as leader of the women were surely intended as his helpers, but Moses complains he has asbolutely nobody to help him. This was in fact an implied criticism of Aaron and Miriam. Again we see the psychological credibility of the Biblical record. Tensions between siblings simmer... and then explode, with an issue like "You married a woman unworthy of you and your position" becoming the excuse to unseat the senior sibling from their position of authority. Aaron was the firstborn, but God had chosen Moses as His number one man... and that was always going to be hard for Aaron to cope with. We see him pressed on one hand by normal sociological pressures, and on the other, by the need to accept God's choice and not be jealous of another man's relationship with God, and to get on with our own calling to serve Him. And Aaron at this point gives in.

Moses "took" (not married) another woman, an Ethiopian- probably a slave woman, or possibly a cheap woman. Moses' brother and sister were ashamed that their brother was involved with a woman like this. Whoever she was, Moses was under the one man: one woman standard of the garden of Eden. At the time of Num. 10:11,29, Moses asks Jethro ["Hobab"] to remain with the people as a guide through the desert. I have suggested that the events of Ex. 18 should be inserted after Num. 10:10 and before

Num. 10:11. In this case the argument between Moses, Aaron and Miriam about Zipporah in Num. 12:1 would have occurred after Zipporah had been accepted again by Moses as his wife. But "Cushite" is a strange term for Zipporah. Perhaps this Cushite was one of the "mixed multitude" who left Egypt, and was taken after his divorce with Zipporah. For the Israelite leader to marry a black woman would have been rather like an apartheid era white South African premier marrying a black servant woman. It demonstrated Moses' humility, and also his attraction to the idea of non-Israelites entering the community of God's people. This would have made Moses a case of divorce and remarriage. It was certainly no barrier to his public service.

But it seems to me that they were using his marriage as an opportunity to bring him down, as they had their own agenda regarding the leadership of the nation. If you feel you have been slandered by gossip in the church, remember that almost every servant of God has been through this at the hands of those they counted as their brethren: Joseph, Moses, Job, David, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Paul, and above all the Lord Himself. Miriam and Aaron implied Moses (their own brother!) was immoral (Num. 12:1). The comment that Moses was the humblest man on earth is made in the very context of his enduring unjust criticism in a spiritual way (Num. 12:3). The way Paul commanded Timothy not to even *consider* a complaint against an elder unless another two or three had been eye-witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19) is proof enough that he expected elders to be slandered from within the ecclesia. The more you read between the lines of Paul's letters, the more evident it is that his very own brethren almost unbelievably slandered him.

Num 12:2 They said, Has Yahweh indeed spoken only with Moses? Hasn't He spoken also with us? And Yahweh heard it-
It is a theme of the record of the wilderness journeys that God heard the thoughts and secret complaints of His people. His total knowledge and sensitive awareness of every word and thought of our wilderness journey should have an abiding impression on how we think and talk. Likewise we wonder whether they "said" these things in so many words. The implications of their self talk were seen by Yahweh as their actual words, just as ours are. The idea is that indeed God had spoken through Aaron and Miriam as prophets but just at specific times (Ex. 4:15; 15:20). But with Moses He was in open, face to face relationship. He strongly objects to anyone somehow devaluing His intimate relationship with others. But that is just what happens when those in close relationship with Him are judged by others as in fact not having that relationship.

It's possible that they were twisting Moses' recent words: "Would that all the Lord's people were
prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit upon them" (Num. 11:29). As if to say: 'OK, so you're saying that having a prophetic relationship with Yahweh isn't that unique nor

important, so therefore, you have no right to be the leader just because you are Yahweh's prophet". This again is psychologically credible in that it is typical of what happens in power struggles- words are twisted and used as a pretext for one's own agenda.

"They said... and Yahweh heard it" is similar to what we several times read of how the private or even internal mutterings of the Israelites were spoken in Yahweh's ears (Num. 11:1). Perhaps all this that follows is a rebuke of their private thoughts or mutterings of siblings to each other in their tent. It is not stated to whom they spoke.

Num 12:3 Now the man Moses was very humble, above all the men who were on the surface of the earth-
The Hebrew for "meek" means one brought down; he was made meek. The word can also mean 'depressed'. His struggles with depression were used by God to bring him to this acme of humility. Thus the man Moses was *made* very meek, until he was the meekest man alive on earth (Num. 12:3 Heb.). Moses appears to have been very angry at times, but this may be understandable in terms of his depression, and this great commendation, that he was the humblest person, must be allowed its full weight in our interpretation of his character. True greatness is in humility, as the New Testament often teaches. Moses was the leader because he was the most humble.

"A stuttering shepherd, shy of leadership and haunted by his crime of passion" in slaying the Egyptian... these things developed this in him. Remember that Moses himself wrote this. It's an autobiographical comment, reflecting of course the Spirit of Him who knows every heart, and could make such a statement. And yet he writes it in recording how God had rebuked Aaron and Miriam for criticizing him, and how He had told them that He spoke with Moses alone face to face. We can imagine Moses blushing, with hung head. And then he makes the comment, that he was made the most humble man... Appreciating the honour of seeing so much of God, when he himself was a sinner, was part of that humbling process. All Israel will ultimately go through this when they face up to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: " Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Is. 2:10,11). This certainly reads like an allusion to Moses' cowering in the rock, humbling himself in the dust, before the glory of Yahweh. Our glimpses of the wonder of the Father's character should have the same effect upon us, just beholding the glory of God, i.e. the manifestation of His perfect character is Christ, should change us into the same image (2 Cor. 3:18- another invitation to see ourselves as Moses). What a compliment! The most humble man that was then alive; and humility is of great value to God, according to the Proverbs and 1 Pet. 3:4. That the leader of possibly 3 million people for forty years could be the meekest man is a sure wonder. Perhaps this comment is made at this point because Moses

weakness in the previous chapter had perhaps further developed his humility. He truly cries unto God to heal Miriam of the punishment she was given for criticizing him.

God's comment on Moses was: "the man Moses was very great" (Ex. 11:3). Yet it is also written here that "the man Moses was very meek" (Num. 12:3). Putting the two passages together we have the clear lesson that he who humbles himself is made great. Miriam and Aaron try to humiliate Moses because of the Ethiopian woman he had palled up with in earlier days. But his response was humility itself; so much so that the record comments: "The man Moses was very meek (some suggest the Hebrew implies 'made very meek', as a process), above all the men which were upon the face of the earth".

Num 12:4 Yahweh spoke suddenly to Moses, to Aaron, and to Miriam, You three come out to the Tent of Meeting! The three of them came out-
God's sudden response appears to be because Moses was "humble" (:3). He made no response. But God did. This is a powerful encouragement to self control. It shows for all time that we do not have to always justify ourselves nor answer criticism. Even though at other times it may be necessary. Moses' silence was perhaps because he recognized that his marriage "out" to a non Hebrew was not totally justifiable. Neither was his divorce and remarriage... seeing Zipporah had not committed adultery against him. God sees these situations, when a man indeed may be in the wrong but has a heart for Him. And He is so eager to get involved and justify that man. These ancient records are so relevant to life today. Imagine a group of believers on a committee discussing an issue, and a conservative cuts down a liberal with the comment "You're divorced and remarried". The brother blushes and goes silent. We want to hug the brother and slap his critic, just as God did.

The glory of the "similitude of the Lord" that Moses saw and reflected (Num. 12:4) is likened to "the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God" (2 Cor. 4:4). Like Moses, Jewish people have that glory, but they have it veiled; they potentially have it, but it is hidden, because their minds are veiled. This could possibly suggest that Paul saw more potential in the Jewish mind for Christ than other races; thus he speaks in Rom. 11 of how the natural branch which has been cut off [Israel] will be more effectively grafted back into the olive tree than the wild Gentile branches. This of course has similarities with the Lord's teaching about Himself as the vine, whose unfruitful branches had been cut off (Jn. 15:2). Israel "much more" than the Gentiles can be grafted back in, whereas Gentile converts do this "against nature" (Rom. 11:24).

Yahweh asked the three of them to come to Him, but then revealed Himself to just Miriam and Aaron. Perhaps He invited Moses too so that Moses could intercede for them so that they not be slain. We see how He so wants to show mercy, He wants to hear an advocate on our behalf. And we have that in the Lord, supremely.

Num 12:5 Yahweh came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forward-
"*A* pillar" rather than "*the* pillar" could suggest that this was an especially intense manifestation of God through an Angel. God is extremely sensitive to the slander of His people, and has an especial interest in preserving the truly humble.

Num 12:6 He said, Hear now My words. If there is a prophet among you, I Yahweh will make Myself known to him in a vision. I will speak with him in a dream-
Heb. "please listen" shows God's humility and passion to save Miriam and Aaron.

Heb. 1:1 states that God spoke to the prophets in various manners. We can understand by this that inspiration took various forms. Here God tells Moses and Aaron that [at that time] He reveals Himself to prophets by dreams and visions, but with His prophet Moses, He uses another method- He spoke with Moses “mouth to mouth”. Whilst all prophets spoke God’s word, they each had different processes of inspiration at work. God had indeed spoken to Miriam and Aaron, but in a one off sense. They are being told here that they are wrong to assume that they are regularly being given revelations from God. The fact they received God's word in the past at specific times didn't mean they were justified in their claims to leadership.

Num 12:7 My servant Moses is not so. He is so faithful in all My house-
Paul quotes this in Heb. 3:2,5, but making the point that Moses' technical obedience to all the commands about building the tabernacle, the house or dwelling place of Yahweh, was nothing compared to the work of the Lord Jesus. For He was not only legally obedient, He developed a character far beyond that. And on the basis of that utter perfection was able to build an eternal dwelling place of God in a group of redeemed persons. God appeared to prophets in visions regarding specific things at specific times (:6). But He spoke with Moses regularly, face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. That source of regular, ongoing revelation was infinitely higher than the occasional revelations to Aaron and Miriam in visions in the past.

The idea is "Faithful in all My household". The context is Miriam and Aaron complaining that Moses had divorced Zipporah for reasons other than adultery, and had remarried- and outside the covenant people. Their implication was that Moses had not been faithful in his own household affairs, so how could he be the leader in God's household. God's response is to comment that Moses has been faithful in all God's household. He thereby overlooks the possibly legitimate hints that Moses' own family management

hadn't been that great- but then, it would seem that God accepted that the marriage breakup was perhaps due to factors beyond Moses' control. Not least Zipporah's faithfulness to her pagan father, who did not want to unite with the people of God.

Num 12:8 that with him I will speak mouth to mouth, even plainly, and not in riddles; and he shall see Yahweh's form. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?-

God spoke to Moses "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Yahweh shall he behold" (Num. 12:8) is the basis of 1 Cor. 13:12: "Now (in the period of the Spirit gifts) we see through a glass darkly; but then (in the dispensation of the completed word) face to face: now I know in part (from the ministry of the gifts); but then shall I know, even as also I am known". The point of this connection is simply this: The close relationship between God and Moses is now available to us through the word. But do we feel God speaking to us face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Ex. 33:11)? For this is how close God and Moses came through the word. Yet it is possible. An *urgent* devotion to the word is needed by us as a community. This is what we really need exhortation about.

Paul speaks as if he has in one sense matured into "love", no longer a child but a man; yet he writes as if he is still in the partial, immature phase, seeing in a mirror darkly, waiting for the day when he would see "face to face". Likewise "Now I know in part, but then shall I know..." (1 Cor. 13:12). It's the 'now but not yet' situation which we often encounter in Scripture. In a sense we have attained to the mature state of love; in reality, we are still far from it. Paul is alluding to Num. 12:8 LXX, where God says that He spoke with Moses face to face and not in dark similitudes. Paul felt that he wasn't yet as Moses, encountering God 'face to face' in the life of mature love. He was still seeing through a glass darkly. But some time later, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he was now beholding the glory of the Lord's face [as it is in Christ] just as Moses did, "with unveiled face", and bit by bit, that glory was shining from him (2 Cor. 3:18 RV). And hopefully we feel the same- that bit by bit, we are getting there. So let's take Paul's urging seriously: to grasp the utter supremacy of the life of love, to "follow after love", to press relentlessly towards that state of final maturity which *is* love (1 Cor. 14:1).

The extent of inspiration is revealed by the way that God says He spoke with Moses "mouth to mouth"- not 'mouth to ear', as if Moses just sat and listened; but mouth to mouth in the sense that God placed His words inside the mouth of Moses (Num. 12:8). Thus what Moses spoke forth wasn't merely the memory of what his ears had heard from God's mouth; rather it was God's own words put somehow within him. "Mouth to mouth" rather than "mouth to ear" reflects the mutuality of relationship between them. Moses not only listened but spoke back and even changed God's intentions. "Why then...?" suggests that it is so wrong to disregard the fact another man has a deeply

intimate personal relationship with the Lord. But the lines drawn by denominational Christianity do this all the time.

Num 12:9 The anger of Yahweh was kindled against them; and He departed-
The departure of Yahweh is parallel with the departure of the cloud (:10), again showing that there was an Angel within the cloud which ascended and descended. The implication of :10 could be that the conversation enveloped them all in the cloud, and when the cloud departed, Miriam stood there stricken white as snow.

The same words are used in Ex. 4:14 of God's anger burning against Moses. He too had once been stricken leprous and had been healed. So his mediation for others was based on his own experience of grace, just as ours should be.

Num 12:10 The cloud departed from over the Tent; and behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow. Aaron looked at Miriam, and behold, she was leprous-
Leprosy was a symbol of sin. Moses had himself had the experience of being struck leprous "as white as snow" and then quickly healed from it (Ex. 4:6). He was thus shown that human sin and weakness were not going to stop God's purpose going forward. Moses would have been able to see her leprosy with the eye of faith, remembering his own experience; and Miriam likewise would have been encouraged by Moses' experience to believe that the affliction could quickly be healed. If she perceived the similarities between herself and her brother. And we likewise can take encouragement from others' experiences, insofar as we are thoughtful about life. And if we are familiar with the Biblical records and biographies of the lives of God's previous servants.

"Snow white" leprosy was a sign the leprosy was over (Lev. 13). So she was stricken with the appearance of having been judged for sin, but the judgment was over at the point of it being inflicted. It's as if God foresaw the intercession of Moses and Aaron for her, and Aaron's statement of repentance, and factored this in at the time of the judgment. Perhaps we can understand our own judgment for sin in a similar way. We see something similar in the way she is punished by being shut out of the camp for seven days, when the law required 14 days for those who had been leprous (Lev. 13:13-17). The law was ameliorated, to again show that in wrath God remembers mercy- at one and the same time. Just as we saw in Num. 11:33, where the intended 30 days judgment of lustful Israel was reduced, so that they were plagued as soon as the quail meat was between their teeth. God's judgment and His mercy are seen at one and the same time, unlike in human judgment and wrath.

Num 12:11 Aaron said to Moses, Oh, my lord, please don't count this sin against us, in which we have done foolishly, and in which we have sinned-
Aaron's language here clearly places Moses as his superior, and he as the far inferior. This is a far cry from the original attempt he made to place himself on at least an equal level with Moses, and to bring Moses down from his exalted status. Effectively, these words are repentance for his previous position. Perhaps this is why Aaron is not punished whereas Miriam is [what other explanation is there for that?]. He makes no specific apology nor statement of repentance, but he does speak of "this sin" and the implication of his words is that he regrets what he said. But clearly his motivation is also fear that he may also be struck with the terrible disease his sister had. We note the contrast in how Aaron cries out to Moses to help, whereas Moses cries out to God. LXX implies Aaron was not fully repentant: "Do not lay sin upon us, for we were ignorant wherein we sinned". God would not have been so angry if this were a genuine sin of ignorance. But despite their fearing the results of sin more than repenting from the heart, Moses still intercedes and is heard. If this is how eager God is to perceive repentance, despite impure motivation, we should likewise, rather than demanding specific apologies. We note too that Aaron's penitence here is greater than it was over the golden calf incident. Acceptance of guilt is indeed a sign of spiritual growth.

Aaron doesn't instinctively pray for his own self-preservation- that the leprosy didn't also break out upon him. Instead he prays for his sister's healing. "Don't count this sin..." is "lay not the sin upon us.... which we sinned". To carry sin therefore is not the same as the sin. To carry sin is to bear the result and consequence of sin. This was what Jesus bore on the cross. Therefore the consequence of every sin is crucifixion, death by torture. And Jesus took this for us. He knew from Isaiah 53 that He was to bear Israel's sins, that the judgments for their sins were to fall upon Him. Israel 'bore their iniquities' by being condemned for them (Num. 14:34,35; Lev. 5:17; 20:17); to be a sin bearer was therefore to be one condemned. To die in punishment for your sin was to bear you sin. There is a difference between sin, and sin being laid upon a person. Num. 12:11 brings this out: "Lay not the sin upon us... wherein we have sinned". The idea of sin being laid upon a person therefore refers to condemnation for sin. Our sin being laid upon Jesus therefore means that He was treated as if He were a condemned sinner. He briefly endured within Him the torment of soul which the condemned will feel.

Often the Spirit points out that the sinner is only harming himself by his actions- and yet he earnestly pursues his course, in the name of self-interest and self-benefit (Num. 16:38; Prov. 19:8; 20:2; Hab. 2:20; Lk. 7:30). Sin is therefore associated by God with utter and derisible foolishness (e.g. Num. 12:11; 2 Tim. 3:9); but this isn't how man in his unwisdom perceives it at all. Indeed, to him self-denial is inexplicable folly and blindness to the essentials of human existence. "This their way is their folly: yet their

posterity approve their sayings. Selah (pause to meditate)" (Ps. 49:13). The *folly* of sin is only *fully* evident to God.

Num 12:12 Let her not, I pray, be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb-
The description of Miriam in Num. 12:12 LXX is quoting from Job 3:16 LXX; as if both Job and Miriam represented apostate Israel. This description of Miriam indicates that the "leprosy" was not Hansen's disease, leprosy as we now know it. For leprosy doesn't begin with such dramatic manifestations. See on :14.

We note the sad state of Miriam's skin, white as snow. Perhaps this was some Divine justice for her dislike of Moses' Cushite, Gentile wife because she was a woman of black skin. Miriam's white skin was now shown to be shameful and repulsive to everyone.

Num 12:13 Moses cried to Yahweh, saying, Heal her, God, I beg You!-

AV "Heal her now" was not totally answered, as God wanted her to be quarantined for seven days first. Moses was surely motivated by his own experience in Ex. 4:6 of being struck "leprous like snow" because he had also resisted God's prophetic purpose. Awareness of our own failures motivates us to pray for others in theirs. We note Moses refers to Miriam as "her" rather than mentioning her name. He knows that God intimately knows the situation he stands in.

Faith is inculcated by an appreciation of the height of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. He now has all power in Heaven and in earth, and this in itself should inspire us with faith in prayer and hope in His coming salvation. On the basis of passages like Ex. 4:7; Num. 12:10-15; 2 Kings 5:7,8, "leprosy was regarded as a "stroke" only to be removed by the Divine hand which had imposed it". The leper of Mk. 1:40 lived with this understanding, and yet he saw in Jesus nothing less than God manifest. Inspired by the height of the position which he gave Jesus in his heart, he could ask him in faith for a cure: "If you will, *you can* [as only God was understood to be able to] make me clean".

Num 12:14 Yahweh said to Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, shouldn't she be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut up outside of the camp seven days, and after that she shall be brought in again-
The idea is that she had done something which would justify her father spitting in her face, i.e. disowning her or spitting in her face and making her sleep outside his house for

a period. Dt. 25:9 explains spitting in the face as a sign of deep disdain. This is an unusually passionate example of God's specific anger with His daughter Miriam. The image of a father spitting in his daughter's face is extreme. She must jave really behaved awfully. This is how much He hates racism, judging a man on his apparent marital failures, and seeking to politically machinate for power amongst God's people by bringing another man down. God absolutely hates and despises those who do such things in His family. Yet those who do them often consider themselves somehow more mature than those they abuse. I suggested on Lev. 13:1 that the plague of leprosy was not Hansen's disease as we now know it. See on :12. The Hebrew for "leprosy" is literally 'a stroke', and here we have an example of a person being struck down and then isolated for a period of repentance. Leprosy as we know it would not have been cured so quickly. Leprosy had no cure in the ancient world. And yet the legislation in Lev. 13,14 sounds as if after a relatively short time, the affliction could be lifted- and then a sin offering had to be made. The decisions and diagnosis of the affliction was to be made by the priests, not physicians. I conclude therefore that we should pay more attention to the Hebrew word here translated "leprosy". It is the same word as used for the "stroke" of Divine judgment. This makes more sense throughout the legislation. God could smite sinners with this affliction, mistranslated as "leprosy". If the sinner repented sufficiently, it would be lifted. But the priest would judge that, and therefore sin offerings were required to complete the cleansing process. It is no sin to get sick with leprosy; but if we understand this affliction as a Divine stroke, then it all makes so much more sense.

Num 12:15 Miriam was shut up outside of the camp seven days, and the people didn't travel until Miriam was brought in again-

The overall progress of God's people is hindered by the unresolved sin of their leadership. This isn't the same as the false notion of 'guilt by association'. There is also the idea present here that true spiritual progress of God's people towards His Kingdom will not be achieved by abandoning smitten sinners in the desert. They must be "brought in again". We think of how during Paul's final shipwreck, salvation was made conditional upon all abiding in the ship.

Num 12:16 Afterward the people travelled from Hazeroth, and encamped in the wilderness of Paran-

Num. 33:18 says that "They departed from Hazeroth, and pitched in Rithmah", whilst Num. 12:16 has "the people travelled from Hazeroth, and encamped in the wilderness of Paran". Rithmah was in the wilderness of Paran, which covered a large area. The intellectual desperation of Bible critics in raising this kind of supposed "contradiction" speaks more about them than anything else. Such intellectual desperation is symptomatic of a struggling, uneasy conscience.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 13

Num 13:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
This was in response to Israel's desire to send men to spy out the land (Dt. 1:22). Had they believed God's promises, they wouldn't have needed this human reassurance. But because that was what they wanted, like the Father giving the prodigal son what he wanted, God gave it to them. Even though it was to lead to their collapse of faith and rejection. In essence, we often get what we want. The critical thing is therefore to desire the right things. Because Divine concessions to human weakness often only lead us into more acute temptation. But He makes the concessions because that is what we ask for. And we get what we want, in essence. If we wish to be in the Kingdom above all, then we shall be.

Num 13:2 Send men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel. Of every tribe of their fathers, you shall send a man, every one a prince among them-
"Which I give..." was God's desperate attempt to remind them that whatever the spies reported about the nature of the land, God would give it to His people. "Spy out" is the word used of how the ark and Angel in the cloud were ever going before Israel to "search out a resting place" (Num. 10:33; Dt. 1:33), and that resting place ultimately referred to the inheritance of Canaan. It was God Himself who had spied out the land for them (Ez. 20:6 s.w.). But they insisted upon empirical, human spying out. This insistence upon empirical evidence is not the stuff of faith, and led to their spiritual failure in this context. "Of every tribe" excluded Levi, because they were not going to inherit any land possession.

Num 13:3 Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran according to the commandment of Yahweh: all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel-
Dt. 33:2 comments about this incident, that Yahweh "shone forth from Mount Paran, He came with ten thousands of holy ones". They failed to walk in step with the Spirit. There were ten thousands of Angels going with them in glory in order to give them the Kingdom, but they were faithless and turned back. It is stressed that Yahweh commanded this- but as discussed on :1, it was in confirmation of their own weakness of faith in wanting spies to go and check out God's word of promise- instead of believing it without empirical evidence.

Num 13:4 These were their names. Of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur-
None of these names occur elsewhere, except those of Caleb and Joshua. They were to be chosen by the initiative of Israel (:2). And because unbelief was never far from the

hearts of the people, we suspect they chose men who were not known for their faith nor leadership; but who rather were likely to speak to the unarticulated fears of the people.

Num 13:5 Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori-
The names of the unfaithful spies are very negative, e.g. Shaphat ben Hori is understood by Jewish midrash as meaning 'Judge of a hole in the ground'. And I will generally give the meaning of the names of the unfaithful spies as found in the midrash. I have often commented that the names we read of in the Old Testament are often reflective of later developed character and historical actions in the lives of the person. They are not therefore their birth names, and often a person would have more than one name. The fact these names of the unfaithful spies aren't found elsewhere would confirm my suggestion that these were the names they came to be known by after their terrible faithlessness. And likewise Hoshea was renamed to Joshua (:16) after his faithfulness.

Num 13:6 Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh-
Caleb was head of a household within the tribe of Judah. It could be argued that he was directly related to Judah through Hezron and Pharez (1 Chron. 2:5,18,25). But "Kenizzite" (Josh. 14:6; Num. 32:12) could refer to the Gentile tribe of Gen. 15:19; or to a man called Kenaz, memorialized by Caleb naming his son with that same name (1 Chron. 4:15). And Jud. 1:13 could mean that Caleb's father was called Kenaz. Caleb means "dog", and this is apparently alluded to when he is commended for faithfully following Yahweh, as a dog would follow its master (Josh. 14:8; Num. 14:24). The genealogies are constructed in such a way that they don't preclude Caleb having been a Gentile who was fully accepted into the tribe of Judah

Num 13:7 Of the tribe of Issachar, Igal the son of Joseph-
"Igal", 'putter forth of evil speech'. See on :5. They slandered the land.

Num 13:8 Of the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun-
Hoshea, 'saver', was changed to 'Joshua', 'Yah's salvation' (:16). His faith was that Yahweh would save. Despite all the obstacles to attaining the Kingdom, he believed that Yahweh would save from them all. And this is the essence of faith in Jesus, the Greek form of 'Joshua'.

Num 13:9 Of the tribe of Benjamin, Palti the son of Raphu-
'Remover of good deeds', son of 'weak hands'. See on :5.

Num 13:10 Of the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel the son of Sodi-
'Harsh words'; for he slandered the land. See on :5.

Num 13:11 Of the tribe of Joseph, of the tribe of Manasseh, Gaddi the son of Susi-
'Thrower of words, son of grief'. Several of these names have reference to words, because these men became known for their slander of the land. See on :5. As so often, the word of man triumphed over the word of God in the minds and fears of men.

Num 13:12 Of the tribe of Dan, Ammiel the son of Gemalli-
'Soured strength' (cp. Num. 13:31). See on :5.

Num 13:13 Of the tribe of Asher, Sethur the son of Michael-
'Contradictor', for his lack of faith contradicted the Divine promise of the Kingdom; see on :5.

Num 13:14 Of the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi the son of Vophsi-
'Hider of the truth'. The ultimate truth was and is that God's people can inherit the Kingdom; see on :5.

Num 13:15 Of the tribe of Gad, Geuel the son of Machi-
'The majesty of God [Geuel] now pining away [Machi]'. See on :5.

Num 13:16 These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun 'Joshua'-
As discussed on :5, the idea may be that these are the names they became known by, just as Hoshea was now to be renamed Joshua. See on :8. In Dt. 1:23, Moses seems to admit he had been unwise in this: "The thing pleased me well and I took twelve men of you, one man for every tribe". In In this time of final spiritual maturity, Moses was keenly aware of his own spiritual failings (as Paul and Jacob were in their last days). This is one of the great themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He begins his Deuteronomy address by pointing out how grievously they had failed thirty eight years previously, when they refused to enter the good land. He reminds them how that although God had gone before them in Angelic power (Dt. 1:30,33), they had asked for their spies to go before them. And Moses admits that this fatal desire for human strength to lead them to the Kingdom "pleased me well". It seems to me that here Moses is recognizing his own failure. Perhaps he is even alluding to his weakness in wanting Jethro to go before them "instead of eyes", in place of the Angel-eyes of Yahweh (Num. 10:31-36). Moses at the

end was aware of his failures. And yet he also shows his thorough appreciation of the weakness of his people. Moses admits at the end that Israel's faithless idea to send out spies "pleased me well"- when it shouldn't have done (Dt. 1:23,32,33). He realized more and more his own failure as he got older.

Num 13:17 Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, Go up this way by the South, and go up into the hill country-
If their intention was genuine military reconnaissance, they would have focused upon the areas immediately in front of them. And this is where Moses sent them, to the hill country of Judah which was immediately where they would enter Canaan. But by going instead throughout the entire land, they were showing they wanted to check out God's word of promise about the land- they wanted empirical evidence rather than showing faith. See on :25.

Num 13:18 and see the land, what it is, and the people who dwell therein, whether they are strong or weak, whether they are few or many;-
These requests seem to be Moses' weakness or at least, concession to Israel's weakness. God told them to simply search the land, presumably in order to be able to divide it up for conquest and inheritance. Moses instead asks the spies to assess whether the land is good or not, how strong the opposition will be, etc. And this weakness was the undoing of Israel. Indeed Dt. 1:22 says that Israel asked God to send out the spies before them- even though God had promised that the Angel in the pillar of cloud would go ahead of them. God grants such concessions to human weakness, but making use of them often leads us into greater openness to temptation and likelihood of failure. Or Moses may have asked them to go and check that indeed the land was full of "many" people, as God had said; and that they were now weakened. But asking people to check God's word against empirical evidence tends towards unbelief, as we see here. This has relevance to the various invitations made to check the claims of God and His word against "science" and empirical evidence.

Time and again in the Biblical record, Abraham is held up as a very real example, in whose steps all God's people are to tread. For example, as Abraham was bidden leave Ur and go and "see" the "land" of promise which God would "give" him (Gen. 13:15), so the spies were told to go and "see" the "land" which God had "given" them (Num. 13:18; 32:8,9- the same three words as in the promises to Abraham)- yet they lacked the faith of Abraham to believe that really, they could possess that land. They did "see" the land, yet they were punished by being told that they would not now "see the land" (Num. 14:23; Dt. 1:35). They saw it, but they didn't "see" it with the eyes of Abraham. And so it can be with our vision of God's Kingdom. Remember that Moses was the author of both

Genesis and Numbers- such connections aren't incidental. Moses wished the people to see themselves as going forward in the spirit of Abraham- and hence he wrote up the Genesis record for Israel's benefit an inspiration.

Num 13:19 and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it is good or bad; and what cities they are that they dwell in, whether in camps, or in fenced cities-
They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them to a "good land" (Ex. 3:8 s.w.). They felt they had to check out the truth of His word for themselves; and concluded the land was "evil"; see on :32. God's clear statements and promises must be allowed to trump our own perceptions and empirical conclusions. This is what faith is all about.

Num 13:20 and what the land is, whether it is fat or lean, whether there is wood therein, or not. Be courageous, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first-ripe grapes-
But this appeal to "be courageous" was not an appeal for the courage of faith; see on :19. It was a merely human, secular appeal. The courage asked of Joshua later was to believe it was God's good pleasure to give His people the Kingdom (Lk. 12:32). The note about time means this would have been in early August.

Num 13:21 So they went up, and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, to the entrance of Hamath-
As discussed on :17, they were asked to explore just the area immediately ahead of the Israelite advance. Instead they explored all of Canaan. This is a parade example of when a concession is made to human weakness (see on :1), we tend to misuse and abuse it.

Num 13:22 They went up by the South, and came to Hebron; and Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were there-
Although not recorded in Num. 14:24; Dt. 1:36, it appears Caleb was specifically promised Hebron at that time. Caleb had explored that area as a spy (Num. 13:22) and taken a special liking to it. We see therefore his spiritual ambition; 'this shall one day be mine'. And we can do the same, as we in this life spy out our future inheritance.

Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt
The idea may be that it was "built up" seven times greater than Zoan, which the Hebrews may well have laboured as slaves to build up.

Num 13:23 They came to the valley of Eshcol, and cut down from there a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a staff between two. They also brought

some of the pomegranates and figs-
The idea seems to be as GNB "as far as Eshcol". Perhaps the two who carried this were the faithful Joshua and Caleb. The valley of Eshcol is near Hebron, which was visited by Caleb (see on :22). So it seems quite safe to assume that he brought back this cluster of grapes from the area he had fallen in love with and had been promised. "Staff" is s.w. "bar" used of how the tabernacle fittings were carried (Num. 4:10). They saw in this a kind of tabernacle. If they also carried pomegranates and figs, we can assume they had no room to carry much else, including weapons. They went in faith.

Num 13:24 That place was called the valley of Eshcol because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from there-
The faith and vision of Joshua and Caleb (see on :24) is graciously counted to all Israel. The Biblical record constantly reflects the grace of its ultimate author. The valley of Eshcol may well have been named after Abraham's supporter (Gen. 14:24), but the meaning of the name now became reflective of the cluster of grapes found there.

Num 13:25 They returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days-
I have made the point that they were originally told just to explore a limited area in southern Canaan (:17). But by going instead throughout the entire land, they were showing they wanted to check out God's word of promise about the land- they wanted empirical evidence rather than showing faith. And because of this more extensive searching of all Canaan, it took them 40 days. And they suffered for this, because on the basis of a day for a year, they had to wander 40 years in the desert.

Num 13:26 They went and came to Moses and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, to the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh, and brought back word to them, and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land-
To 'bring back a word' is used of communicating God's word (Num. 22:8; 23:5,16; Josh. 22:32). The word of God was clear- they could enter the land and take it. But here we have the word of man being allowed to triumph over the word of God in the hearts of men, as happens so often. To return a word also means to answer a question- s.w. "what answer shall I return" (2 Sam. 24:13; 1 Kings 12:6; Neh. 2:20). There was a question as to whether they could inherit the Kingdom- and that question should never have been, if they had believed God's word.

Num 13:27 They told him, and said, We came to the land where you sent us and surely it flows with milk and honey and this is its fruit-
Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that it was possible for to enjoy this in the

Kingdom of God. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after. And His Kingdom is somehow unattainable.

Num 13:28 However the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. Moreover, we saw the children of Anak there-
Rahab informed the later spies that the cities were fortified from fear of Israel, and the Canaanites were weak and fearful before Israel at this time (Josh. 2:10,11). Those obstacles to our inheritance of the Kingdom which seem to us huge and too strong for us may actually be very weak and far easier to overcome than we imagine. The spies were sent to find out whether the people in the land were many or few. But they were being asked to confirm the truth of God's statement that although the people were indeed many, God would give Israel victory against them (Dt. 9:1,2). But they focused upon the obstacle rather than the solution- which is the way of the flesh in every context.

Num 13:29 Amalek dwells in the land of the South; and the Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the hill country; and the Canaanite dwells by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan-
As noted on :28, they focused upon the obstacle rather than the solution- which is the way of the flesh in every context. And they almost relish in giving all the details of those obstacles. There was not a word of faith from the ten spies.

Num 13:30 Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it-
The Bible often records the immediacy of response in faithful people. Procrastination and endlessly weighing up the difficulties often leads to failure to act as we should.

Num 13:31 But the men who went up with him said, We aren't able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we-
Caleb and Joshua perceived that Israel were "well able" to overcome the tribes and inherit the land, seeing that the Angel-hornet had gone ahead and prepared the way; and yet due to Israel's disabling of this possibility at the time, it was in some ways so that God Himself was "not able" to give them the inheritance, because *they* judged that *they* were "not able" to take it (Num. 13:30,31; 14:16).

Num 13:32 They brought up an evil report of the land which they had spied out to the children of Israel, saying-
The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27;

Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

If their intention was genuine military reconnaissance, they would have focused upon the areas immediately in front of them. But by going throughout the entire land, they were showing they wanted to check out God's word of promise about the land- they wanted empirical evidence rather than showing faith.

The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that eats up its inhabitants; and all the people who we saw in it are men of great stature-
This was effectively calling God's descriptions of the promised land untrue. If we don't believe we can inherit the Kingdom prepared for us (Mt. 25:34), then we are effectively calling God a liar. Ps. 106:24 says that they didn't believe God's word of promise that they would possess the land (Gen. 15:18; 17:8; Ex. 23:30). These promises were clear and unambiguous; but the immediate and the visible seemed more true to them than the promises of God's word. Perhaps they had forgotten those promises, not recited them to themselves, not bothered to attend Moses' sessions of instruction, of which the Pentateuch is likely a transcript. Unless God's words of promise are regularly in our consciousness, we will likewise fail to believe it when we come up against the human obstacles in our paths.

If they had accepted the power of God, then *whatever* 'adversary' was in the land, in whatever form, was ultimately of no real power (Num. 13:32; 14:36; Dt. 1:25). And yet it was not God's way to specifically tell the people that there was no such dragon lurking in the land of Canaan – instead He worked with them according to their fears, by making the earth literally open and swallow up the apostate amongst them (Num. 16:30) – emphasizing that by doing this, *He* was doing "a new thing", something that had never been done before – for there was no dragon lurking in any land able to swallow up people. And throughout the prophets it is emphasized that *God* and not any dragon swallowed up people – "The Lord [and not any dragon] was as an enemy; *He* has swallowed up Israel" (Lam. 2:5 and frequently in the prophets). The people of Israel who left Egypt actually failed to inherit Canaan because they believed that it was a land who swallowed up the inhabitants of the land (Num. 13:32), relating this to the presence of

giants in the land (Num. 13:33). As Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them, they needed to believe that whatever myths there were going around, God was greater than whatever mythical beast was there. And because they would not believe that, they failed to enter the land, which in type symbolized those who fail to attain that great salvation which God has prepared.

Num 13:33 There we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight-
They made the common mistake of assuming that our view of ourselves is how others also see us. The Israelites were seen as grasshoppers by their enemies- and so this is how they came to perceive themselves (Num. 13:33). Prov. 23:7 RV observes: "As he reckons within himself, so is he". We are defined by our own self-perception. We must come in the end to perceive ourselves from God's perspective and not according to how men perceive us. We must see ourselves from outside ourselves, and thereby "guide your own heart in the way" (Prov. 23:19). According to how they felt that the world perceived them to be, so they felt themselves to be. As it happened, they were wrong; the Canaanite nations were terrified of them, according to Rahab's inside account. If Israel had perceived themselves as those made strong by the Lord, more than conquerors, so indeed they would have been. Self-perception was and is vital for God's Israel.

The people were frightened by the "giants" they met in the land of Canaan (Num. 13:33), likely connecting them with superhuman beings. These *nephilim* [LXX *gigantes*] had their origin explained by Moses in Genesis 6 (see on Gen. 6:4)- the righteous seed intermarried with the wicked, and their offspring were these *nephilim*, mighty men of the world. Note in passing how Ez. 32:27 LXX uses this same word *gigantes* to describe pagan warriors who died- no hint that they were superhuman or Angels. According to Jewish traditions (as reflected in 1 Enoch and the *Book of Jubilees*), the supposedly sinful Angels ("the Watchers") morally corrupted human beings in the lead up to the flood by teaching them to do evil, astrology, weapon making and the use of cosmetics (1 Enoch 7-8, 69; 10; 21.7-10; 64-65; 69; Jub. 5:16-11; 8:3). Yet the Genesis record simply states that the descendants of Cain started to do all those things, their wickedness increased, and so they were punished through the flood (Gen. 4:20-22). Constantly in the Jewish Apocryphal writings there is a shifting of blame from humanity to Angelic beings.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 14

Num 14:1 All the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night-

This incident looks ahead to the bitter weeping of those rejected at the day of judgment (Mt. 8:12), at the borders of the Kingdom. But their weeping was self inflicted and unnecessary if they had had faith.

Num 14:2 All the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would that we had died in this wilderness!-
Israel continually "murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12).

They wished they had died in the desert, and this was to be their judgment. We see so clearly that the condemned are self condemned. "All who love His appearing" will be accepted, and those who think and act as if they don't want the Kingdom- won't have it.

Num 14:3 Why does Yahweh bring us to this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will be a prey: wouldn't it be better for us to return into Egypt?-
They recognized the Lord had brought them out of Egypt. Their lack of faith was not the same as atheism, rather was it a lack of faith in the possibilities of the God they believed in. There should be no question amongst us, not in our deepest heart, about returning to the world / Egypt, the life we knew before our baptism (cp. the Red Sea crossing, 1 Cor. 10:1,2). If we do allow this question, then it will lead to actually doing this in practice (:4).

Dt. 1:27 adds: "And you murmured in your tents and said, Because Yahweh hated us He has brought us forth out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us". We marvel at how the passionate love of God for Israel at this time, falling in love with them and not beholding iniquity in Jacob, could be perceived now as hatred for Israel. It is a psychological classic, revealing the fickleness of the human mind when it is not firmly based in faith in God's stated words.

We notice their concern for their children and wives, implying this was the males who were speaking. But they want to return to Egypt, where their children had been killed at birth. And where they as males had been made to make bricks without straw and were beaten. Such is the nature of selective memory once a narrative is espoused. The psychological credibility of the record is very impressive. The plagues on Egypt and the Red Sea crossing were recent memories, and the provision of manna and Angelic guidance was ongoing. Miracle doesn't elicit faith. The power of believed narratives is overpowering; as we see in migrants risking all for the sake of a narrative about a certain

country. Our dream destination is to be God's Kingdom, and that narrative is the only true one. All else will fade before it.

Num 14:4 They said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt-
Human beings so want human leadership. God through Moses was their captain, but they wanted a leader who would lead them where *they* wanted. The large number of human religions and religious leaders is proof enough of this desire for human leadership. Israel actually made a captain and set about to return to Egypt (Neh. 9:17). But this is omitted in the historical record; it simply says that this is what they *thought* of doing (Num. 14:4). The depth of their apostasy is graciously unrecorded. or perhaps this is another example of the thought being counted as the action.

Num 14:5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel-
We note Aaron had a part in this. We are to intercede for others on the basis of our experience of the Lord's intercession for us. Job prays for his friends, he mediates for them, after gratefully realizing that his own search for mediation with God in order to obtain forgiveness had somehow been answered, by grace (Job 42:6,8). After the same pattern, Aaron ought to have died for his flouting of the first commandment in making the golden calf; but Moses' intercession alone saved him. And afterwards, deeply conscious of his experience, Aaron made successful intercession for the salvation of others (Num. 14:5; 16:22). The way he holds the censer with fire from the altar of incense, representing his prayers, and "stood between the dead and the living [as a mediator]" (Num. 16:48) is a fine picture of the height to which he rose.

Num 14:6 Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were of those who spied out the land, tore their clothes-
Dt. 1 records how Moses also pleaded with Israel at this time. Their grief was that of God, who millions of times sees people come to the brink of His Kingdom and turn away from it. And it should be a tragedy we too share.

Num 14:7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to spy it out is an extremely good land-
They reminded the people of God's simple statement that He was bringing them to a "good land" (Ex. 3:8 s.w.). But the land was "extremely good", better even than God had implied, over and above all they could ask or think. God's description of the land had been true. And so His promise that they could attain it was therefore likewise going to be true. That "good land" was to be given them not for the sake of their righteousness (Dt.

9:6), but simply so- by God's sovereign grace. But faith in grace has never come easy to men.

Num 14:8 Since Yahweh delights in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us-

The issue came down to faith in grace, and His desire to give us the Kingdom. So it is to this day. God not only forgives, but He delights in doing so (Is. 62:14; Mic. 7:18); the way He is spoken of as 'delighting' in spiritually weak Israel is part and parcel of Him lavishing grace as He does (Num. 14:8). It must be so awful to have such a wonderful spirit of lavishing grace and love, consciously giving out life and patient forgiveness to so many; and yet not be appreciated for it, to have puny humans shaking their fist at God because they die a brief moment of time sooner than they think they should, to have tiny people arrogantly questioning His love.

The Hebrew for "delights" is only elsewhere used in the Pentateuch of a man delighting in a woman to marry her (Gen. 34:19; Dt. 21:14; 25:7,8). And the prophets portray God as having fallen in love with Israel in the wilderness and entering into a marriage covenant with her at Sinai. Joshua and Caleb perceived this love of God. But Israel didn't. That such love should go unperceived, and that God at this point should be accused of hating Israel (Dt. 1:27), was tragic indeed. And His love so often goes unperceived and unrequited. This is the tragedy of God's relationship with His people. At least we have perceived it, and seek to respond.

The Lord spoke of us all as a little flock, fearing it is *not* the Father's pleasure / will to give us the Kingdom (Lk. 12:32). In doing so, He was as ever drawing on the language of the OT. Joshua-Jesus encouraged Israel that Yahweh delighted / willed that they should enter the land (Num. 14:8); but instead, they were too caught up with doubts... doubt about salvation, about what they could eat and drink day by day, and the giants in the land. This is the very context in which the Lord was speaking- fearing "the nations of the world", doubting where food and clothes would come from, just as Israel did (Lk. 12:22-29). Yet the pleasure / will of Yahweh is that we should share His Kingdom, and that pleasure / will prospered through the cross (Is. 53:10).

A land which flows with milk and honey-

Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that they could experience this in the Kingdom of God. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Num 14:9 Only don't rebel against Yahweh, neither fear the people of the land; for they

are bread for us. Their defence is removed from over them, and Yahweh is with us. Don't fear them-
To fear and be faithless is to actively rebel against Yahweh. The word for "rebel" is nearly always used about rebelling against a king. They didn't want Him as their king, and so at this very time they made themselves another captain to return to Egypt (see on :4). To pull away from God's program to lead us to inherit His Kingdom is to reject Him as King, and to thereby rebel. To be in the shadow [s.w. "defence"] of someone was to be a subsidiary nation under the protectorate of a great empire (s.w. Ez. 31:6,12,17). The nations of Canaan had been under the protectorate of Egypt and the Philistines, but that had now been withdrawn. And they were terrified of the Israelites, as Rahab testified.

Num 14:10 But all the congregation threatened to stone them with stones. The glory of Yahweh appeared in the Tent of Meeting to all the children of Israel-
We now understand why the account of Num. 13,14 follows on from that of the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron in Num. 12. For this was exactly how He had acted at the time of that rebellion. Stoning with stones was usually for religious heresy. So we can imagine that the idolatrous people now turned to the gods they had carried with them out of Egypt (Ez. 20:6-8; Acts 7:43) and accused Joshua and Caleb of some kind of religious apostacy. But the basis of their anger was that they subconsciously knew that Joshua and Caleb were telling the truth, although it was not a truth they wished to hear.

In the surrounding cultures, stoning was a punishment for those who bore false witness. This is how the Israelites judged those who preached the good news of the Kingdom. They considered it a false Gospel. The language used of their rejection of that Gospel is quite severe. To disbelieve God is to "rebel" against Him (:9). The ruling principle of their lives was to be that they would inherit the Kingdom. To disbelieve our salvation is to "despise" God (:11). To reject the Gospel is to consider the preachers of it "false witnesses". Paul uses the same term when he tells the Corinthians he would be a "false witness" if the Lord had in fact not risen. Their desire to kill the messenger because they didn't accept the message is psychologically credible. The real desire was for a different leadership, who would lead them back to Egypt rather than out of it.

The book of Numbers features the record of incidents whilst the people were "in the wilderness", and also the giving of extra laws. But those extra laws are to be related to the incidents recorded. Num. 15 will go on to talk about presumptuous sins. We can conclude that that legislation was given in the context of Israel's presumption in rejecting the Kingdom and calling God a liar. And the implication is that we can all in principle commit that same sin. It is unforgivable insofar as the sin itself means we refuse to believe in God's grace and salvation, and reject it as fake. Whilst that's our position, salvation is impossible- by our own choice. The issue of whether we believe we

will be saved therefore assumes critical place in the psychology and worldview of all God's people, at all times.

Num 14:11 Yahweh said to Moses, How long will this people despise Me?-
"How long...?" could suggest 'Seeing they will never be otherwise, I will destroy them'. This could be a way of God asking Moses not to pray for more time, to as it were leave God alone to destroy Israel. He is saying that this situation cannot continue any longer. Just as He asked Moses in Ex. 32:10. But Moses knew God well enough to still intercede, and change the intention of God to disinherit the people at this time. See on :23. The idea of "provoke" is to scorn, to blaspheme, and this is what we do to God if we doubt we shall inherit the Kingdom. The language used about Israel's lack of faith is extreme. They "despised" the land (:32) even though it seems they didn't doubt it was a good land, they just doubted whether they could. They gathered together against God (:35). The language all shows that the most fatal error is to not believe we will be saved- this is far and more fundamentally worse than any sin of hot blood. See on Jn. 12:37.

And how long will they not believe in Me, for all the signs which I have worked among them?-
It's not that the people were atheists. They speak about the existence of Yahweh quite freely (:3). But to not believe that He will give us the Kingdom, the promised land, is to effectively be in denial of Him. We too can be effective atheists when we doubt our salvation by grace.

Or we can read "How long...?" as a desperate hope for the time to more quickly come when the people would believe. The pain of God leads Him to hope, even desperate hope; and again that hope is expressed and felt in terms which are relative to our kind of time. Hence His many questions relating to 'How long?': "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe me?" (Num. 14:11,27); "How long will it be till they are pure?" (Hos. 8:5; Jer. 4:14; 13:27). These aren't merely rhetorical questions. There's an element of literality about God's question- He doesn't know how long it will be, He can only imagine and hope- for Israel has free will, and will not turn to Him just when He says so. For He is in covenant relationship with them, He loves them, and as we've emphasized, that must involve each party allowing the other to function independently and to have their own time and free choice for returning. These questions, and other similar statements from God, are almost God's probing of possible paths into the future- the future which He could, of course, choose to know, but it seems He chooses not to fully know.

One wonders whether the questions God asks at times are in fact only merely rhetorical; perhaps some of them are genuine reflections of how He has restrained His foreknowledge in order to become vulnerably in love with His people. For example: "How long will these people treat me with contempt?" (Num. 14:11). I'm aware that by

saying these things, I'm pushing a view of God that is quite different to that held by many believers. My comment is that the view of God widely held in Christianity has its roots in Plato's philosophy that God is totally without emotion and unable to be touched by our situation on earth in a passionate manner. The very first clause of the 39 Articles of the Church of England reads: "God is without body, parts, and passions". The Westminster Confession of Faith says the same- God is "without passions". Frankly I find it incredible that this kind of thing can be said, when the Bible is so utterly full of examples of God's passionate response to human grief upon earth. It seems clear enough to me that those churches founded upon such suppositions are simply flatly in contradiction to clear Bible teaching, and reflect their roots in pagan philosophy rather than God's word. Rather than in any sense bringing God 'down', it seems to me that by assigning to Him the characteristics and possibilities which His own word so often speaks of, we are in fact elevating His awesomeness and wonder.

Num 14:12 I will strike them with the pestilence-
The "pestilence" which was the plague upon Egypt (Ex. 9:3) was to come upon a hard hearted Israel (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Num. 14:12; Dt. 28:21; Jer. 21:6). The plagues upon Egypt form the basis for the vials and seals of Revelation, which speak of judgment to come upon the land of Israel. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

And disinherit them-
This is the same word translated "inherit" or "possess" in Num. 13:30 ; 14:24. The word also means 'to destroy'. We are God's inheritance- we are to be totally devoted to Him. If we don't want to be, then He will inherit / destroy us anyway. This is the logic of total devotion- we are devoted to Him, and must willingly go along with this or else He will destroy us. The idea is alluded to in Num. 14:22- because God's glory must fill the earth, therefore the sinners would be destroyed. And again in Num. 14:33,35 we read of the sinners being "consumed", a Hebrew word meaning to be perfected or even cleansed.

And will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they-
The same three words used of how God would make Abraham's seed a great and mighty nation (Gen. 18:18). God was alluding to that intention, but saying that He could cease fulfilling it the way He had been working on, and do it another way- through Moses. They would then have become as He intended- a nation of Levites. God's purposes are therefore open ended to some extent.

And this wasn't the first time God had thought to do this, and Moses had persuaded Him otherwise (Ex. 32:10). The intimacy of Moses' intercession with God Almighty... is

amazing. No wonder Judaism rightly respects Moses. The verbs "I will strike them... I will disinherit them" are cohortatives, and effectively can be translated "Let Me strike... let Me disinherit them". But Moses as it were doesn't give permission. Man is allowed to foil God Almighty. All that stood between Yahweh and the destruction of His people were words, the words of a fallible weak man, Moses, who comes to his climax in :19 with the simple request in one word: "Pardon". And God heard. And even this is but a dim shadow of the Lord's for us. Truly we have a great High Priest.

Num 14:13 Moses said to Yahweh, Then the Egyptians will hear it; for You brought up this people in Your might-
To have done this would've resulted in God changing His stated purpose with Israel. He is prepared to alter His intentions, according to human behaviour. And He shows Himself here open to dialogue, to persuasion, from His faithful children like Moses who reason according to a desire to see *God's* glory rather than their own glory. It may be that it becomes clear that God intends to do something- perhaps to end a life, to relocate us geographically, to close one road and open another. Our prayers shouldn't be simply asking Him to do or not do something. Rather should we reason with Him, giving our reasons as to why we wish Him to act in the way we are asking. This is for our benefit and reveals our motives to ourselves; and also deepens our faith that we are really asking according to God's will as revealed in His word.

Moses seems to have shared the primitive idea that a god rose or fell according to the fortunes of his worshippers, when he asks God to not cut off Israel in case the nations mock Yahweh. Yahweh could have responded that this was far too primitive and limited a view. But no, He apparently listens to Moses and goes along with his request!

From among them-
"From their midst". It is stressed that Israel were taken out from the "midst of Egypt" (Dt. 4:34; 1 Kings 8:51). The plagues and wonders were done in "the midst of Egypt" (Ex. 3:20; Dt. 11:3). The midst of Egypt appears to be defined in Ps. 135:9; Is. 19:3; Ez. 29:3 as being Pharaoh and his servants. The narrative therefore stresses so much his response to the plagues. God's especial focus had been upon his conversion, and yet he refused. Israel were taken out right from under his nose, from the very heart of Egypt. Ez. 20:8 reveals what is not recorded in the historical record; that because the Israelites were so devoted to Egyptian idolatry still, His thought had been to destroy them "in the midst of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:8). But God's pole of grace overcame the pole of necessary judgment. He tolerated them and saved them, with enthusiasm, by the grace which comes from love- love taken to its ultimate, saving term. The whole narrative speaks as if the Hebrews were all at one place at one time and left "the midst of Egypt" together. Although unrecorded in the historical narrative, this would have meant that they gathered together "in the midst of Egypt" with Moses, who was not in Goshen but in the locality and presence of Pharaoh.

Num 14:14 and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, Yahweh, are in the middle of this people; for You, Yahweh, are seen face to face, and Your cloud stands over them and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night-

It was only Moses who saw Yahweh face to face. But his personal relationship with God had been shared not only with Israel, but somehow the Gentile world of Canaan had got to hear about it. If we have a close relationship with God, we will not need to boast of this to others, it will become apparent, and the knowledge of it will somehow spread widely.

God had 'gone before' Israel through the Angel which was to lead them through the desert (s.w. Ex. 23:23). But as with all religious but not spiritual people, they wanted a visible leader. And so when Moses apparently disappeared in the mountain, they demanded that gods be made to "go before us". It was only by grace that God responded that despite their apostacy, He would still "go before you" through the Angel (Ex. 32:34; 33:14). Even the Gentile world had more faith than Israel in this; they believed that Yahweh "went before" His people in an Angel (Num. 14:14). But Israel themselves at the time of the golden calf didn't believe that. Moses in his final speech therefore urges the people to believe that indeed the Angel was going before them (Dt. 1:30,33; 31:6,8).

We see here God's sensitivity to how the Gentiles perceive Him, and this has big implications for how we act before them. For we are God's representatives, and how we represent Him before the world is so significant to Him. For effectively we are Him in this world, and it is our living example far more than our doctrinal explanations which will convert others to Him.

Num 14:15 Now if You killed this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of You will speak, saying-

God could have given legitimate answers to each of Moses' objections; for there were indeed times when He did not turn from the fierceness of His wrath (Ex. 32:12)- such as Jer. 4:8; 2 Kings 23:26. He intended to fulfill the promises to Abraham, but through Moses. But such is His sensitivity and pure pity that He accepted Moses' pleas.

Num 14:16 'Because Yahweh was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore to them, therefore He has slain them in the wilderness'-

Caleb and Joshua perceived that Israel were "well able" to overcome the tribes and inherit the land, seeing that the Angel-hornet had gone ahead and prepared the way; and yet due to Israel's disabling of this possibility at the time, it was in some ways so that God Himself was "not able" to give them the inheritance, because *they* judged that *they* were "not able" to take it (Num. 13:30,31; 14:16).

The way Moses pleaded with God to change His mind and not destroy Israel for the sake of what the surrounding nations would say is indeed inspirational to us all. It surely inspired David to pray likewise- for "wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?" (Ps. 115:2).

Num 14:17 Now please let the power of the Lord be great, according as You have spoken, saying-
The power of God was understood by Moses as coming to its ultimate term in His grace and pity to hardened sinners. The awesome physical power we see in the natural creation is encouragement that His saving grace is of an even greater order. The same power which had done the miracles in Egypt was to be manifest in His forgiveness and salvation of His people from their sins (s.w. :13). This is why the book of Job concludes with manifestations of God's literal power- in order to persuade Job and the friends of His power to save sinners.

Num 14:18 'Yahweh is slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, forgiving iniquity and disobedience; and that will by no means justify the guilty-
Moses asked to know God deeper in Ex. 33 and 34, and was subsequently given an inspiring theophany in which the Name of Yahweh was declared. This wasn't just a piece of exquisite intellectual stimulation for Moses. He quoted that very theophany, the things he had there learned of the essentially merciful character of God, in his matchless prayer of Num. 14:17-19, where he pleads with God not to destroy Israel and not to glorify him as God had offered. All we learn of the Father, the richness of the vision we see in Christ, all this cannot remain within us, as jottings in our Bible margins, as notes of addresses, as dimly recollected ideas in brain cells. If we have really seen, there must, inevitably and naturally, be a giving out of the vision.

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and on the fourth generation'-
This is cited by Moses as a reflection of "the greatness of Your grace" (:19). Sadly, the words are often wrested by those who don't want to see God's grace. The grace in it is that the sins of a man are not necessarily visited upon him and his family- until the third generation. They have three generations to repent of what he did. And if the second and third generations don't repent, then the fourth generation reap the judgment for the sin of the ancestor, if they too don't repent. This is exactly relevant here. For Yahweh does agree to Moses' request and forgives on these terms (:20), but with the understanding that indeed He will visit the iniquity that had been done later on, if there was no real repentance.

Num 14:19 Please pardon the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your

grace, and according as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now-
"According to the greatness of Your grace" is matched in :20 by "according to your word". The implication could be that it was Moses' vision of the extent of God's grace which enabled, prescribed and defined the realization of His grace in practice. David perceived this when he asked in Ps. 33:22 "Let Your grace be on us, Yahweh, according as we have hope in You". Likewise if Abraham had continued bargaining with God about Sodom and asked for it to be saved if only one righteous were to be found there, then we can assume God would have heard him. But he failed to hope for grace as far as he might have done, and so it didn't happen.

Num 14:20 Yahweh said, I have pardoned according to your word-
See on :18,19. Others can be forgiven because of our intercession (see too Mk. 2:5,6). This has huge implications; for in this case we should be praying constantly for others, if the prayers of a third party can have such power in another's life. Thanks to Solomon's prayer, and *if* he had been obedient, all Israel would have been blessed and experienced Yahweh dwelling amongst them (1 Kings 6:12,13). Moses prayed for God to forgive Israel; and He responded: "I have pardoned, according to *your* word" (Num. 14:20) rather than according to their repentance and prayer. Indeed it would seem from Heb. 11:28 that Israel were delivered from the Egyptians due to *Moses'* faith in the Christ whom the sprinkled Passover blood pointed forward to.

This "pardon" didn't remove the consequence of not entering the land (:23). They were forgiven- and not merely saved from immediate destruction, nor simply experiencing the delay of their destruction by some years. Seeing they died some years later than originally decreed, in what then was the significance of their "pardon"? Surely forgiveness involves some restoration of previous relationship, and not merely deferral of judgment? What cash value does this "pardon" have it meant merely the delay of condemnation by a few years? Although they are seen in the New Testament as representative of the rejected at the last day, we could think that they were forgiven even that, saved from condemnation personally, thanks to Moses' intercession. In which case we marvel that His intercession saved even from condemnation, and did not merely achieve a deferral of their judgment by up to 38 years. Perhaps we are to conclude that although that generation were to die in the wilderness, they would die pardoned and could therefore look forward to future eternal inheritance of the Kingdom. But they despised even that. They wanted it right away, and tried to enter it immediately. And for that they really were condemned. We marvel at how men could be condemned, saved from it by amazing intercession- and still prefer condemnation. We are to accept that will rightly die in the desert, have some sand kicked over us and the rest move on, following the Angel to the same end. But we have that priceless pardon, and the sure hope of resurrection and eternal inheritance of the land. And that is wonderful by me. But they were so immediate that they wanted the Kingdom right now, or no deal. And so

they got nothing. In his autobiography in Deuteronomy, Moses makes no mention of his successful intercession at this point. Because it was a redemption refused, a salvation spurned, a great intercession wasted.

Num 14:21 but in very deed, as I live-
To doubt God's word in practice is to belie His very Name and being. This is why God assures us of the certainty of both His salvation and also His judgment of sin by saying that "As I live, says Yahweh..." (Ez. 20:31,33; Is. 49:18; Num. 14:21). As surely as He who is, really is, so surely His words of promise and judgment will be fulfilled. His Name therefore confirms the reality of His words. LXX "But as I live and my name is living". The Name of Yahweh is not therefore simply a title or lexical item, a mere word. God's personality and characteristics are expressed in His Name, and all His constant action in the world and in human hearts is in order to articulate that Name. Thus it becomes a living Name.

And as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh-
The glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle when it was erected (Ex. 40:34), as it would later fill the temple (2 Chron. 7:1). But it was God's intention that His glory should fill all the earth; the same words are used in Num. 14:21. The apparently intense manifestation of Himself in a specific place was only a foretaste of what He wished to bring about in "all the earth". And yet Judaism misread this as meaning that His glory was there alone in a specific holy place. They failed to perceive that it was merely a localized foretaste of His intention to make this a universal experience, and the tearing down of the veil at the Lord's death was evidence enough of the progression of this plan. When exiled from the sanctuary, David in his Psalms often perceives that God's glory fills and shall fill all the earth (Ps. 72:19; Hab. 2:14).

The surrounding verses are all using *eretz* ("earth") specifically about the land promised to Abraham, not the whole planet (:2,3,6,7,9,14,16,23,24,30,31). God's foremost intention was to fill His land with His glory, and through this, secondarily, the whole planet.

If God had let that generation enter the land, then the earth / land would not have been full of His glory. For they had seen His glory (:22) but not reflected it back as intended. But their pardon meant they would in the Kingdom. But they refused even that.

Num 14:22 because all those men who have seen My glory and My signs which I worked in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have tempted Me these ten times, and have not listened to My voice-
"Ten times" may not be a literal number, as in Gen. 31:7; Lev. 26:26; Job 19:3. Or we could calculate the ten times as twice at the Red sea, twice concerning the manna,

twice concerning the quail, twice concerning lack of water, once with the golden calf and once in this refusal to enter the land.

Num 14:23 surely they shall not see the land which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any of those who despised Me see it-
Time and again in the Biblical record, Abraham is held up as a very real example, in whose steps all God's people are to tread. For example, as Abraham was bidden leave Ur and go and "see" the "land" of promise which God would "give" him (Gen. 13:15), so the spies were told to go and "see" the "land" which God had "given" them (Num. 13:18; 32:8,9- the same three words as in the promises to Abraham)- yet they lacked the faith of Abraham to believe that really, they could possess that land. They did "see" the land, yet they were punished by being told that they would not now "see the land" (Num. 14:23; Dt. 1:35). They saw it, but they didn't "see" it with the eyes of Abraham. And so it can be with our vision of God's Kingdom. Remember that Moses was the author of both Genesis and Numbers- such connections aren't incidental. Moses wished the people to see themselves as going forward in the spirit of Abraham- and hence he wrote up the Genesis record for Israel's benefit an inspiration.

"Despised" as in Num. 14:11 is s.w. provoke or blaspheme. It is specifically associated with turning to other gods (Dt. 31:20; 32:19; Is. 1:4). And that appears to be the context. The Israelites decided not to enter the land and instead to follow the gods of Egypt back to Egypt (Num. 14:11,23).

Num 14:24 But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and has followed Me faithfully, him will I bring into the land into which he went; and his seed shall possess it-
Caleb was head of a household within the tribe of Judah. It could be argued that he was directly related to Judah through Hezron and Pharez (1 Chron. 2:5,18,25). But "Kenizzite" (also Num. 32:12) could refer to the Gentile tribe of Gen. 15:19; or to a man called Kenaz, memorialized by Caleb naming his son with that same name (1 Chron. 4:15). And Jud. 1:13 could mean that Caleb's father was called Kenaz. ‘Caleb’ means ‘dog’ in Hebrew, and God alludes to this in describing Caleb as His faithful follower. The intimacy between a man and his dog can be seen between God and His man. The genealogies are constructed in such a way that they don't preclude Caleb having been a Gentile who was fully accepted into the tribe of Judah.

We must consider at this point Caleb's words of Josh. 14:12 "Now therefore give me this hill country, of which Yahweh spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and great and fortified cities". Although not recorded in Num. 14:24, it appears Caleb was specifically promised Hebron at that time. Caleb had explored that area as a spy (Num. 13:22) and taken a special liking to it. We see therefore his

spiritual ambition; 'this shall one day be mine'. And we can do the same, as we in this life spy out our future inheritance.

Joshua allowed the leaders of Israel to lead him into wrong decisions about the initial attack on Ai, and also into being deceived by the Gibeonites. And yet as a younger man, he had boldly stood up to the peer pressure of the princes of Israel in faithfully declaring that Israel could and should go up into Canaan; when the other princes must have put huge pressure upon him to agree with them. He is described as maintaining "another spirit" to theirs (Num. 14:24). The resolution of youth seems to have been somewhat lost as he grew older.

Joshua and Caleb were characterized by the comment that they "wholly followed the Lord" when they went to spy out Canaan (Num. 14:24; 32:11,12; Dt. 1:36; Josh. 14:8,9,14), and urged Israel to go up and inherit it. This refers to the way that the Angel had gone ahead of them, and they faithfully followed where the Angel had gone, and believed that Israel could follow that Angel wherever it led. When Israel finally did go into the land, they were told that Joshua would 'go before' them, and they were to follow him and thereby inherit the land (Dt. 31:3). From this we see that circumstances repeat in our lives. As Joshua had been told to be strong good courage in order to take the land, so he had to tell others (Josh. 10:25). As God charged him to be courageous and obedient to the book of the Law, so Joshua on his deathbed charged his people (Josh. 1:7,8 cp. 23:6).

Caleb had a spirit "with him". This helps us understand the sense in which the word or *logos* of Jesus was "with God" without implying personal pre-existence. We must not read the New Testament through Greek / Western eyes, but rather try to understand it against its original Jewish / Hebrew background of thought. It's a failure to do this which has given rise to trinitarianism and its associated misconceptions. Thus when we read of Jesus being "with" God, the Greek / Western mind can assume this means sitting literally together with Him. But time and again in the Hebrew Bible, the idea of being "with" someone means [according to the Brown, Driver and Briggs *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 768] to "be in one's consciousness, whether of knowledge, memory or purpose". Thus Job speaks of how what God plans to do to him is "with God", i.e. in His purpose (Job 23:14); David is spoken of as having the idea about building a temple "with" him (1 Kings 8:17; 2 Chron. 6:7)- and there are multiple other examples (Num. 14:24; 1 Kings 11:11; 1 Chron. 28:12; Job 10:13; 15:9; 23:10; 27:11; Ps. 50:11; 73:23). It is this refusal to read the Bible within its own Hebraic context which has led to so much misunderstanding, and adopting of doctrines and positions which simply don't stand up to closer Biblical scrutiny.

Num 14:25 Now the Amalekite and the Canaanite dwell in the valley. Tomorrow, turn and go into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea-
They were getting what they wanted. They wanted to turn away from their enemies, and

so God turned them away. This is the significance of the statement that the Canaanite lived in the valley, and they were told to turn away from them. We get what we really want. This looks ahead to the terrible sending away of the rejected from the judgment seat at the last day. "Turn" is s.w. "turn away". They had turned away from God in their time of opportunity, and often wished to return to Egypt. And so it was appropriate for them to be told to return / turn away from the Kingdom. Condemnation is really self chosen, and will be a living out of the decisions already taken by the condemned. Truly "we make the answer now"; the essence of judgment is now.

Num 14:26 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
It was as if God needed someone to talk with, to share His feelings of frustration...

Num 14:27 How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, that murmur against Me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against Me-
For "how long...?", see on :11. The Hebrew for "murmur" is the word for "stop", and is usually translated in that way. The idea is that they didn't want to go further on the journey; they wanted to return to Egypt. Despite the wonder of the Red Sea deliverance. Their hearts truly were in Egypt. This sense of not wanting to go onwards towards the Kingdom, to put a brake on God's saving process, is the same temptation which in essence afflicts all God's people who have started the journey with Him.

An example of the Lord's perhaps unconscious usage of His Father's words is to be found in His exasperated comment: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" (Mt. 17:17). Of course the Lord would have spoken those words and expressed those ideas in Aramaic- but the similarity is striking with His Father's Hebrew words of Num. 14:27: "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation...?". As a son comes out with phrases and word usages which 'Could be his father speaking!', so the Lord Jesus did the same thing. What I am saying is that the Lord was not merely quoting or alluding to the Father's Old Testament words, in the way that, say, Paul or Peter did. As the Father's Son, He was speaking in the same way as His Father, no doubt saturated with the written record of the Father's words, but all the same, there were those similarities of wording and underlying thinking which are only seen between fathers and sons. And His words of Mt. 17:17 = Num. 14:27 seem to me to be an example of this.

Num 14:28 Tell them, 'As I live, says Yahweh, surely as you have spoken in My ears, so will I do to you-
But the people thought they were only quietly murmuring (:27). God hears our inaudible grumblings and faithless doubts, just as He did Sarah's. We have here an example of where those who are condemned have in fact desired that and chosen that outcome.

God is more concerned with saving people than condemning them, and any condemnation is essentially self inflicted rather than inflicted by God.

Num 14:29 Your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness; and all who were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, who have murmured against Me-

The idea of carcasses falling suggests they were already carcasses. They were the living dead. Robert Roberts rightly described the generation that was under twenty years old on leaving Egypt as the most faithful of all Israel's generations. The faithful element with whom God so 'fell in love' was not just comprised of the 'under 20s'. Joshua and Caleb also featured amongst them, as did the Levites (who the curse of destruction in the wilderness did not apply to: Num. 14:29 cp. 1:49). Numerically, the largest of these three groups who constituted the 'faithful element' was the under 20s. It is fitting, therefore, that this faithful remnant are personified as a young person. Thus God reflected to Hosea: "When Israel was a child (s.w. "young man"), then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (Hos. 11:1).

Num 14:30 surely you shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore that I would make you dwell therein, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun-

This promise was solemnly made, with uplifted hand as it were, to that generation who left Egypt (Ex. 6:8). But they did not enter the land, as Num. 14:30 makes clear. This was because Israel broke their side of the covenant, and did not in fact want to enter the land; and continued serving the idols of Egypt, which they took with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8; Acts 7:43). But that promise was guaranteed by the fact that "I will bring you into the land... I am Yahweh" (Ex. 6:8). The very essence of Yahweh, that 'I will' save, as surely as 'I will be who I will be', a saviour God, was fought against by Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to the covenant. And because 'Yahweh' involves His character, which includes His judgment of sin and not turning a blind eye to it (Ex. 34:4-6), human intransigence and faithlessness was allowed to as it were even counteract His most essential 'being' a saviour God for His beloved people.

Num 14:31 But your little ones, that you said should be for a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which you have rejected-

In the end, God gives us our dominant desire. Israel in the wilderness “despised the land of desire, they believed not his word” of promise, that they would enter it (Ps. 106:24 AVmg.). They didn’t really desire the land, so they didn’t receive it. Israel both despised the land, and they despised their God (Num. 14:11,23,31 RV). They rejected the land and so were rejected from it; just as all the condemned are actually receiving

that which they themselves really want. Our attitude as to whether or not we want to be in the Kingdom is essentially our attitude to God. This has far reaching implications. Ps. 107:30 likewise speaks of how the faithful are brought to the haven of their desire (RVmg.). All those who truly love the Lord's appearing- with all that implies in practical life and belief- will be accepted (2 Tim. 4:8). And yet Israel didn't have the dominant desire to be in the Kingdom, as Joshua and Caleb had. Why didn't they? It is vital that we understand the reasons for their failure – such an understanding will be a safeguard to help prevent us from making the same mistake (Rom. 15:4).

The whole people of Israel would have been left in the wilderness and now allowed to enter the land, if Gad and Reuben refused to cross the Jordan river (Num. 32:15). But this would have broken the Divine promise of Num. 14:31 that all those under 20 would enter the land. Even that promise, therefore, had unstated conditions attached to it. And yet God had yet another option- if they refused to go over Jordan, then they would forfeit their land and receive a different inheritance (Num. 32:30). The complexities of these conditions are of course beyond us, because we are seeing only a part of the working of God's infinite mind. The point is, there are conditions attached to God's promises which aren't always made apparent to us.

Num 14:32 But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness-
We must consider the tone of voice in which God said this, and His feelings as He did. For God grieved over the carcasses of those wretched men whom He slew in the wilderness for their thankless rebellions against Him their saviour (Heb. 3:17). The apostle makes the point: "With whom was He grieved?". Answer: with the wicked whom He slew! A human God or a proud God would never grieve over His victory over His enemies.

Num 14:33 Your children shall be wanderers in the wilderness forty years, and shall bear your prostitution, until your dead bodies be consumed in the wilderness-
Their desire was to make them a captain and return to Egypt, and Neh. 9 says they did make a captain, to replace Moses. So their judgment was to wander, shepherdless, in the desert. Their concern about their children being killed by the Canaanites was only an excuse- their children ended up bearing their sins, i.e. bearing the consequence of them. The figure of 'carrying iniquity' means 'carrying the consequence of sin'; which is what the Lord did on the cross. Others suffer the consequence of our sin; and the consequence of sin can be carried by Jesus.

To disbelieve we will enter the promised land of God's Kingdom is effectively prostitution against God. The Bible often describes unfaithfulness in terms which are startling to us, but this is to show how serious is unbelief. LXX "And they shall bear your fornication", which usually refers to idolatry. This implies idolatry as the underlying

reason why they refused to enter Canaan and wanted to return to Egypt, the land of their gods. For they had taken the gods of Egypt with them (Ez. 20:6-8; Acts 7:43). Likewise Num. 14:43 LXX "because ye have disobeyed the Lord and turned aside"; and turning aside is usually turning aside from God unto idols.

Num 14:34 According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, even forty days, for every day a year, you will bear your iniquities, even forty years-
The Lord Jesus on the cross was a sin bearer (Is. 53:11); and the idea of sin bearing was almost an idiom for being personally guilty and sinful (Num. 14:34; Ex. 28:43). The Lord was our sin bearer and yet personally guiltless.

And you will know the altering of My purpose'-
That God can change His mind is an indication of the extreme sensitivity He has to human behaviour. The only thing in which He is unchanging is His patience with sinners (Mal. 3:6). He had promised to bring Israel in to the promised land. But He destroyed that generation- "and ye shall know my breach of promise" (AV), or, "the altering of my purpose" (RVmg.). God's purpose can change. Because God can change His mind. He says so Himself. Such is His desire to save. The only element in which he does not change is in not consuming the sons of Jacob, by grace alone. There is a gap between Yahweh's prophetic pronouncements, and their fulfillment. And in that gap there is the possibility for repentance. This is what gives intensity to our prayers and repentance, knowing we too live in such a gap.

Num 14:35 I Yahweh have spoken, surely this will I do to all this evil congregation, who are gathered together against Me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die-
Heb. 3:11 says that "I swore in My anger: They shall not enter into My rest". God has emotion. The generation that were promised the rest, permanence and stability of the promised land were not given it, because in their hearts they wandered. And this, as noted on Heb. 3:10, was reflected in their wandering in the wilderness. This implies that God changed His mind about letting Israel enter the land; for He had promised that generation "rest" in that He promised them the land (Josh. 1:15). Or as Num. 14:34 (A.V. mg.) says: "Ye shall bear your iniquity, even forty years, and ye shall know the altering of My purpose". These were the words of the Angel to Moses. The apparent change of plans could be seen as more appropriate if it concerned the Angel which led them; and yet the Angel all the same was manifesting God. This oath they would not "enter into My rest" was solely because they did not believe (Heb. 3:18) in their hearts (Heb. 3:12. The immorality, idolatry etc. were relatively incidental to the essential issue- that they did not believe He would give them rest in the promised land. And therefore He did not give it to them. The context of all this is Paul's appeal for confident hope in our future

salvation (Heb. 3:6). It is unbelief and a constant demand for 'proof' which was their problem which cost them salvation.

Num 14:36 The men, whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation to murmur against Him, by bringing up an evil report against the land- Had they believed in the power of God, then *whatever* 'adversary' was in the land, in whatever form, was ultimately of no real power (Num. 13:32; 14:36; Dt. 1:25). And yet it was not God's way to specifically tell the people that there was no such dragon lurking in the land of Canaan – instead He worked with them according to their fears, by making the earth literally open and swallow up the apostate amongst them (Num. 16:30) – emphasizing that by doing this, *He* was doing "a new thing", something that had never been done before – for there was no dragon lurking in any land able to swallow up people. And throughout the prophets it is emphasized that *God* and not any dragon swallowed up people – "The Lord [and not any dragon] was as an enemy; *He* has swallowed up Israel" (Lam. 2:5 and frequently in the prophets). The people of Israel who left Egypt actually failed to inherit Canaan because they believed that it was a land who swallowed up the inhabitants of the land (Num. 13:32), relating this to the presence of giants in the land (Num. 13:33). As Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them, they needed to believe that whatever myths there were going around, God was greater than whatever mythical beast was there. And because they would not believe that, they failed to enter the land, which in type symbolized those who fail to attain that great salvation which God has prepared.

The Hebrew seems to mean that the unfaithful spies now again bring up an evil report upon the land. This verse appears unnecessary until we get the sequence of events:

The people wanted to return to Egypt and not enter Canaan

God condemned them to instant death and destruction as a nation

Moses intercedes and God pardons them

The "pardon" meant that although they would die in the desert, they would rise again to eternally inherit the land

The ten spies then made another attempt to persuade the people of how bad the land was and were condemned

The people weren't interested in future eternal inheritance, and wanted to enter the land immediately

They were therefore punished with absolute condemnation; Moses' amazing intercession and achievement was refused by them.

Num 14:37 even those men who brought up an evil report about the land, died by the plague before Yahweh-
Their "evil report about the land" is twice stressed (:36). They had agreed that the land was indeed a good land. The evil report was in their false claims about the apparently invincible inhabitants, and the implication that the people therefore should return to Egypt. To 'bring up an evil report' is to slander, and the word is always elsewhere used about the slander of persons. It is a strange term to use about a land. But effectively "the land" is being put for God's promise about entering the land. It was God whom they were slandering. And so do we if we refuse to believe we shall enter His Kingdom.

Num 14:38 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive out of those men who went to spy out the land-
The implication is that the twelve men were standing "before Yahweh" (:37) and ten of them were struck down dead, and only Joshua and Caleb were left standing.

Num 14:39 Moses told these words to all the children of Israel, and the people mourned greatly-
This incident looks ahead to the bitter weeping of those rejected at the day of judgment (Mt. 8:12), at the borders of the Kingdom. But their weeping was self inflicted and unnecessary if they had had faith.

Num 14:40 They rose up early in the morning, and went up to the top of the mountain, saying, Behold, we are here, and will go up to the place which Yahweh has promised; for we have sinned-
These Israelites who had crossed the Red Sea (cp. our baptism) and were now rejected from God's Kingdom, because they themselves had said they didn't want to inherit it, now wanted more than anything else to be there. This is a major Biblical theme- that the rejected will desperately ask to be allowed in to God's kingdom; the foolish virgins will knock on the closed door begging for it to be opened (Mt. 25:11; Lk. 13:25). Our ultimate destiny is to stand before the Lord wanting to enter His Kingdom with every fiber in our being. But this must be our attitude now, for then it will be too late to change anything.

We note how one moment they were talking of returning to Egypt, and then in a moment they change and want to desperately enter Canaan. This instability was what reflected their lack of any deep faith or conviction, neither towards Yahweh nor their Egyptian gods. Hence the misery of the uncommitted, wandering to their deaths.

Num 14:41 Moses said, Why now do you disobey the commandment of Yahweh, since disobedience shall not prosper?-

Those rejected by God at His judgment still desperately want to enter His Kingdom (Mt. 25:11). In that day of final judgment, all present will desperately want only one thing- to enter the Kingdom. Nothing else will matter. We should have that spirit with us now. This was the sin of presumption (Dt. 1:43) which Num. 15:30 will now go on to condemn.

Num 14:42 Don't go up, for Yahweh isn't among you; that you not be struck down before your enemies-
"Go not up, for the Lord is not among you... but they presumed to go up... nevertheless, the ark of the covenant of the Lord (which the Angel had made with them) departed not" (:42-44)- as if to imply that the Lord (the Angel) was in the ark, and therefore did not go up with them because the ark did not. See on Ps. 78:60.

Num 14:43 There the Amalekite and the Canaanite are before you, and you shall fall by the sword, because you are turned back from following Yahweh; therefore Yahweh will not be with you-
The comment of :33 LXX "And they shall bear your fornication" implies that the refusal to enter the land was connected with idolatry. For "fornication" in a national sense usually refers to idolatry. This implies idolatry as the underlying reason why they refused to enter Canaan and wanted to return to Egypt, the land of their gods. For they had taken the gods of Egypt with them (Ez. 20:6-8; Acts 7:43). Likewise Num. 14:43 LXX "because ye have disobeyed the Lord and turned aside"; and turning aside is usually turning aside from God unto idols. Yahweh would not be with them because they had chosen not to have Yahweh with them.

Num 14:44 But they presumed to go up to the top of the mountain; nevertheless the ark of the covenant of Yahweh and Moses didn't depart out of the camp-
David's bringing up / going up / ascending of the ark (2 Sam. 6:2) recalls how the ark did not go up into Canaan in Num. 14:44 (s.w.); for the land was not to be given to Israel. But when the time came, the ark was brought up into Canaan (Josh. 4:16,18 s.w.). And so now, the land was being given to them again. David felt as if he was as Joshua reconquering Canaan in fulfilment of the promises. This may explain why Paul in Acts 13:21 parallels the 40 years wandering of Israel with the 40 year reign of Saul; and he may speak of Saul reigning 40 years because of this, even if it was not literally true. It creates big chronological problems if we read that 40 year reign of Saul literally.

Num 14:45 Then the Amalekite came down, and the Canaanite who lived in that mountain, and struck them and beat them down, even to Hormah-
Dt. 1:44 "The Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased

you, as bees do, and beat you down in Seir, even to Hormah". It was as if the Israelites had knocked the bee hive, and provoked the bees to attack them; hence the Amorites chased Israel "as bees do" (Dt. 1:44). The hornet had been sent ahead of Israel to as it were chase out the Amorites; but now it was as if this was reversed, and they chased the Israelites. For in their hearts they were no better than the Amorites.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 15

Num 15:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
This may be intentionally positioned here after the tragic record of how Israel didn't want to enter the land and returned in their hearts to Egypt. The regulations here stress that they would enter the land (:2), and when there, would offer freewill offerings (:3). It was to encourage the younger generation, and also to show the faithful few that God's saving purpose would come true. And there would be in Israel people who loved God so much that they made freewill offerings; whereas the people had just been claiming that Yahweh hated them, and they wanted to follow their Egyptian idols back to Egypt. See on :31.

Num 15:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When you have come into the land of your habitations, which I give to you-
See on :1. "Habitations" may imply that each family would have their own specific area which they were to possess and inhabit. Just as we each have specific intended futures and roles within the Kingdom of God, both now and eternally. But it is s.w. "sojournings". Even life in Canaan was to be a sojourning, a passing through, because the Kingdom was in view still as the permanent dwelling for God's people. This leads right on from the comment in Num. 14 that the generation over 20 would not enter the land. It could be that now Moses is specifically addressing and encouraging the younger generation. But these laws go on in :24,25 to speak of how forgiveness was possible for the entire body of Israel if sin was committed in ignorance. We wonder whether this was a hint that even then Israel could be forgiven if they recognized they had sinned, and God would have been prepared to accept they had done so "in ignorance" of the real implications. We recall that God graciously excused the murder of His own son as a sin "done in ignorance" (Acts 3:17 "Through ignorance you did it as did also your rulers"). The same word is translated "deceived" in Job 12:16: "The deceived and the deceiver are His". If they recognized that they had been deceived by the 10 spies, could they then have been forgiven? Perhaps recognition of sin means that the sin was previously done in ignorance. The otherwise strange laws inserted into the law of Moses about the "red heifer" offering for all Israel may likewise have been intended as a nudge towards all this. A way was being made for all Israel to be forgiven- and these laws had not

previously been given. God led the condemned generation "to see what was in their hearts"- why do that, if they were merely being led to their deaths? Is there not a hint that God was looking at any possible heart change that might enable Him to forgive and eternally save them, even if they had to die in the wilderness? For Moses too couldn't see nor enter the promised land, and yet will be saved. He sinned at Kadesh (Num. 20:1), exactly where Israel did (Num. 13:25). Both Moses and Israel are charged with the sins of "disbelief" (Num. 14:11; 20:12) and "rebellion" (Num. 14:9; 20:24) and are banned from entering the land. But Moses had hope of resurrection to eternal inheritance. "Presumption"(:30) is literally 'with upraised hand'. And this was how Moses had sinned at Kadesh, lifting his hand and then striking the rock. But even that was forgivable in terms of salvation. They were to see in Moses a possible pattern for themselves. The ten unfaithful spies were smitten with death; but the condemned generation were kept alive. Whilst there is life there's hope, and surely man is always capable of repentance whilst still alive. And I suggest God was nudging even that condemned generation towards that. He had sworn they would die in the wilderness, but still they could be resurrected to eternal inheritance of the land if they repented. Moses committed the sin of high handed presumption, literally lifting his hand before striking the rock (see on Nun. 20:11); David likewise committed the sin of presumption by despising God's word in sinning with Bathsheba. But both were still forgiven, although they had to take the consequences in this life. So the sin of presumption can be forgiven, by ceasing to be presumptuous. Just as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit can be forgiven once it stops.

The commands of :3-6 are an expansion upon the laws given in Leviticus. Once in the land, they were to additionally offer grain, oil and wine with their sacrifices. This reinforces what we have read in Num. 14- that the land was "good" and was flowing with blessing of grain, oil and wine. They were therefore reminded that once in the land under the covenant, they would have abundance of these things and would add them to the offerings, further to what had been commanded in Leviticus. They were being focused upon the abundance of the future Kingdom.

"I am giving you... into which I am bringing you" (:17) encouraged them that their wanderings were not aimless, but were part of being brought to the Kingdom. We can take comfort in the counterpart to this in our own wilderness wanderings.

Num 15:3 and will make an offering by fire to Yahweh, a burnt offering, or a sacrifice, to accomplish a vow, or as a freewill offering, or in your set feasts-
See on :1. The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill

offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

To make a pleasant aroma to Yahweh, of the herd, or of the flock-
"Of the herd" continues the common Mosaic theme, that the animal was not to be raised specially for sacrifice but was to be taken out of the herd, it was one "of" them. This looks ahead to the human nature of the Lord Jesus as one of us, taken "of" the herd of humanity. And all sacrifice is to be from out of our normal lives, making time in lunch breaks to read the Bible and pray, things like that, rather than occasional consciously prepared 'gifts' to God.

Num 15:4 then he who offers his offering shall offer to Yahweh a grain offering of a tenth part of an ephah of fine flour mixed with the fourth part of a hin of oil-
This section seems to be reminding Israel of the need not to forget to offer a grain offering at the same time as a major sacrifice; as if to underline that God is magnified in the little things of life, and these shouldn't be left outside the sphere of His influence just because we consider we have made a major sacrifice to Him.

Num 15:5 and wine for the drink offering, the fourth part of a hin, you shall prepare with the burnt offering, or for the sacrifice, for each lamb-
Bread (:4) and wine were effectively offered with the lamb. The Lord's choice of symbols for the breaking of bread surely had this in mind. They are but the side offerings, as it were, compared to the lamb. To take bread and wine would beg the question: 'And where is the slain offering?'. And the answer to that at the breaking of bread is 'Here in our midst'.

Meal [bread], wine and oil are associated with what people ate at their own tables: Jud. 9:9, 13 (oil and wine), 1 Sam. 1:24; 10:3 (meal and wine), Hos. 9:4 (wine), Mic. 6:7 (oil). The idea was that in sacrifice, one was at the Lord's table and eating with Him. This is our experience not only at the memorial meeting, but in all experience of sacrifice to Him. We fellowship with Him.

Num 15:6 Or for a ram, you shall prepare for a grain offering two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mixed with the third part of a hin of oil-
These commands were for when Israel were in the land, as the amounts of oil and wine required would've been hard to find in the desert. Indeed it is an open question as to whether the laws of sacrifice were kept whilst in the desert. It was by grace that God would have overlooked this. I suggest that it is to this which Am. 5:25 refers, challenging

Israel to remember that God had accepted them in the wilderness by grace alone, as they were unable to keep His ideal requirements: "Did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness?".

Num 15:7 and for the drink offering you shall offer the third part of a hin of wine, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
"A pleasant aroma" is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being "in Christ". "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Num 15:8 When you prepare a bull for a burnt offering, or for a sacrifice, to accomplish a vow, or for peace offerings to Yahweh-
The sacrifices were to be accompanied by oil, bread [flour] and wine. They were to give to God the same food which they would eat at their own table; oil and wine (Jud. 9:9,13); meal / bread and wine (1 Sam. 1:24; 10:3; wine (Hos. 9:4) and oil (Mic. 6:7). They were to see themselves as eating at His table, sharing a meal with their invisible God. The same idea is behind the Lord's table which we share at the breaking of bread meeting. And this theme was developed at this point, because Israel had just been condemned to 40 years wandering. But God was urgent in His desire to remain in fellowship with them. Permanently depriving a sinner of the Lord's table was not His way at all, indeed the very opposite. See on :12.

Num 15:9 then shall he offer with the bull a grain offering of three tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil-
One of the most obvious similarities between the peace offering and the breaking of bread is that they both feature bread and wine, associated with a slain animal in the midst (Num. 15:9,10; 2 Sam. 6:17- 19). And further, both require the eating of the

sacrifice by the offerer. The peace offering and Passover (also typical of the memorial meeting) featured the offerer eating the sacrifice "before the Lord". This phrase "before the Lord" is continually emphasized in the records of the peace offerings. I guess we would all admit that our sense of the presence of the Father and Son at our memorial meetings has much room for improvement. We really are "before the Lord" as we sit there. God came unto men when they offered acceptable peace offerings (Ex. 20:24), as He is made known to us through the breaking of bread.

Num 15:10 and you shall offer for the drink offering half a hin of wine, for an offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
This had only previously been required in the specific case of Ex. 29:40 but was now being made applicable to every sacrifice. After the rejection of the people in Num. 14, God wanted them to have this extra feature in relationship with Him. I see it that way, rather than Him as it were punishing them with more legislation. For that was not at all the purpose of any of His Mosaic laws.

Num 15:11 Thus shall it be done for each bull, or for each ram, or for each of the male lambs, or of the young goats-
See on :12. The repetition of "each" stresses that each animal was to be accompanied by the required side offerings.

Num 15:12 According to the number that you shall prepare, so you shall do to each one according to their number-
It was important that each animal sacrifice was individually accompanied by the side plates, as it were, of bread, wine and oil. As explained on :8, each animal was to be seen as a meal enjoyed with God, with the altar as the table at which it was 'eaten'. The way Solomon and others offered vast numbers of animal sacrifices at one go was therefore completely missing the point of personal relationship with God- and reducing it to mere religion. For God wanted individuals to dine with Him, and not rivers of blood flowing from huge numbers of sacrifices, as the prophets make clear.

Num 15:13 All who are native-born shall do these things in this way, in offering an offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
The reference to "native-born" was again an encouragement to an Israel just rejected from the land that one day, they would be there. And they would have children who were born in that land. Constantly God likewise encourages us, directly and indirectly, that we shall indeed one day inherit the Kingdom.

Num 15:14 If a stranger lives as a foreigner with you, or whoever may be among you throughout your generations, and will offer an offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh; as you do, so he shall do-

The Law of Moses constantly envisaged that Gentiles would live amongst Israel at all points in their history, "throughout your generations". The intention was that Israel in their land would be the light of the Gentile world around them, and Gentiles would come to that light, and also come to worship Yahweh. Israel's apostacy on one hand and arrogant xenophobia on the other meant that this was never realized. The intention has been deferred and reinterpreted in the later prophecies which speak of Gentiles coming to Zion's light.

Num 15:15 For the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the stranger who lives as a foreigner, a statute forever throughout your generations: as you are, so shall the foreigner be before Yahweh-

As explained on :14, the intention was always that Gentiles would come to Israel and live there, and thereby come to Yahweh. They too could be "before Yahweh". This was sadly ignored and misinterpreted by Israel, to the point that notices were erected in the temple effectively warning Gentiles not to come "before Yahweh" on pain of death. There was a riot in Jerusalem just at the thought that Paul might just possibly have brought Gentiles into the temple area "before Yahweh".

Num 15:16 One law and one ordinance shall be for you, and for the stranger who lives as a foreigner with you'-

This is stressed so many times. See on :29. The law of Moses was the contract of the covenant between God and Israel. But the Gentiles were invited to come under that law, indeed it was required of them. This was therefore an open invitation and even requirement that Gentiles enter covenant relationship with Yahweh. God's definition of "Israel" as His people was from the start geared towards inclusiveness of all races- and thereby against all forms of racially based patriotism and xenophobia.

Num 15:17 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The Law of Moses, like the whole of God's word, is studded with incidental reminders that truly we shall enter the promised land.

Num 15:18 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When you come into the land to which I bring you-

God had just condemned Israel to 40 years wandering in the desert outside of His land

(Num. 14). But right at the start of it, He emphasizes that He is still earnestly operating His program to "bring" them into that land, seeing they of themselves hadn't wished to enter it. And so even when it seems a man way be walking away from the Kingdom, even by his own choice, Yahweh is ever seeking to "bring" him somehow, eventually, back to it. Those who "leave" are still the subjects of His efforts to "bring" them there.

Num 15:19 then it shall be that when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall offer up a wave offering to Yahweh-
Again we note the continual encouragement, after the events of Num. 14, that they would enter the land / Kingdom one day. There is no recorded evidence that Israel ever obeyed what they were commanded here.

Num 15:20 Of the first of your dough you shall offer up a cake for a wave offering: as the wave offering of the threshing floor, so you shall heave it-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Num 15:21 Of the first of your dough you shall give to Yahweh a wave offering throughout your generations-
Cain's sacrifice wasn't accepted because of his lack of faith in the principles of blood offering, and because of his hatred of his brother. For it was not impossible for God to accept non-blood sacrifices (Num. 15:17-21; 18:12,13; Dt. 26:1-4). Cain, the epitome of 'the devil' (Jn. 8:44), was characterized by the attitude that he was not his brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9). But the Lord Jesus perhaps offered a commentary on the incident when he said that our offering can only be accepted if we are first reconciled to our brother (Mt. 5:24). Cain's insistent lack of responsibility for his brother was the real sin, and therefore his sacrifice wasn't accepted by God. He wanted to serve God his own way, disregard his brother, justify his disagreement with him... to be a private person. But this was the basis of his rejection.

Num 15:22 When you shall err, and not observe all these commandments which Yahweh has spoken to Moses,-

At times Moses lost the sense of his own personality, so strong was his inspiration by God: “All these commandments, which the Lord has spoken unto Moses” (Num. 15:22,23); these words were actually said by Moses (:17). Jeremiah spoke “from the mouth of the Lord” and yet the Lord spoke “by the mouth of Jeremiah” (2 Chron. 36:12,22) - this is how close was the relationship between God and the men He spoke through. Their mouth was His mouth, and they were subsumed beneath that awesome reality. Thus John the Baptist described himself as merely "a voice" when he was asked who he was.

Num 15:23 even all that Yahweh has commanded you by Moses, from the day that Yahweh gave commandment, and onward throughout your generations-
There is clearly the recognition here that the law given at Sinai was not as it were set in stone. In an "onward" sense there was to be progressive revelation; and we have an example of this in :34. This flexibility means that we are more open to the idea that finally the entire Law was abrogated in the Lord Jesus; and there were evident variations allowed to it when Israel were in exile. The law was the contract forming the basis of Yahweh's covenant relationship with His people; and yet that contract was clearly flexible. If it could be added to by God, parts could also be ammended. We see this quite early on, for the 'second law' in Deuteronomy, given at the end of the wilderness wanderings, has some amendments to the earlier law given.

Num 15:24 then it shall be, if it be done unknowingly, without the knowledge of the congregation, that all the congregation shall offer one young bull for a burnt offering, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh, with the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it, according to the ordinance, and one male goat for a sin offering-
Sins of ignorance still required atonement. The passage of time doesn’t work a quasi-atonement for our sins; confession of sin and earnest searching of our lives, both past and present, is one of the disciplines which characterize the spiritually healthy believer. It’s likely we will come to the day of judgment with sins of ignorance still counted to us, and yet we believe God will forgive them- hence we ask to be forgiven for such sins which aren’t perceived by us (Ps. 19:12). This means we will be forgiven without repentance. If we look forward to such forgiveness, we should show it to our brethren today, forgiving without demanding their repentance, hoping that they will later on in their journey perceive things more maturely.

Num 15:25 The priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the children of Israel, and they shall be forgiven; for it was an error, and they have brought their offering, an offering made by fire to Yahweh, and their sin offering before Yahweh, for their error-
James may have sins of ignorance in mind when he says that obeying all the law but breaking just one commandment will lead to condemnation (James 2:10). His argument

becomes all the more powerful if he is alluding here, for the point is then made that this holds true even if that one commandment is broken in ignorance. Clearly the only way to justification with God is through faith in the Lord Jesus.

"All the congregation of the children of Israel" is the very phrase repeatedly used in Num. 13:26; 14:2,5,10,27 of how "all the congregation of the children of Israel" had disbelieved the two spies and preferred to spurn God's Kingdom; and how God's wrath was with "all the congregation of the children of Israel". They were all guilty of the presumptuous sin, but didn't all die. Because they were forgiven. "They shall be forgiven" is literally 'They shall be pardoned'. This is exactly what Moses had achieved in his intercession for the people for their sin of rejecting the promised land. They had been pardoned. The sin had been treated as one of relative "ignorance" or 'deception' [s.w.], in that they had believed the false report of the ten spies. Their presumptuous sin had been to go up into Canaan anyway, unwilling to accept death in the wilderness and future resurrection. Some of them died in that endeavour, but the rest of that generation lived on and died in the desert. But during that time, they had the chance to repent. Whilst there's life there's always hope for repentance, surely. For can a living man be precluded from repentance?

Num 15:26 And all the congregation of the children of Israel shall be forgiven, and the stranger who lives as a foreigner among them; for in respect of all the people it was done unknowingly-
The sin of crucifying the Lord Jesus is very generously presented as a sin of ignorance by the Lord's saying that “they know not what they do”, confirmed by Peter's appeal to repent although “Through ignorance you did it” (Lk. 23:34; Acts 3:17). Repentance was therefore encouraged on the basis of having had sin made known to them. And the offering for that sin had already been made, in the Lord's death. Their sin of [apparent] ignorance was therefore in fact the forgiveness for their sin- if they actualized it by recognition and repentance.

Num 15:27 If one person sins unknowingly, then he shall offer a female goat of a year old for a sin offering-
The ruler was to offer a male (Lev. 4), but the common person was to offer a female. It may simply be because female animals cost less, and the ruler was to realize that he had greater responsibility in his failure and needed to show this in the kind of sacrifice he made.

Num 15:28 The priest shall make atonement for the soul who errs when he sins unknowingly, to make atonement for him before Yahweh; and he shall be forgiven-
We note that the legislation about the cities of refuge likewise reflected God's special concern about unintentional sin. He recognizes that there are different kinds of sin. And

in this we see His sensitivity, for the other legal codes at the time saw everything in black and white terms of obedience or disobedience to legal statutes. The word for "unknowingly" or "unintentionally" is s.w. 'deceived' (Job 12:16). It could be that God also recognizes that some are deceived into sin, and therefore treats those who lead into sin more severely than those who are led into sin. Likewise the New Testament condemns false teachers, but seems to be more acceptive of the falsely taught, the misguided.

Num 15:29 You shall have one law for him who does anything unknowingly, for him who is native-born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger who lives as a foreigner among them'-

The implication therefore was that any Gentile living in Israel was under the Mosaic law. And that law was the contract forming the basis of the covenant. They were therefore to enter covenant with Yahweh if they lived in Israel. The law continually envisages Gentiles living in Israel, as if they were going to be attracted by Israel and come and live in the land having entered covenant with Yahweh. God's definition of "Israel" as His people was from the start geared towards inclusiveness of all races- and thereby against all forms of racially based patriotism and xenophobia. See on :16.

Num 15:30 'But the soul who does anything in presumption, whether he is native-born or a foreigner, the same blasphemes Yahweh; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people-

David murdered, committed adultery and even the deadly sin of presumption (2 Sam. 12:9 cp. Num. 15:31). Yet these were overlooked by God *as if* they were 'surface' sins; the real man David was accepted by God and held up as a wondrous example to all the faithful. Such is His softness towards us, and more essentially, His earnest desire to save men who may not 'make it' on the basis of straight obedience. The context here in the previous chapter is of Israel having been presumptuous in trying to enter Canaan when told they now could not do so (Dt. 1:43). If God is eager to see presumptuous sins as sins of ignorance, so that He might still save al least some... we also should take as generous a view as possible of others' sins.

"Presumption" is literally 'with upraised hand'. The idea is of willful defiance; thus Israel left Egypt with a high hand and therefore the Egyptians pursued them (Ex. 14:8; Num. 33:3). And this was how Moses had sinned at Kadesh, lifting his hand and then striking the rock. But even that was forgivable in terms of salvation. In the next chapter, Num, 16, we will read of Korah and his followers standing proudly before their tents, as if this too was sin with upraised, defiant hand. The book of Numbers features the record of incidents whilst the people were "in the wilderness", and also the giving of extra laws. But those extra laws are to be related to the narrative incidents recorded. Num. 15 follows on from Num. 14, and therefore talks about presumptuous sins. This means to

"despise" God's word of promise (:31), and Num. 14 records Israel 'despising' both God and the promised land. Whilst they continued in that, there was no atonement possible. We can conclude that that legislation was given in the context of Israel's presumption in rejecting the Kingdom and calling God a liar. And the implication is that we can all in principle commit that same sin. It is unforgivable insofar as the sin itself means we refuse to believe in God's grace and salvation, and reject it as fake. Whilst that's our position, salvation is impossible- by our own choice. The issue of whether we believe we will be saved therefore assumes critical place in the psychology and worldview of all God's people, at all times. The context continues in Num. 16, where the rebellion of Korah is again a sin of presumption that was met with immediate destruction- just as the ten spies were destroyed. Again we are left with the impression that presumptuous sin leads to immediate destruction. For those left alive, especially the condemned generation in the desert, there was still some potential for repentance, pardon and future salvation through resurrection.

Num 15:31 Because he has despised the word of Yahweh, and has broken His commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be on him'-
Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). As noted on :30, David committed this sin but was spared. The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My

face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

"Despised the word" is the term used about David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:9,10). But God's grace is such that even in this case, when David deserved to die for knowingly doing wrong, still a way was found for David to live. We are all in essence in the same situation, for our sins are often knowingly done.

As discussed on :1, the immediate context of these commandments is the presumptuous sin of Israel, in turning away from the Kingdom, and then presuming to try to enter it when they had been barred from it. Despising the word of the Lord is alluding to how the faithless spies and their followers did just this in Num 14:36,37.

Num 15:32 While the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day-

The inheritance of the land is elsewhere described as a keeping of a Sabbath rest. The Sabbath was a looking forward to resting from the labour of Egypt in the salvation of the promised land: "You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm, therefore Yahweh your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Dt. 5:15). Quite often, inheritance of the land is described as "rest": "You haven't yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which Yahweh your God gives you... dwell in the land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, and He gives you rest" (Dt. 12:9,10). Paul in Hebrews develops this point, based upon the statements in Ps. 95:8-11 that God had sworn that the condemned generation would not enter the "rest" of the promised land. This man who broke the Sabbath rest intentionally therefore becomes similar to those who willfully refused to enter the land, which has just been recorded in Num. 14. He gathered sticks just as the Hebrews gathered straw in Egypt; rather than rest from that labour. And that is the context for these laws.

As discussed on :1, the context here is Israel's rejection because they had willfully disobeyed Yahweh and blasphemed Him (Num. 14:11). This man was similar, and perhaps that is why his case is recorded here. He is an example of the presumptuous sin just spoken of in :30. The mention that Israel were in the wilderness when this happened may appear to be stating the obvious. But many of the laws, including those so far in this chapter, had been prefaced with the comment that they were to be observed when Israel were in Canaan. Perhaps there was a willful misunderstanding of the Sabbath law as only applicable in Canaan. I say willful misunderstanding, because the man was judged as guilty of the sin of presumption (:30,31). So often, caviling over

legalistic interpretation of the law is because we are seeking to simply ignore God's law and go our own way; see on :33.

The only other occurrence of the Hebrew phrase "gathering sticks" is in the description of the widow woman of 1 Kings 17:10. We wonder whether she was doing so on the Sabbath; and yet Elijah was taught that he had to depend upon this for him to have food to remain alive. Just as unclean ravens brought him his food. We are likewise taught the same at times.

The repeated occurrence of the phrase "in the wilderness" in Num. 15:32; 27:3 leads the Rabbis to identify the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath as Zelophehad, who therefore "died in his own sin", an allusion to Num. 15:31 which uses this term in prefacing the incident of gathering sticks. Although it is then noteworthy that he had apparently faithful daughters.

Num 15:33 Those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation-
Firewood would have been scarce in the wilderness, so this man perhaps found some and wanted to gather it on the Sabbath before anyone else could. The motive for reporting him would therefore have been jealousy and anger, rather than pure concern that the Sabbath had been broken. So often those who report others breaking God's laws have their own agendas.

Num 15:34 They put him in custody, because it had not been declared what should be done to him-
A similar incident was dealt with the same way in Lev. 24:12. As discussed on :23, there was an element of progressive revelation in God's law, and not every situation was legislated for. Probably they realized he deserved the death penalty, but the question may have been how he should be put to death.

Num 15:35 Yahweh said to Moses, The man shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp-
Heb. 13:12 stresses that the Lord Jesus died in the same place, outside the camp of God’s people. Although Jesus never sinned, in His time of dying He so closely identified with condemned sinners that even in our moments of sin He can still identify with us (Gal. 3:13). The people who gathered manna on the Sabbath were not dealt with like this, although it was an equally clear breaking of specific laws. We can only conclude that people may sin in the same external way, but God knows the heart and in this case, the man was guilty of the sin of presumption (:30,31) rather than a lesser level of disobedience. But only God can judge these things. All we see is the external actions and sin. We cannot therefore "judge" because we fail to see the heart behind the wrong

action. And clearly God does judge identical actions differently, as we see by comparing this man with those who gathered manna.

The capital punishment for gathering on the Sabbath begs for comparison with the way some tried to gather manna on the Sabbath but were not so harshly punished. Surely the point is, in the context of Num. 15, that he had sinned presumptuously whereas the manna gatherers were merely opportunistic. And possibly hungry. Whereas this man apparently knew that the sabbath was the sign of the covenant (Ex. 31:12) but rejected that covenant. Perhaps this is why the judgment was to be stoned outside of the camp, reflecting his conscious rejection of his place in the camp of God's people.

Num 15:36 All the congregation brought him outside of the camp, and stoned him to death with stones, as Yahweh commanded Moses-

The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorossa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Num 15:37 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-

The provision for Naziriteship encouraged the average Israelite to enter into the spirit of the High Priest by imposing some of the regulations governing his behaviour upon them. *All* Israel were bidden make fringes of blue, in conscious imitation of the High Priest to whose spirit they all were intended to attain (Num. 15:38). But we are bidden now "come boldly unto the throne of grace (cp. the mercy seat in the Most Holy)... boldness to enter into the holiest" (Heb. 4:16; 10:19): to do what only the High Priest could do under the Old Covenant.

Num 15:38 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them that they should make themselves fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put on the fringe of each border a cord of blue-

People touched the hem of Jesus' garment, the fringes mentioned here, in search of healing (Mt. 9:20; 14:36). By doing so, they were recognizing that their healing was

possible because of His righteous obedience to the Father's commandments. His power to heal has a basis- not merely that He is powerful of Himself, but because of His moral obedience.

Fringes of blue were the sign of royalty. We recall David cutting off the hem of Saul's garment, and Saul's conclusion that this meant that David would replace him as king and his kingship had been cut off by David. The point was that all Israel were kings, they were a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Reminding ourselves of God's Kingship over us in daily life is what qualifies us as His Kings.

Num 15:39 and it shall be to you for a fringe, that you may look on it, and remember all the commandments of Yahweh, and do them; and that you do not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you use to play the prostitute-
If there is an external being who makes us sin, surely he would have been mentioned extensively in the Old Testament? But there is a very profound and significant silence about this. The record of the Judges period, or Israel in the wilderness, show that at those times Israel were sinning a great deal. But God did not warn them about some powerful supernatural being or force which could enter them and make them sin. Instead, He encouraged them to apply themselves to His word, so that they would not fall away to the ways of their own flesh (e.g. Dt. 27:9,10; Josh. 22:5). Num. 15:39 is especially clear about our innate sinful tendencies: "Do not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to go after wantonly" (Heschel's translation). In some Orthodox Jewish liturgies, this verse is to be repeated twice each day. And so it should be by us all. For this is the heart of the matter, the essence of the believer's struggle against sin within.

AV "That ye seek not after your own heart" uses the same word for "search" as recently used about the spies searching out the land, but with the heart of disbelief. Again we see how the commands here are directly related to the preceding historical narrative. The reason they failed the test of faith was because of lack of daily, moment by moment attention to God's ways and words. For this was what the fringe was intended to teach.

Ecc. 11:9 alludes to Num 15:39: "Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment". The way of the world is to just do whatever our heart tells us, to follow our heart. But the Biblical view of the heart radically clashes with this. We are to control our heart, not do what is intuitive, and allow the heart to be regenerated. But the context of Num. 15 is that we have in that chapter a set of laws relevant to Israel's belief of the ten spies and their rejection of entering the promised land. The spies had judged after the sight of their eyes and followed their heart rather than God's leading. They had "seen" giants and

they seemed in their own eyes as grasshoppers compared to them (Num. 13:32,33; 14:33).

Num 15:40 that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy to your God-
The Jewish commentator Rashi claims that the numerical value of "fringes" by gematria is 613, the number of Mosaic commandments. So there is an appropriacy in the fringe being intended to help Israel remember all those 613 commandments.

Num 15:41 I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am Yahweh your God-
This reminder was pertinent at the time, for they had just been told to return towards the Red Sea and the border with Egypt (Num. 14:25). They were being reminded that even in what appear to be steps backward, God is still at work to bring us out of Egypt and into His Kingdom. There is perhaps the hint here to the condemned generation that Yahweh still sought to be their God. They would die in the desert, but like Moses, they could be pardoned and resurrected to eternal inheritance of the land, and have Yahweh as their God.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 16

Num 16:1 Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men-
Korah is presented as the ringleader of the rebellion (Jude 11). But his sons apparently survived, dissociating themselves from their father, becoming the "sons of Korah" who were musicians in the sanctuary. As we see throughout the Biblical records, good men have bad sons and vice versa. Spirituality is in the end totally individual and personal. The Kohathites pitched on the same side of the tabernacle as the Reubenites. So we see the simple takeaway lesson- watch whom you mix with, even amongst the people of God. For people tend to lead each other into sin.

Initially God's intention was that the firstborn of all Israel would be priests (Ex. 13:2; 19:6). But after the golden calf, they were replaced by the Levites (Num. 3:12). The priestly work was split up among Levi’s four sons: Aaron, Kohath, Merari, and Gershon (Num. 3:17,38; 1 Chron. 23:12,13). But the most senior role was given to Aaron, passing over Kohath (Ex. 28:1; Num. 17:1-10). And Kohath's family had to be supervised by Eleazer, a son of Aaron (Num. 3:32). This is typical of how God doesn't always honour the firstborn, as we see from the Abraham, Isaac and Jacob family stories. In this case, the discontented fed off each others' discontent; for the Levites were led by Elizaphan, the son of Kohath's fourth son (Num. 3:30). Aaron was the son of Amram, Kohath's

firstborn. Korah was the son of Kohath's second son Izhar. Korah was the firstborn son of Izhar, so he was a firstborn; but his father was not a firstborn. He was younger brother to Amram, Moses' father. Making Korah a cousin to Moses. He clearly was discontented that he as a firstborn didn't have more seniority. He obviously felt that he ought to lead the Levites. The Reubenites were the deposed firstborns just as the Kohathites thought they were. Again we see how the Biblical record is so psychologically credible; for we see discontented people feed off each other all the time.

Dathan and Abram were from Reuben, the deposed firstborn. So we see men with a chip on their shoulder, wanting power. The record is so psychologically credible. They failed to learn the lessons from the Jacob story, nor that of Ex. 13:2, where all firstborn had to be sanctified by an offering because they were not sanctified merely by means of being firstborn. God in fact was at pains to show that firstborn status meant nothing to Him of itself.

Num 16:2 and they rose up before Moses with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation, men called to lead the assembly, men of renown-

We note that Korah was a firstborn, and Reuben was a deposed firstborn. Possibly there was some discontent about the firstborn of Israel being exchanged for the Levites. The rejected Israelites had wanted a captain to lead them back to Egypt. We are told that they in their hearts returned there. So it is likely that this putsch was in order to take Moses and Aaron out of leadership positions, so that the people could be led back to Egypt.

Num 16:3 They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said to them, You take too much on yourself, since all the congregation are holy, each one of them, and Yahweh is among them. Why then lift yourselves up above the assembly of Yahweh?-

The complaint may have been that Moses was exalting his own immediate family to the priesthood, and Korah and the Levites were subservient to them. Perhaps Korah led the rebellion against Moses because he objected to how Elzaphan son of Uziel had been appointed over the Kohathites (Num. 3:30). Kohath had four sons, Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uziel (Ex. 6:18). Amram's sons, Moses and Aaron, had already received high honour in ruling over all Israel. So Korah, as the firstborn son of the next born son Izhar, thought that he ought to have been over the Kohathites. But instead, the son of Uziel, Kohath's youngest son, had been made prince of the Kohathite clan. This is typical of how God

appoints those who are least qualified and strong in secular terms. But Korah disliked this. He felt he was next in line to be the leader of the Kohathites.

Aaron had made this same complaint against Moses in Num. 12 and now he experiences the same. As God was gracious to him then, thanks to Moses' intercession, so Aaron is going to reflect that grace to others. He was falsely accused as he had falsely accused Moses. This kind of thing often happens, for our spiritual growth and our ability to enter into the mind of others and pity them- not simply as some kind of "measure for measure" justice.

The comment that "all the congregation are holy" alludes to the preceding statement in Num. 15:40, that all Israel were to wear tassels to remind them that they were holy to their God. Here we see again how the incidents and laws of Numbers are all interconnected and are not random events.

The congregation had "gathered themselves together against" Aaron at the time of the golden calf (Ex. 32:1), and he gave in to them. He appears to have progressed here, because he doesn't give in to them but rather intercedes for them. Circumstances repeat in our lives, so that we learn to respond better.

Num 16:4 When Moses heard it, he fell on his face-
We see here his humility. A challenge to power and status is usually met by anger and a show of force. But Moses falls on his face in humility and in pleading with them not to sin.

Num 16:5 and he spoke to Korah and to all his company, saying, In the morning Yahweh will show who are His, and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. Even him whom He shall choose He will cause to come near to Him-
LXX implies that God had already made the choice of Moses: "And he spoke to Core and all his assembly, saying, God has visited and known those that are his and who are holy, and has brought them to himself; and whom he has chosen for himself, he has brought to himself". This is alluded to in 2 Tim. 2:19 "the Lord knows them that are His". Paul is therefore arguing that all God's people are now as Moses was personally. He often does this- for Moses was seen in Judaism as an unapproachable icon, whereas Paul wants every Christian convert to see Moses as a pattern to be realistically followed.

Paul in 2 Tim. 2:24,25 makes a series of allusions to Moses, which climax in an invitation to pray like Moses for the salvation of others:
“The servant of the Lord [A very common title of Moses] must not strive [As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)] but be gentle unto all [The spirit of Moses] apt to teach [As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12; Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)], patient [As was Moses], in meekness [Moses was the meekest man (Num. 12:3)] instructing those that oppose themselves [at

the time of Aaron and Miriam's self-opposing rebellion] if God peradventure will give them repentance [i.e. forgiveness] ["Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30)]"- and he prayed 40 days and nights for it. And note too: 2 Tim. 2:19 = Num. 16:5,26; 2 Tim. 2:20 = Num. 12:7; 2:21 = Num. 16:37; 2 Tim. 2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3; 2 Tim. 2:26 = Num. 16:33. This is quite something. The height of Moses' devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn't just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half-heartedly ask our God to 'be with' brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others. For the Judaists, an appeal to be like Moses, to emulate him in teaching, was blasphemous; for they considered Moses at such a level that he could never be imitated. Yet Paul urges timid Timothy and all teachers to realistically be Moses to our audience.

Num 16:6 Do this: take censers, Korah, and all his company-
Surely they were supposed to see the similarity with what had happened in Lev. 10:1: "The sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, each took his own firepan, and they placed coals in them and they placed incense upon them, and they brought before Yahweh a foreign fire, which He did not command them". Here and in Lev. 10, the rebellious incense offerers were destroyed by fire from Yahweh. Censers were for offering incense, which was exactly how Nadab and Abihu were slain (Lev. 10:2). So this was the kind of leading into temptation which we are to pray shall not happen to us (Mt. 6:13). Their path to repentance was being offered to them, but the consequences of refusing it were now higher. The intended response was 'No. We give in. To offer incense like that and come near to the incense altar in the holy place is not for us. We would rightly be slain for doing so. So, we give in and retreat from our position'. But human pride was in the way. And they took up the offer, leading to their justifiable destruction. For by knowingly doing what they knew would lead to destruction, they were committing the sin of presumption which forms a context to this account (Num. 15:30,31). Balaam was put in a similar position- he was told to go with the elders of Moab, but only speak God's word. The intention was that he fall down and repent, and refuse to go with them. But he went with them, ostensibly in obedience to God's word of command which was leading him to self destruction. See on :29.

Num 16:7 and put fire in them, and put incense on them before Yahweh tomorrow; and it shall be that the man whom Yahweh chooses, he shall be holy. You have gone too far, you sons of Levi!-
As explained on :6, they were being invited to either repent, or go forward to self destruction. The Hebrew seems to imply that Yahweh had already chosen a holy one, and it was not them. The command to "put fire in them" was because they had "gone too

far". So that they were being led down the path to destruction, unless they dropped everything and repented. God likewise works with people today.

It has been suggested that the words "Enough you sons of Levi!" cannot be addressed to Korah's company, since they are laymen who are objecting to the claims of the Levites. They must be addressed by Korah's company to Moses and Aaron, and may have fallen out of their right place at the end of Num. 16:3.

Num 16:8 Moses said to Korah, Hear now, you sons of Levi!-
As discussed on :6,7, they were on a fast track to self destruction. And so Moses desperately appeals to them: "Hear now...", i.e. 'Be obedient to God's word'. For that is the sense of the word for "hear". And it was urgent- "now", because they had been commanded to offer incense when doing so would lead to their destruction. They needed to urgently repent.

Num 16:9 Is it a small thing to you, that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of Yahweh, and to stand before the congregation to minister to them-
They didn't consider servanthood within the family of God to be a very great honour; they wanted leadership and personal honour from those they would be over. This is the great paradox, the acme of humility, that serving is actually an honour. But there are so few who really grasp this. Leadership, like respect, is something which can never be demanded nor sought after if we are truly God's people. Notice that to serve others in God's family is to come "near to [God] Himself".

"Come near before Yahweh" is usually translated "offer [sacrifice] before Yahweh", and is translated that way multiple times. Although rarely (Ex. 16:9; Lev. 9:5) it is used of the congregation coming near before Yahweh. But the congregation didn't generally want to come before Yahweh, and so He chose just the Levites to come before Yahweh (Num. 8:10; 16:9 s.w.). It was God's intention that all Israel should be His servants, a nation of priests. But He changed and ammended His approach, and chose just the Levites for this. We see here how open God is to change, so that by all means He may have relationship with His people. Under the new covenant, all believers are part of a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) as He initially intended even under the old covenant. And yet there is always the tendency to leave the priestly work to specialists rather than perceiving our personal call to do it.

They didn't appreciate the wonder of the fact that the Levites had been taken by God as the firstborns instead of the firstborn of Israel. And this was in order to save Israel from destruction. Israel's salvation is presented as dependent upon them: "I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the

service of the children of Israel in the Tent of Meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come near to the sanctuary" (Num. 8:19). Likewise "the Levites are the ones who will serve in the service of the tent of meeting; they are the ones who will bear their guilt" (Lev. 18:22,23). We too can fail to appreciate the hugely significant role we play in saving others. We should need nothing else.

Num 16:10 and that He has brought you near, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you? Do you seek the priesthood also?-
Coming near to Yahweh was something which should have been done on will and initiative of the people. But just as God brought Israel out of Egypt when they wanted to remain there, so He caused the Levites to come near to Him. This is an example of how His Spirit works upon human lives, to bring people unto Him when otherwise they would not have made the required distance of movement towards Him.

Num 16:11 Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against Yahweh; and Aaron, who is he that you murmur against him?-
See on Num. 26:9. Israel's rejection of Moses was a rejection of the God who was working through Moses to redeem them. Thus Korah and his followers "strove against Moses... when they strove against Yahweh" (Num. 26:9 cp. 16:11). Moses understood that when Israel murmured against him, they murmured against Yahweh (Ex. 16:2,7; Num. 17:5; 21:5). They thrust Moses away from them (Acts 7:27,39) - yet the same word is used in Rom. 11:2 concerning how God still has not cast away Israel; He has not treated them as they treated Him through their rejection of Moses and Jesus, who manifested Him.

Num 16:12 Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab; and they said, We won't come up-
They perceived that by offering incense they were indeed on a path to self destruction, as Nadab and Abihu had been. See on :6,7. So they wanted to pull back from that, and yet wanted to save face. And so they twist the turn of their argument. But repentance in this case simply had to involve loss of face. And there was no way it could be compromised as they wished.

Num 16:13 Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, but you must also make yourself a prince over us?-
Stephen in Acts 7 stresses the way in which Moses was rejected by Israel as a type of Christ. At age 40, Moses was "thrust away" by one of the Hebrews; and on the

wilderness journey the Jews “thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:27,35,39). This suggests that there was far more antagonism between Moses and Israel than we gather from the Old Testament record- after the pattern of Israel's treatment of Jesus. It would seem from Acts 7:39 that after the golden calf incident, the majority of Israel cold shouldered Moses. Once the point sank in that they were not going to enter the land, this feelings must have turned into bitter resentment. They were probably unaware of how Moses had been willing to offer his eternal destiny for their salvation; they would not have entered into the intensity of Moses' prayers for their salvation. The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to “the Lord spake unto Moses” (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books.

Num 16:14 Moreover you haven’t brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards-
Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey, and denied that they could experience this in God's Kingdom in Canaan. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after. We marvel at how quickly they adopted the narrative that Egypt was good and Canaan was bad. A complete change to the narrative they had held just a few years previously.

Will you put out the eyes of these men? We won’t come up-
GNB "And now you are trying to deceive us", understanding this as an idiom for covering the eyes of another in deception.

Num 16:15 Moses was very angry, and said to Yahweh, Don’t respect their offering-
Yet he was the humblest man on planet earth at the time (Num. 12:3). Anger isn’t advisable for us, as it can easily lead us into sin; but of itself, anger isn’t necessarily incompatible with humility. Yet later Moses' faith slipped for a moment; because his spirit was provoked by Israel, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips and was

therefore barred from entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven. Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he turned himself and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazer (Ex. 32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted?

I have not taken one donkey from them, neither have I hurt one of them-
Paul alludes to these words: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel" (Acts 20:33); and Paul maybe had these words in mind again in 2 Cor. 7:2: "We have hurt no man... we have defrauded no man". Always we are to be looking out for similarities between our experiences and those of Biblical characters. For it is in this way the we through patience and comfort of the scriptures have hope; and the Bible becomes a living word speaking to us directly. LXX "I have not taken away the desire of any one of them" could mean they were implying he had messed with their wives (Ez. 24:16). Sexual slander is always a cheap shot taken at any religious leader, and Moses was surely liable to it, seeing the people hated him so much and were always murmuring at him.

The insistence Moses had not taken a donkey from them was effectively saying that he had not exercised the power of a ruler. Saul as king of Israel did just this (1 Sam. 12:3).

Num 16:16 Moses said to Korah, You and all your company go before Yahweh, you, and they, and Aaron, tomorrow-
As explained on :6,7 this was effectively a command which would lead them to their deaths. For there were many commands about the incense and who could offer it, warning that any who offered otherwise or who weren't priests, or came near to offer incense when they weren't qualified, were to die. Their path to repentance was being offered to them, but the consequences of refusing it were now higher. The intended response was 'No. We give in. To offer incense like that and come near to the incense altar in the holy place is not for us. We would rightly be slain for doing so. So, we give in and retreat from our position'. But human pride was in the way. And they took up the offer, leading to their justifiable destruction.

Num 16:17 and let each man take his censer, and put incense on them, and each man bring before Yahweh his censer, two hundred and fifty censers; you also and Aaron, each his censer-

Each prince offered 21 animals in total at the dedication of the altar in Num. 7, and there were 12 princes, making a total of 252 animals. When the princes rebelled, the 250 rebellious princes were asked to bring their censers before Yahweh, along with the censers of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:17), making a total of 252 censers. That this number is again associated with the princes of Israel cannot surely be chance. There is the simple message that the hand of God was present throughout the whole narrative.

Num 16:18 They each took his censer, and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, and stood at the door of the Tent of Meeting with Moses and Aaron-
As discussed on :6,7,16 they refused to back down and were now committing the sin of presumption, challenging God to strike them down.

Num 16:19 Korah assembled all the congregation against them to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Yahweh appeared to all the congregation-
"The congregation" therefore refers to all Israel and it was therefore all of Israel who were to be slain (:21).

Num 16:20 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
Moses and Aaron know Yahweh well enough to as it were disobey the command to separate themselves from the condemned sinners. They do not do so immediately, but instead beg Him not to destroy all the congregation.

Num 16:21 Separate yourselves from among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment!-
Twice in quick succession God wishes to do this and is talked out of it, as it were, by Moses' intercession (:21,45). We get the impression of a fast moving, intense relationship between God and Moses. "This congregation" apparently referred to all Israel (:19); because in :22-26 we see the intercession of Moses and Aaron, and their obtaining of deliverance for "this congregation" so long as they literally separated themselves from the rebels. God wished to destroy the entire congregation, as He wished to at the time of the golden calf and also at the time of their refusal to enter Canaan in Num. 14. But again, the intercession of Moses leads to a radical change of heart in God Almighty. Such is the power of prayer and intercession for others. The power of Moses' intercession contrasts with the far greater power of that of the Lord, whose intercession was not with words alone but backed up by His blood, His sacrifice.

If Yahweh had destroyed Israel, then it would have left just Moses and Aaron. Clearly He still has in mind what He did in Ex. 32:10 where He told Moses “I will become furious with them and consume them, and I will make you into a great nation".

We observe how God is willing to move down one track, but is persuadable to move down another even if that is not His ideal.

"In a moment" is literally 'in the twinkle of an eye'. God was a fraction of a second away from destroying all the people; the intercession of Moses was immediate, and was immediately effective. We see how intense was that mediation, and how immediate was God's response to Moses. And Moses' mediation is a dim shadow of the Lord's for us. At the time of the golden calf it had been the same: "I will come up in the midst of you in a moment" (Ex. 33:5 s.w.). The sons of Korah remembered this when they used the word in Ps. 73:19: "How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment they are utterly consumed". They perceived that this sudden destruction did come upon their family, although Israel as a whole, including themselves, were saved from it by grace.

Num 16:22 They fell on their faces, and said, God, the God of the spirits of all flesh-
Biblically, a man or woman is identified with their spirit in the sense of their mind or way of life. Heb. 12:23 speaks of the spirits of just men, with whom the believer ought to associate. This means that we ought to identify ourselves with the way of life, the spirit of life, of “just men” of the past. God is “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Num. 16:22; 27:16) in the sense that He is the God of all humanity. So “spirits in prison” can refer to people who, in their spiritual lives, are imprisoned.

Moses is seeking to touch a Divine nerve by reminding Him of how all He intended destroying were in fact energized by His Spirit. So often David appeals to Yahweh as our creator and maker as the basis for Him to show grace and pity to man in his weakness. To this day He has a desire to the work of His hands in pity. We note that Moses had saved Aaron's life at the time of the golden calf, and now Aaron in turn intercedes for others. Our own experience of having been interceded for leads us to intercede for others.

Shall one man sin, and will You be angry with all the congregation?-
It’s clear from the record in this chapter that the architect of the rebellion was Korah, the “one man” whom Moses referred to (see too :40,49; Jude 11 "the gainsaying of Korah"). But he influenced others to sin, and they were still guilty for their sin. Although God doesn’t count people as guilty merely by association, He expects us not to identify ourselves with sinful behaviour- hence verses 23-25 are God’s response to Moses’ concern that God might be indiscriminately applying the unfair principle of ‘guilt by association’. Moses is pleading with God in the spirit of Abraham, who likewise pleaded for a change in the outworking of God's purpose and stated intentions- on the same basis, that the innocent should not perish with the righteous. But Moses here seems over generous in considering that Korah was the "one man" who had sinned; those who had followed him into the sin of presumption still had to be punished. The result of the amazing intercession was that only the rebels were punished, even though God judged

the entire congregation as guilty for going along with them. 'Going along' with the sins of leaders is therefore here seen as a capital offence. The problem with religion and mere denominationalism is that the sins of leaders are ho-hummed and legitimized by the congregation. We note again that this amazing atonement was achieved without the shedding of blood, without which there was technically no remission of sins. Likewise Yahweh had noted in Num. 14 that he saved Israel from destruction and pardoned according to the mere *word* of Moses- without shedding of blood. For there was no time for an animal to be offered. It makes us reflect how much more powerful is the Lord's intercession for us, based upon His blood.

Num 16:23 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
As at the time of the golden calf, God had likewise insisted that He would destroy the congregation of Israel and make a great nation from Moses. Situations at times repeat in our lives, and here Moses again is called to intense, immediate intercession in order to avert this. And Aaron joins in this time; it was God's intention that he should rise up to the intensity of Moses, and indeed Aaron saved Israel again when the plague broke out which would otherwise have destroyed the congregation. This is the power God is willing to give to the prayers of third parties for others' salvation. There is a gap between Yahweh's prophetic pronouncements, and their fulfillment. And in that gap there is the possibility for repentance. This is what gives intensity to our prayers and repentance, knowing we too live in such a gap. And here again, God 'repents' of His intention to destroy the entire congregation, and instead tells them to get away from the tabernacle of Korah and thereby be saved from the threatened destruction (:24).

Num 16:24 Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from around the tent of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram!'-
The usage of the word "tent" here is misleading. The word *mishkan* is used, the usual term for the tabernacle, and a different word for ordinary dwelling tents is used in :26,27. It seems that Korah had his own religious system which he had established near to the tabernacle of Yahweh. The singular "tent / tabernacle" cannot refer to the ordinary tent of the three men, for they would not all have normally lived in the same tent. Acts 7:43 informs us that Israel carried the tabernacle of other gods with them through the wilderness, as well as Yahweh's tabernacle. So we see the extent of the apostacy. The desire to replace the leadership of Moses and Aaron was of the same spirit as the desire to appoint another "captain" who would lead them and their pagan tabernacle back to Egypt where they had taken it from. It could be that whilst this showdown was happening at the tabernacle of Yahweh, the "congregation" were worshipping idols at the apostate tabernacle of Korah. I will suggest on Num. 18:1; 19:7,11 that in fact the priests bowed to pressure and allowed some of the rebellious Levites and even other Israelites to enter the sanctuary at this time, and this required the red heifer ritual to be

cleansed from. Perhaps they took part of the furnishings of the true tabernacle and erected them in their own tabernacle.

Num 16:25 Moses rose up and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him-
We note that Moses went to Dathan and Abiram, not Korah. Clearly this was one last desperate appeal to them; for as noted on :22, Moses had the impression that Dathan and Abiram had been drawn into the sin of "one man", Korah. But it seems they still didn't heed even the desperate appeals of Moses. Korah himself went to the tabernacle and was offering fake incense there.

Num 16:26 He spoke to the congregation, saying, Depart, I beg you, from the tents of these wicked men-
This is the normal word for "tents", as in tents which are lived in; hence the plural. And it is a different word to the word for "tabernacle", in the singular, used in :24. That word refers to some paganic, idolatrous *mishkan*, a fake tabernacle. "I beg you" shows Moses' earnest desire for the salvation of those who despised him, grumbled about him constantly, and at times sought to slay him and certainly depose him from leadership.

And touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins!-
"Touch" is better 'to lay the hand on'. The idea was that the others were not to grab hold of any of the idols in the tents of these men, associated with their paganic tabernacle discussed on :24. The idea is not of 'guilt by association' through touch, but rather of actual participation in idolatry. Especially since idols were often made from precious stones and metals, and would have been valuable. If they did, then they would "be consumed in [the coming judgment for] all their sins". We each stand in the position of that surrounding congregation; for 2 Cor. 6:17 alludes to this historical moment in bidding each believer to "touch not" idolatry and the things of the temple / tabernacle of idols. The later psalms of the sons of Korah, who were saved, often reflect upon the fallacy of materialism in the face of sheol, the word used here for the "pit" where their relatives were destroyed and into which they entered but were saved (:30). The materialism of Korah is also hinted at here in that people are warned not to touch the possessions of Korah, which presumably were significant. We note :32 also speaks of "their goods" being destroyed.

Num 16:27 So they went away from the tent of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side; and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood at the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little ones-
The genealogy of the sons of Korah, the gatekeepers of the temple, is recorded in 1 Chron. 9:17-19. It can be shown from the genealogies that they were brought up by their

second cousin, Phinehas. They obeyed the command to leave the tents of their father Korah when he was consumed in the earthquake. Num. 16:27 mentions Dathan and Abiram's children standing outside their tents at this time, but there is the pointed omission of Korah's children; they had left the tents. We can therefore build up a picture of Phinehas as a zealot for the purity of God's Truth (Num. 25), yet mixed with compassion, as shown by the way he took those children of Korah under his wing, and brought them up soundly in the Truth, with the result that wrote at least 11 of the Psalms and protected the purity of temple worship. It should be noted that Samuel was a Korahite (1 Chron. 6:33-38).

Their standing in their tent doors could be seen as an example of the presumptuous sin of the preceding chapter, literally 'to uplift the hand'.

Num 16:28 Moses said, Hereby you shall know that Yahweh has sent me to do all these works; for they are not from my own mind-
Num. 16:28 LXX: "Moses said, Hereby ye shall *know* that the Lord hath *sent me* to *do all these works*; for I have not done them *of myself*". The ideas of *know, sent me, do these works, not of myself* are so frequent in John's Gospel and are alluding here: Jn. 13:35; 8:28,42; 7:3,28; 5:30,36; 10:25,37; 14:10; 15:24; 17:4. "The works... The Son can do nothing *of himself*" recalls Moses' words: "All these works... I have not done them of my own mind" (Num. 16:28 AV). The Lord was claiming to be as Moses, and a prophet greater than Moses; but not God. This verse is the basis of "I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me" (Jn. 8:28).

"They are not from my own mind" may mean that Moses is saying that He was propelled to leadership by God and not at all according to his own wish. Paul likewise writes of how his ministry was given to him against his own will. Any ministry is a gift from God, as the Lord's parables teach. There can be no room for any spirit of careerism in Christian ministry. The need is the call, and we are to follow it, having surrendered to the Lord's leading and not seeking any leadership position "from my own mind" as Moses here puts it. We are to aspire to serve, not to be masters.

Num 16:29 If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then Yahweh hasn't sent me-
This describes "the common death of all men" as being "visited after the visitation of all men"; visiting is very much Angelic language, and thus indicates that an Angel consciously causes a man to die (by taking his breath away). This happened with Moses.

As discussed on :6,7, the idea was that these men had been challenged by God through Moses to offer incense with their censors, which was priestly work, to which these men

claimed to be fitted. If they did, then they would be slain, according to the law. Their only alternative was to either go ahead and do so to their destruction; or fall on their faces and repent. And so Moses is alluding to this when he says that if they were slain by direct Divine action, then his whole position about them would be justified. If they weren't, then they were indeed qualified to be priests, even though Moses' law said they weren't. and Moses would have been a false prophet of God's words.

Ps. 106:18 says that God kindled a fire to destroy them, but in reality, they kindled that fire themselves (Is. 9:18; Hos 7:6). Lev. 10:2 uses the same term for fire from Yahweh devouring Nadab and Abihu as in Num. 16:35 about the destruction of Korah's rebels. They were clearly aware of what had happened to those rebels, and were daring God to repeat it. It was truly the sin of presumption.

Clearly they didn't believe in Moses. But earlier they had been given signs "that they may believe you for ever" (Ex. 19:9). We see here the conditional nature of how God works with man. Reason to believe is given, but man must still exercise his choice.

Num 16:30 But if Yahweh make a new thing, and the ground open its mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain to them, and they go down alive into Sheol-
"Make a new thing" is literally 'create a new creation'. Even in the destruction of the wicked, there is something of a new creation. So that others may emerge into His creation. Sin and condemnation thereby become positive, within the Divine ecology.

"The Angels that sinned" in 2 Pet. 2:4 allude to these men. “Angel” can mean “minister”, “messenger” (as John’s disciples were messengers or ministers to him, Lk. 7:24). Numbers 16:9 describes the rebels as “ministers” of the congregation. The Septuagint uses the word *aggelos* for “ministers”, which is the same Greek word translated “Angel” in 2 Peter 2:4. They left their first, or original, “principality” (Jude 6, A.V. margin); the rebels were princes, but wanted to be priests as well (Num. 16:2,10). Because of this, the ground opened and swallowed them (Num. 16:31–33), as a dramatic example to everyone of the fate of those who rebel against the Word of God. It was especially dramatic in that it is emphasized that this was the first time that such a thing had happened (Num. 16:30). Thus they are now dead, “in everlasting chains under darkness”, in the heart of the earth, to be resurrected and judged at “the judgment of the great day”. Jude 8 implies that “likewise”, i.e. like the angels that sinned, the Judaizers “speak evil of dignities”, e.g. Jesus and Paul. The rebels spoke evil of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:11–14).

A case could be made that the whole record of Israel’s rejection from entering the land of Canaan is framed to adduce a reason for this as the fact they chose to believe that the land was inhabited by an evil dragon who would consume them there. This was a slander of the good land, and the whole point was that if they had believed in the power

of God, then *whatever* 'adversary' was in the land, in whatever form, was ultimately of no real power (Num. 13:32; 14:36; Dt. 1:25). And yet it was not God's way to specifically tell the people that there was no such dragon lurking in the land of Canaan – instead He worked with them according to their fears, by making the earth literally open and swallow up the apostate amongst them (Num. 16:30) – emphasizing that by doing this, *He* was doing "a new thing", something that had never been done before – for there was no dragon lurking in any land able to swallow up people. And throughout the prophets it is emphasized that *God* and not any dragon swallowed up people – "The Lord [and not any dragon] was as an enemy; *He* has swallowed up Israel" (Lam. 2:5 and frequently in the prophets). The people of Israel who left Egypt actually failed to inherit Canaan because they believed that it was a land who swallowed up the inhabitants of the land (Num. 13:32), relating this to the presence of giants in the land (Num. 13:33). As Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them, they needed to believe that whatever myths there were going around, God was greater than whatever mythical beast was there. And because they would not believe that, they failed to enter the land, which in type symbolized those who fail to attain that great salvation which God has prepared.

Then you shall understand that these men have despised Yahweh-"Despised" as in Num. 14:11 is s.w. provoke or blaspheme. It is specifically associated with turning to other gods (Dt. 31:20; 32:19; Is. 1:4). And that appears to be the context. The Israelites decided not to enter the land and instead to follow the gods of Egypt back to Egypt (Num. 14:11,23). The language of 'despising' is that of the presumptuous sin spoken of in the previous chapter; it was the sin of Israel who wanted to enter Canaan without God's blessing.

Num 16:31 It happened, as he made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground split apart that was under them-
Mot, the god of death, was thought to have jaws encompassing the earth and swallowing up people at their death into the underworld. But Job rejected that myth – he saw God as the swallower, and death as a return to the dust, albeit in hope of bodily resurrection at the last day (Job 19:25–27). Perhaps Job is also alluding to the myths about Mot when he speaks of how "Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering" (Job 26:6 R.S.V.); and in that context speaks as if God is the real attacker, not, therefore, Mot or any other such being. Note too how Num. 16:31–35 describes *God* as swallowing up Korah, Dathan and Abiram into death in the earth – as if to deconstruct the idea that Mot did things like this.

Num 16:32 and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and all the men who appertained to Korah, and all their goods-
Korah's sons didn't die (Num. 26:11); they separated themselves from their father and his supporters in time. My suggestion is that they along with the others "went down alive

into sheol" but were rescued out of it, possibly "in the morning" as one of their Psalms speaks of deliverance from sheol "in the morning". The double note that people "went down alive into sheol" may be intended to help us see this possibility. They were saved from condemnation, from sheol, by grace. No wonder they spent their lives writing Psalms praising God's grace in saving them from sheol. Their names were Assir, Elkanah and Abiasaph (Ex. 6:24)- 'Prisoner', 'God will obtain for me' and 'father of gatherers'. We could possibly see reflected here Korah's sense that his family were imprisoned by their inferior [as he saw it] position, but would obtain and gather more for themselves. And yet these sons of Korah separated from their bad background, they rose above the 'chip on a shoulder' mentality, and became the authors of many Psalms. Throughout the psalms of the sons of Korah, we can detect allusion to the events of Num. 16: "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. 84:10); "Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed" (Ps. 46:2). Many of these Psalms were clearly rewritten under inspiration and applied to crises such as the Assyrian invasion of Judah and the Babylonian exile; because the "sons of Korah" become programmatic for us all. They all have a theme of telling the Gentiles of Yahweh's grace, and this was how the historical sons of Korah would've felt after their deliverance from death.

The Psalms of the sons of Korah have 'deliverance from sheol' as a major theme, especially Ps. 49. Not only does this reference resurrection, but is a reflection of their own deliverance from the 'sheol' where their relatives died. They glory that God saved them from this- even though it was their own decision, they are glorifying the way in which even our own decisions for salvation are of Him and He is to be praised for them. And yet they perceive that the death of their families was in fact the death of all men. For all have sinned: "Like sheep dragged to Sheol, death shall graze on them; the upright shall rule them in the morning". And yet the sons of Korah realized that they were in essence no better than their rebellious ancestors who went to sheol; for they too would go to sheol, but be saved from it by the grace of resurrection: "But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol". The Korah Psalms often reflect that human wealth and ambition ends in sheol, along with man's wealth; therefore we can conclude that the desire for power and leadership was motivated by material ambition.

Psalm 88 is another psalm of the sons of Korah, whose father and relatives perished in sheol. But they recognize that this was their rightful end to, and they can only be saved from it by grace: "'My soul has come to Sheol... I am reckoned with those [Korah and his rebellious family] that descend to the Pit...like the pierced-through [the rebels in the family of Korah] who lie in the grave... You have laid me in the Pit below, in darkness, in the depths... separated from my companions [family members]". They felt their death was in essence that of their rebellious relatives. They were no better, but saved by grace. We see here their humility in recognizing that as the Lord put it in Lk. 14, the dramatic

death of some doesn't mean that we ourselves are not also sinners who shall also die. Only grace can save us, and they came to that conclusion.

Psalm 46 is a Korah Psalm, so we note the references to rebels falling alive into the depths with a roaring underworld beneath them (Ps. 46:2-7). The allusion is to what happened to the father, brothers, sisters and relatives of the "sons of Korah". But the Psalm goes on to talk of how "we" will not fear because ultimate salvation for "us" is certain. We have an insight into the mind of Korah's sons.

There is a notable stress in Num. 16:32 and :33 on their households, and "all the men who appertained to Korah". This surely includes the sons of Korah. But Num. 26:11 is clear that the sons didn't "perish". Perhaps this means the sons of Korah were swallowed into sheol but were redeemed from it immediately so they didn't perish. Redemption from sheol by grace is a big theme of the psalms written by the sons of Korah. This fits the theme developed in the preceding Num. 13-15- that condemned men can be saved. Israel were condemned to destruction and replacement by Moses, but were saved out of that. Then they were condemned to die without entering Canaan, as was Moses. But they were pardoned, and I have argued that this meant that although they died in the desert they could have the hope of resurrection to eternal inheritance of the land.

There are times when our loyalty to the Lord will result in us having to experience some kind of separation from family members who choose not to go the Lord's way; Jesus foretold this would happen frequently (Mt. 10:34-37). The men who "appertained to Korah" were therefore his religious followers rather than his immediate sons and family. "Their goods" may well have involved idol worship paraphernalia; see on :26.

It seems likely that Korah was not present with his family when they were swallowed up into the earth. He and the 250 rebels were at the sanctuary offering their unacceptable incense, which is why other scriptures speak of Dathan and Abiram being swallowed up- but not Koran (Dt. 11:6; Ps. 106:16-18). Num. 26:10 RSV seems to make this clear: "The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men".

Num 16:33 So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into Sheol; and the earth closed on them, and they perished from among the assembly-
"Chains of darkness" is rendered "pits of darkness" in 2 Pet. 2:4 R.V., which is a New Testament commentary upon this. The Greek word *serius* (pits) indicates an underground granary or prison, which corresponds with Dathan and Abiram's destruction when they "went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished" (Num. 16:33). I suggested on :32 that "all that appertained to them" referred to their religious followers and idol worship paraphernalia; see on :26.

Num 16:34 All Israel that were around them fled at their cry; for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up!-
These people who “were around them” were saved by grace, considering the warning of :24-26, that whoever stood near those men would also perish. All the time in the Old Testament we are seeing examples of people breaking God’s law and yet being saved by grace.

Num 16:35 Fire came forth from Yahweh, and devoured the two hundred and fifty men who offered the incense-
Destruction by fire was an appropriate judgment for those who had offered strange fire. Judgment is related to the crime because men are self condemned more than being condemned by God. For saving, rather than destroying, is God's passion. Ps. 106:18 says that God kindled a fire to destroy them, but in reality, they kindled that fire themselves (Is. 9:18; Hos 7:6). Lev. 10:2 uses the same term for fire from Yahweh devouring Nadab and Abihu as in Num. 16:35 about the destruction of Korah's rebels. They were clearly aware of what had happened to those rebels, and were daring God to repeat it. It was truly the sin of presumption. See on :6,7,29.

It could be argued that the destruction of the incense offerers vindicated Aaron as the high priest, and the destruction of Korah into the earth justified Moses as the political leader. But we recall how Aaron sinned at the time of the golden calf, and was only saved by Moses' intercession. The Levites went out to slay their brethren who were guilty of the apostacy, killing 3000. But Aaron was spared- because of Moses' intercession. That God would now go to such lengths to justify Aaron shows how he was truly forgiven and accepted again as the high priest.

We note the similarity with Elijah standing alone before 450 apostate priests: “A fire of Yahweh fell and consumed [the offering]” (1 Kings 18:38) just as here "Fire came forth from Yahweh, and devoured the two hundred and fifty men who offered the incense".

Num 16:36 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The command to Eleazar (:37) was presumably because Aaron as High Priest ought not to defile himself with dead bodies.

Num 16:37 Speak to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, that he take up the censers out of the burning, and scatter the fire yonder, for they are holy-
They were "holy" in the sense that they were dedicated or set apart for a specific purpose, i.e. plating upon the altar (:38). They were not to be taken by the people and used for secular purposes.

Num 16:38 even the censers of these sinners against their own lives-
Often the Spirit points out that the sinner is only harming himself by his actions- and yet he earnestly pursues his course, in the name of self-interest and self-benefit (Num. 16:38; Prov. 19:8; 20:2; Hab. 2:20; Lk. 7:30). Sin is therefore associated by God with utter and derisible foolishness (e.g. Num. 12:11; 2 Tim. 3:9); but this isn't how man in his unwisdom perceives it at all. Indeed, to him self-denial is inexplicable folly and blindness to the essentials of human existence. "This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah (pause to meditate)" (Ps. 49:13). The *folly* of sin is only *fully* evident to God. Note that Ps. 49 is a psalm of the "sons of Korah".

Let them be made beaten plates for a covering of the altar; for they offered them before Yahweh, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel-
That they were destroyed and were not left alive is shown by a comment on this incident in Psalm 73. Here Asaph describes how “my steps had well nigh slipped” (v. 2) because the wicked seemed to be prospering so much. Then, “I went into the sanctuary (tabernacle) of God; then understood I their end” (v. 17). This was because the brass censers of the 250 rebels were melted down after their death and beaten into plates with which the altar was covered – another example of the angels that sinned being publicly “set forth as an example” (Jude 7). Asaph would have seen these and reflected on the fate of the wicked men. Thus he reflects upon the rebels, the angels that sinned, “surely thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down (by the earth swallowing them) into destruction” (v. 18) – therefore they are not alive, but in the same way as Sodom was destroyed with eternal fire, i.e. totally, so, too, were these “angels” (Jude 6,7). The example of sinners from previous generations ought to be a warning to us. Asaph in Psalm 73 explains how he struggled with the fact that sinners appear to have a blessed life and the righteous suffer; but when he entered the sanctuary, “then understood I their end” (Ps. 73:17), probably a reference to him beholding the plates on the altar made from the censers of these sinners.

Num 16:39 Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burnt had offered, and they beat them out for a covering of the altar-
It was a Divine principle that the altar should be made of earth and not of any human craftsmanship (Ex. 20:21). If the plates were fixed onto the sides of the altar, then every thoughtful Israelite would have wondered whether this was a contradiction of the spirit of the commandments about altars. And the answer would be that this was an exception in order to remind everyone of the sin of Korah and his followers. Or we can understand "covering" as referring not to plates on the sides of the altar, but a kind of canopy over the altar, perhaps to shield the sacrifices from wind and rain. So we see again how God's word and law is a progressive revelation; constantly there are

exceptions made by Him to His own law, and this is to pave the way to understand His glorious grace in the Lord Jesus.

Num 16:40 to be a memorial to the children of Israel, to the end that no stranger, who isn't of the seed of Aaron, comes near to burn incense before Yahweh; that he not be as Korah, and as his company - as Yahweh spoke to him by Moses-
Uzziah expressly ignored this warning and offered incense (2 Chron. 26:19). The lesson of the copper plates was lost on him; he saw them as mere history and refused to learn the intended lessons as he offered his incense. Uzziah is typical of so many. There is a deep sense in human beings that history is bunk, or at best of merely passing historico-cultural interest, which the hurrying man of modern life has little serious time for. This is where Biblical history is so different; and it's why God's word in the Bible is in a sense all history, a living word speaking to us. But it is history to live by, moment by moment.

Num 16:41 But on the next day all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, You have killed Yahweh's people!-
The Hebrew for "murmur" is the word for "stop", and is usually translated in that way. The idea is that they didn't want to go further on the journey; they wanted to return to Egypt. Korah's plan had been to lead the people back to Egypt, and they were angry that Moses had 'stopped' the people doing what they wanted to. Despite the wonder of the Red Sea deliverance. Their hearts truly were in Egypt. This sense of not wanting to go onwards towards the Kingdom, to put a brake on God's saving process, is the same temptation which in essence afflicts all God's people who have started the journey with Him.

Num 16:42 It happened, when the congregation was assembled against Moses and against Aaron, that they looked toward the Tent of Meeting; and behold, the cloud covered it, and the glory of Yahweh appeared-
LXX has: "And it came to pass when the congregation combined against Moses and Aaron, that they ran impetuously to the tabernacle of witness; and the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord appeared".

Num 16:43 Moses and Aaron came to the front of the Tent of Meeting-
The Angel stood there or just inside the veil of the tent. It was to this Angel that they returned after interceding; see on :50.

Num 16:44 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
God again wants to destroy Israel and make of Moses' family a new people. Again, for

the third time, Moses knows God well enough, he has enough faith, enough humility and enough true love for Israel... to again ask God- successfully- to relent from this. That God wanted to do this three times shows His great love for Moses.

Num 16:45 Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment!-
Twice in quick succession God wishes to do this and is talked out of it, as it were, by Moses' intercession (:21,45). The same words were used at the time of the golden calf (Ex. 33:5), and Moses had learned from that that God was open to intercession and changing His expressed intentions. We get the impression of a fast moving, intense relationship between God and Moses.

They fell on their faces-
Moses was specifically told to go away from the congregation, and yet he ran towards them in order to make atonement for them (Num. 16:45,47). Moses was so close to God that he could apparently 'disobey' Him because Moses knew there was a chance of changing God's intentions. He was so close to God- and in this case, God did indeed change His intentions. He had only just changed them over another matter, in relenting from destroying all Israel due to Korah's rebellion- because Moses prayed for the people (Num. 16:21,22).

Num 16:46 Moses said to Aaron, Take your censer, and put fire from off the altar in it, and lay incense on it, and carry it quickly to the congregation, and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from Yahweh! The plague has begun-
The fire of the altar was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). Unquenched fire is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day. Wrath, the command to destroy, had gone forth from Yahweh- but in the gap between the statement of destruction and the execution of it, God is open to persuasion to change. This points up the power and possibilities in intense mediation before Him.

Num 16:47 Aaron did as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and behold, the plague has begun among the people: and he put on the incense, and made atonement for the people-

See on :45. The NT not only encourages us to all be priests; but we can even aspire to the High Priesthood, in a certain sense. The veil was torn down so that we might all enter in to the most holy, doing the work of the High Priest for others. James 5:16 speaks of the need to pray for one another, that we may be healed. This is an undoubted allusion back to mighty Moses praying for smitten Miriam, and to Aaron staying the plague by his offering of incense / prayer (Num. 16:47). Surely James is saying that every one of us can rise up to the spirit of the High Priest in this way. The provision for Naziriteship encouraged the average Israelite to enter into the spirit of the High Priest by imposing some of the regulations governing his behaviour upon them. We again note that atonement was made here by incense and not blood, without which there was to be no remission of sin. Likewise Yahweh pardoned merely according to Moses' word in Num. 14. How much more powerful is the intercession of our Lord, based upon His own blood.

"Atonement for the people" is the very phrase used in the preceding chapter, when there was the possibility for "atonement for all the congregation" if they had sinned in ignorance (Num. 15:27). As discussed on Numbers 15, we have here another example of a sin of presumption being treated as a sin of ignorance. And I suggest this is how we have to understand the Lord's plea for forgiveness of His crucifiers "for they know not what they do"; and Peter's appeal for repentance because he considers that "in ignorance" Israel had crucified their Messiah. This likewise can be our pattern; by seeing sins against us as sins of ignorance, we are not downgrading sin, but rather are seeking to forgive and cleanse those who sin against us as far as possible. For it is true that just as Israel on one hand knew what they were doing in crucifying the Lord, on another they had no perception of the magnitude of the crime. Those who sin against us may likewise have no real understanding of all the dimensions of the damage they do to us. And because of recognizing that, seeing their sin as one more of relative ignorance, our path towards forgiving them is eased.

Num 16:48 He stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed-
Aaron ought to have died for his flouting of the first commandment in making the golden calf; but Moses' intercession alone saved him. And afterwards, deeply conscious of his experience, Aaron made successful intercession for the salvation of others (Num. 14:5; 16:22). The way he holds the censer with fire from the altar of incense, representing his prayers, and "stood between the dead and the living [as a mediator]" (Num. 16:48) is a fine picture of the height to which he rose. We too are to intercede for others on the basis of our experience of the Lord's intercession for us.

Num 16:49 Now those who died by the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, besides those who died about the matter of Korah-

We get the impression that these people died very quickly (:46,47). The plague must have been spreading fast and would indeed have consumed all Israel had not Aaron interceded. I have discussed elsewhere how the terms "thousand" and "hundred" may refer to groups of people, especially families, rather than being numerical values.

Num 16:50 Aaron returned to Moses to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and the plague was stayed-
Again we see Moses acting on his own initiative to persuade God to change His intended plan. Moses and Aaron could only have brought about this change of mind in God by intense, fervent prayer and desire- and it was for people who had just tacitly supported a revolution against them. No matter how much we are slandered and manipulated against by our brethren, they are still God's people and we should respect them and intercede for them as that.

We enquire why we read that "the plague was stayed" when Aaron and Moses were together again at the door of the tabernacle. For it was "stayed" by Aaron earlier. Perhaps the reference of "the plague" here is to the Angel of death who was in the tabernacle, who stood at the door of it in :43, and who now was finally restrained by Moses and Aaron. Such is the power God allows to the prayers and intercession of men.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 17

Num 17:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
God's efforts here were so that the leadership of Moses and Aaron would be accepted, so that others wouldn't be slain for pretending to the priesthood (:9). We marvel at His grace. The people had returned to Egypt in their hearts, and were looking to overthrow the leadership so they could appoint a captain who would lead them back there. It was only God's desire to finally save His resistant people that meant He went to this effort to preserve the spiritual leadership of Aaron. Truly God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather ever seeks to save.

Num 17:2 Speak to the children of Israel, and take of them rods, one for each father's house, of all their princes according to their fathers' families, twelve rods. Write every man's name on his rod-
The names written were presumably the names of the heads of the tribes (:3). "Rods" can also mean "tribes", so a rod was an appropriate symbol for a tribe (Gen. 49:10). This incident is really a commentary on the rebellion of chapter 16. Just as Korah and the rebels had come "before Yahweh" to offer their incense, so the rods were placed before Yahweh. Aaron's rod was chosen, and was returned to permanent status "before

Yahweh", just as Aaron and the Levites were confirmed as the priestly tribe. The process with the budding rod took took two days (Num. 17:33), just as the trial of Korah did (Num. 16:16).

We marvel that despite the dramatic judgements of Num. 16, people still doubted God's choice of Levi. Aaron had sinned badly at the time of the golden calf and in trying to grab power from Moses. In any human organization, Aaron would not have been used as a leader or High Priest. But Moses' intercession was so powerful and Divine forgiveness and restoration so total, that God now treats Aaron as High Priest and strongly justifies him as such. And yet the rod of Aaron pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, as if to teach that although indeed God had chosen Aaron, the ultimate High Priest was not him but the Lord Jesus Messiah. It is surely the choosing of Aaron in this chapter that is alluded to in Heb. 5:4: "One does
not take the honor upon himself, but he that is called by God, just as Aaron was".

Num 17:3 You shall write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi; for there shall be one rod for each head of their fathers' families-
The exercise was in order to declare the spiritual leader of the people, and so Aaron's name was placed on Levi's rod; for Aaron was, as it were, the candidate God was putting forward.

The rods likely had the names of the princes of the tribes written on them, just as Levi's rod had the name of Aaron on it. Aaron is here chosen as the head of his ancestor Levi's families. But Aaron was descended from Levi's second born Kohath, not his firstborn (Gershom). So clearly God is again showing that He prefers working through the second born, not through the firstborn, whom secular culture and wisdom would have made leader. We think of the Jacob-Esau drama.

Num 17:4 You shall lay them up in the Tent of Meeting before the testimony, where I meet with you-
God met with Israel over the ark in the most holy place (Ex. 25:22; 30:6; Num. 17:4). But they were never allowed there. And so He also "met" (s.w.) with Israel at the door of the tabernacle, and spoke with them there (Ex. 29:42,43; 30:36). But the word for "meet" is used in Am. 3:3, where God laments that Israel had not "met" with Him and therefore they could not walk further together. The idea of the "meeting" was that God's word might be revealed, so that the people could walk with Him in His ways. It was an awesome invitation, to be able to meet with the God who only otherwise met with His people in the glory of the most holy place, over the ark. He as it were came out of that most holy place and met with them at the door of the tabernacle. But they weren't interested. Just as so many today.

Num 17:5 It shall happen, that the rod of the man whom I shall choose shall bud; and I will make to cease from Me the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against you-

See on Num. 26:9. Israel's rejection of Moses was a rejection of the God who was working through Moses to redeem them. Thus Korah and his followers "strove against Moses... when they strove against Yahweh" (Num. 26:9 cp. 16:11). Moses understood that when Israel murmured against him, they murmured against Yahweh (Ex. 16:2,7; Num. 17:5; 21:5). They *thrust* Moses *away* from them (Acts 7:27,39) - yet the same word is used in Rom. 11:2 concerning how God still has not *cast away* Israel; He has not treated them as they treated Him through their rejection of Moses and Jesus, who manifested Him.

The Hebrew for "murmur" is the word for "stop", and is usually translated in that way. The idea is that they didn't want to go further on the journey; they wanted to return to Egypt. Despite the wonder of the Red Sea deliverance. Their hearts truly were in Egypt. This sense of not wanting to go onwards towards the Kingdom, to put a brake on God's saving process, is the same temptation which in essence afflicts all God's people who have started the journey with Him. Their murmuring against Moses was a murmuring against God; our attitude to our brethren is our attitude to God. See on :12,13.

Num 17:6 Moses spoke to the children of Israel; and all their princes gave him rods, for each prince one, according to their fathers' families, even twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods-

Or, 'was a part of their rods'. Perhaps to achieve fairness, one long rod was cut up into twelve smaller sections. This meant that presumably the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were counted as one tribe, as there were to be 12 rods. However, the fact the tribes were each invited to give a rod suggests that the rods were the existing symbols of eldership possessed by the princes of the tribes. Aaron's rod has featured previously (Ex. 7:8-10,19-21; 8:5,6). And it could be argued that in the Exodus record, Moses' rod is functionally the same as that of Aaron.

Num 17:7 Moses laid up the rods before Yahweh in the tent of the testimony-

All the rods were cut off and dry, unable to produce fruit. The fact Aaron's rod budded and bore fruit was therefore evidence of God's grace through the Spirit, giving life and fruit to that which was otherwise unable to bear fruit. The idea was that Aaron and his descendants were not intrinsically better than the other tribes; for this was the impression which the other tribes had. He was simply the chosen channel for the Spirit in the particular work of priesthood. And it is the same with any used by God in public ministry. The rod had previously been a serpent but had been transformed from that.

That's the message of how completely God can cleanse and then use and then justify a sinful man like Aaron. A pattern for us.

Num 17:8 It happened on the next day that Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and put forth buds, and produced blossoms, and bore ripe almonds-
The language of budding, blossoming and bearing fruit is used in Is. 27:6 about *all* Israel. God's gracious restoration of Aaron is a pattern for all. That's why the language of Aaron's budding rod is used of all the righteous: "They are planted in Yahweh's house [as the rod was left in the ark], they will blossom [s.w.] in our God's courts" (Ps. 92:13); "the righteous shall blossom as a branch / rod" (Prov. 11:28). The initial hearers of Isaiah's words would have thought back to how Aaron's rod budded, blossomed and bore fruit as a sign that God had chosen that family and not all Israel. However, Is. 27:6 makes it clear that God's ideal intention was that all Israel would be a nation of priests (Ex. 19:6). This came to fulfilment in essence with the end of the Levitical priesthood and the establishment of all those in Christ as a new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5).

The "almond is the first tree of spring in the Near East" and "the last to shed its leaves". It was the watching tree ["almond" and "watching" are related words], and is used like that in Jeremiah 1:11. The almond tree therefore suggested speed of judgment. This is a commentary upon the speed of judgment in Num. 16 upon those who resisted the choice of the Levites. We think too of how Uzziah was struck down immediately for offering incense when not a Levite (2 Chron. 26:18). The large blossoms were the pattern for the bowls of the lamps on the candlestick (Ex. 25:33,34). It was perhaps seen as symbolic of the tree of life. The priesthood could be a tree of life to Israel, but only insofar as it pointed forward to the Lord Jesus, the ultimate priest.

The almond is the first tree in Palestine to bud, so it means literally the watching tree, as if it were alive and eager to come to life. The High Priests were to pronounce the blessing that Yahweh would bless and watch over His people (Num. 6:24). They were the channel for that blessing. The idea is that the fruit on the almond was a kind of firstfruit, with promise of further fruit amongst other trees. It had always been God's intention that all Israel should be a nation of priests. The fruit was a sign of what the work of the priests should achieve for all Israel; the essence was not the rod but the fruit. God wanted Israel as a whole to be fruitful; He wanted them all to blossom, bud and fill the earth with fruit (Is. 27:6). The priesthood were to be but a foretaste and firstfruit of a far greater blossoming of all Israel. And yet this remained God's intention only. The whole idea was reapplied and reinterpreted for fulfilment in the Lord Jesus and all in Him.

The candlestick is described in similar terms, having bowls like almonds, flowers [s.w. "buds"] and blossoms (Ex. 25:31-34). The idea was that the priesthood should be like the candlestick, giving light in the darkness of the tabernacle where there was no

natural light, and illuminating the way towards the most holy place and fellowship with Yahweh Himself. The people were bidden see Aaron's budded, blossoming rod as a kind of candlestick. For that was how the priesthood was to be through the teaching of God's word to Israel and bringing them towards fellowship with God. Hence the imagery of the candlestick is later applied to all believers (the church is the candlestick, Rev. 1:20), for it is God's intention now that all believers are priests (1 Pet. 2:5).

Num 17:9 Moses brought out all the rods from before Yahweh to all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod-
God's interpretation of the almond rod in Jer. 1:11,12 was that "I watch over My word to perform it". The word translated 'hasten' or "watch over" is very similar to the word for 'almond'. Almonds are associated with God's eyes; the bowls of the lampstands were almonds (Ex. 25:33,34). Zech. 4:2 talks about these almond bowls on the candlestick, and Zech. 4:10 interprets them as the "eyes of Yahweh which run to and fro through the whole earth". 2 Chron. 16:9 talks about the Angels in the same way; "the eyes of Yahweh run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him". Similarly in Rev. 4:5 the lamps in the bowls of almond are equated with the "seven spirits (or Angels) of God". Rev. 5:6 equates the seven eyes with the seven spirits. Thus the almond rod which Jeremiah saw represented God's eyes or Angels who would watch over the word of God which Jeremiah was to speak to perform it. Jeremiah was a priest, and this was to have been true for all the priests. Their most important role was to teach God's word. They are called *elohim* just as are the priests. All Israel could have been priests, that was God's original intention; but they failed, and so He had chosen a specific family to do this work. But it was ever His intention to make all Israel blossom and bud (see on :8).

The triumph of Aaron's rods over the other rods is what had happened in Ex. 7:12, when Aaron's rod had swallowed up the other rods of Egypt's leaders. The situation is so similar that we are obviously led to understand that God saw an apostate Israel as no better than Egypt- to where anyway they wished to return, and had returned in their hearts. God's apostate people are often likened to the world, and in the last day will be judged with the world whom they have failed to separate from, even perhaps being sent back into the world to share their judgments.

Num 17:10 Yahweh said to Moses, Put back the rod of Aaron before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the children of rebellion; that you may make an end of their murmurings against me, that they not die-
GNB "It is to be kept as a warning to the rebel Israelites that they will die unless their complaining stops". LXX "a sign for the children of the disobedient; and let their murmuring cease from me". It seems that this is directed at the family members of

those slain in Korah's rebellion and the plague which followed. Despite the dramatic deaths of around 15,000 people (Num. 16:32,49), it seems that their relatives were still murmuring and were likely to also be slain. Aaron had successfully interceded for the plague to be stopped and for all Israel not to be destroyed as God had intended. And yet despite such grace and all that empirical, visible evidence, they still wanted to overthrow Moses and have a captain to take them back to Egypt. For they had returned there in their hearts. It was only God's desire to ultimately save His people which meant that He persevered with His plan, and therefore went to the trouble of giving further evidence that Moses and Aaron were His chosen leaders. And He did this "that they not die". He didn't want to slay anyone. We note that the "they" whom God didn't want to die were at this point largely the condemned generation. They were condemned to die in the desert, but God had pardonned them according to Moses' word. He therefore planned to save them ultimately, as He did Moses who likewise was denied entry to the land. But they were set against that plan, and God is trying still to make it work.

The chosen rod was specifically that of Aaron, it had his name written on it, just as the other rods had the names of the tribal leaders and not the tribes written on them. The selected rod showed "the man I choose" (:5, not "the tribe"). The rod that blossomed was the chosen High Priest. Aaron had been the salvation of sinful Israel through his powerful intercession in the previous chapter. His rod represented that indeed he and his priesthood were the channel God had chosen rather than the rest of Israel. But Aaron was himself sinful. His rod had once become a serpent earlier (Ex. 7:8-10). But now it blossomed eternally [the blossoms apparently didn't wither, speaking of "fruit that remains" eternally] with the buds of new resurrection life coming from the dead wood. This all looked forward to the Lord Jesus, "the man I choose" (:5, not "the tribe") who was the ultimate high priest who would save. His fruit, like ours, will eternally abide. Unlike all fruit of secular life. Despite having once been human [cp. the rod once being a serpent]. There were buds, blossom and fruit on the rod. We see in this the way the Lord had His own fruit but also promise of future fruit through us. Although there is also the idea of judgment: "Behold, the day, behold, it comes: your doom is gone forth; the rod has blossomed, pride has budded... The rod of My son condemns every tree" (Ez. 7:10; 21:10). Aaron's rod had specifically been used to bring some of the plagues of judgment upon Egypt. So the rod was both a token of judgment to rebellious people, as :10 states, and also the guarantee of their salvation, "that they not perish". This is what we see in the Lord Jesus- the token of both judgment and salvation. It's why the cup of wine from the Lord's hand is a double symbol, of both judgment and salvation. For there shall only be one of two possible exits from the day of judgment. The Lord is called "the rod" from the stem of Jesse (Is. 11:1). The dry tree branch would blossom / flourish (s.w., Ez. 17:24), words applied by the Lord to His own death and resurrection. The menorah lampstand likewise had buds and blosoms (Ex. 25:31-36) looking ahead to the Lord Jesus as the light / lampstand of the world (Jn. 8:12). The wood of blessing clearly also

speaks of the stake of wood upon which the Lord was crucified. A rod was a symbol of kingship, whereas here it is the symbol of priesthood. We can discern therefore that a future High Priest is being spoken of, who would be a king-priest- the Lord Jesus. Almond blossom is white but some argue that the almonds in the desert had red blossom, possibly hinting at the Lord's blood being the basis of the true High Priesthood.

Later in Num. 20:9 Moses is asked to take this rod from "before Yahweh" and speak to the rock, so that water would flow for them. The rod being "before Yahweh" refers back to how Aaron's rod that budded was placed before Yahweh (Num 17:22). So it was that rod which was used, and abused. The symbol of God's choice of Aaron was abused by Moses as if it had power of itself. We note that "his [Moses'] rod" in Num. 20:11 is lacking in the LXX and Vulgate, rendering simply "the rod". They used this symbolic piece of wood as if it had power in itself, just as some consider the physical wood of the Lord's cross to have some magic power. And they were condemned for doing so. The same error occured with the bronze serpent. Moses was asked to hold the rod because it was the symbol of warning to a rebellious people; in both passages the people are called "rebels".

Num 17:11 Moses did so. As Yahweh commanded him, so he did-
The obedience of Moses is stressed throughout the records, and is used to present him as a type of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 3:2,5). The point here may be that Moses as a non priest, a Levite and not the High Priest, had entered the most holy place before the "testimony" and the very presence of God, and then re-entered it a second time- and had not been slain. Because God is not a literalist nor legalist. It would not have been appropriate if Aaron had done this, as he was as it were one of the candidates. Constantly we see God overriding the letter of His own law in order to keep the Spirit of it.

Num 17:12 The children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, Behold, we perish! We are undone! We are all undone!-
Their sense that they are condemned and liable to destruction comes right after the declaration of Aaron's family as the rightful priests. We wonder why they now feared so much. Presumably they had continued some plan to take over the tabernacle service and leadership; see on :5,13. Isaiah quotes these words when he feels he has come too close to God's presence (Is. 6:5). It would seem that despite the mass destruction of 15,000 such rebels in Num. 16, many still wanted to rebel, and had come too close to the tabernacle; hence :13 LXX laments that whoever touched the tabernacle would die. Perhaps there was yet another [unrecorded] outbreak of judgment after Aaron's rod was revealed, and now the rest of Israel are recoiling from it, fearing that they will "all perish"

(:13). Their declaration of fear here and in :13 can be taken as a complete lack of faith in the work of Aaron and the intimated future Messiah to save them. They may allude to "It is to be kept as a warning to the rebel Israelites that they will die unless their complaining stops" (:10 GNB). Their comment is as if they were saying that they were going to continue complaining, and so they expected to die.

Num 17:13 Everyone who comes near, who comes near to the tabernacle of Yahweh, dies! Will we all perish?-
LXX "Who touches...". it would seem that they had touched the tabernacle or had attempted to "come near" to Yahweh as the priests alone were to "draw near" to Him. The subsequent warning in Num. 18:3 of death for doing this would imply that this was said by the Levites. Likewise Num. 18:22 "Henceforth the children of Israel shall not come near the Tent of Meeting, lest they bear sin, and die". This is clearly given in the context of the rebellions of Num. 16,17, where the Israelites had tried to do this. And indeed it seems they had come near the tent of meeting and touched the holy things, and it was of grace that more of them had not been slain for doing so.

It seems they still refused to accept they could not do the work of the priests, and therefore Num. 18 warns them yet again. Despite the fearful events of Num. 16, with the destruction of 15,000 people who had tried to revolt against Moses and Aaron, it seems that some were still "murmuring" against them and seeking to take over the tabernacle. Hence their deep fear when Aaron's family were confirmed as priests; see on :12,13. Tragically it seems that no matter how much God speaks and demonstrates His will, people will still rebel against Him. Empirical evidence seems to have no value, compared to the power of a heart which has returned to Egypt and away from God. The answer to "Will we all perish?" is left hanging- because the real answer is 'You should have done, but Moses and Aaron whom you so despised interceded for you, and you did not perish by grace alone'.

The people feared they would perish after Aaron's rod was chosen because the whole congregation had backed Korah's attempt to share the priesthood amongst the whole people. But the comfort was that it was in fact through the mediation of a Levite, Aaron, that they were saved from this [repeated in Num. 18:1]. Although as with the Lord's sacrifice, they didn't appreciate this. They feared judgment rather than seeing salvation by grace. There was no need for this fear of perishing- if he believed.

Another take is that until this point, access to the tabernacle had been open. Hence Num. 18:22 "Henceforth the children of Israel shall not come near the Tent of Meeting, lest they bear sin, and die". Leviticus only stipulated that the Levites must offer sacrifices. But now there appeared to be some increasing barriers between the people and the sanctuary. Possibly they had not taken the commands about the Levites' role seriously [the change to Levites from firstborns as priests had only happened recently,

after the golden calf]. Therefore the people had in practice enjoyed free access to the tabernacle; and now they realized that this was going to cease and the Levites' role was to be enforced. Just as God's initial plan in Ex. 19 had been that the entire nation be priests. Initially all the firstborn were priests. But after the golden calf, only the Levites were to be priests. And now they perceive a further distancing of the people from the sanctuary. This all mirrors Adam's exit from the intimacy of Eden.

"Will we all perish" is literally "shall we be consumed with dying?". Their allusion was to the recent statement that "In this wilderness they shall be consumed" (Num. 14:35). The reality of condemnation had not sunk in until now. Hence their lack of appreciation of how they had been saved from it ultimately by Moses' amazing intercession. Likewise it is only by appreciating that indeed we are condemned that we appreciate the Lord's work.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 18

Num 18:1 Yahweh said to Aaron, You and your sons and your fathers' house with you shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood-

We must bear one another's burden, as the priesthood bore the burden of Israel's iniquity (Num. 18:1,23). This is the meaning of priesthood. But here to bear iniquity seems to specifically mean to have responsibility for sin (as in Num. 30:15), if unqualified people were to enter the sanctuary or do the work of the priesthood. For that has been the theme of the last two chapters. It could be that Aaron and the priesthood had given in to the pressure of the rebellious Levites and allowed some of them to come near to the sanctuary, and they had to bear guilt for this sin (Num. 18:1). Hence the commandment at this point that now they should never again allow Levites to come into the sanctuary (Num. 18:3,5). This makes better sense of the "henceforth..." in Num. 18:22: "Henceforth the children of Israel shall not come near the Tent of Meeting, lest they bear sin, and die". This is clearly given in the context of the rebellions of Num. 16,17, where the Israelites had tried to do this. And indeed it seems they had come near the tent of meeting and touched the holy things, and it was of grace that more of them had not been slain for doing so. I suggest that the priests had allowed the Levites and Israelites to come close to the sanctuary; they were not to ever do so again, and I suggest the unique cleansing sacrifice of the red heifer in Num. 19 was in order to cleanse them from this sin. According to the repeated teaching in Num. 18, the entire priesthood were worthy of death because of allowing the non priests into the sanctuary. But the red heifer ritual cleansed them from this sin unto death, and therefore becomes a powerful type of the Lord's stoning sacrifice for us as condemned sinners.

Num 18:2 Your brothers also, the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, bring near with you, that they may be joined to you, and minister to you; but you and your sons with you shall be before the tent of the testimony-

The last two chapters have recorded an attempted putsch by the Levites against the priests. Here the priests are being told to "bring near" and be "joined with" their Levite brethren, living up to the name of their tribe Levi, 'joined together'. It would have been a hard call to obey, given the behaviour of the Levites just recently, resulting in at least 15000 people being slain in the recent events recorded in Num. 16,17

Num 18:3 They shall keep your commands, and the duty of all the Tent; only they shall not come near to the vessels of the sanctuary and to the altar, that they not die, neither they, nor you-

The Levites would die for touching the vessels, and the priests for letting the Levites touch them. Num. 17:13 has just described the rebellious Levites still refusing to accept they couldn't be as the priests. They lamented: "Everyone who comes near, who comes near to the tabernacle of Yahweh, dies! Will we all perish?". LXX has "Who touches...". It would seem that they had touched the tabernacle or had attempted to "come near" to Yahweh as the priests alone were to "draw near" to Him. The subsequent warning in Num. 18:3 of death for doing this would imply that this was said by the Levites. It seems they still refused to accept they could not do the work of the priests, and therefore Num. 18 warns them yet again.

Num 18:4 They shall be joined to you, and keep the responsibility of the Tent of Meeting, for all the service of the Tent, and a stranger shall not come near to you-

Despite the very clear distinction of duties between priests and Levites, they were to be "joined", a play on the meaning of "Levi". And this is the same basic teaching of Paul about the nature of the body of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. The clear distinction of duties and roles within the body was not at all to take away from the "joining" of unity between all the members.

Num 18:5 You shall perform the duty of the sanctuary, and the duty of the altar, that there be no more wrath on the children of Israel-

As explained on :1, if the priests allowed others to come into the sanctuary, then there was going to be wrath upon all Israel. The outcomes of others are to some extent delegated into the hands of third parties. This is the whole idea of God working through personal evangelism, and it is so that we all live life with a greater sense of responsibility. Eph. 4:16 may even allude here: "By him all the parts of the body fit and are knit [AV "joined"] together, with every joint supplying something according to its

unique purpose, thus making the body grow as it builds up itself in love". For we are the new priesthood.

Num 18:6 I, behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the children of Israel. To you they are given as a gift, given to Yahweh, to do the service of the Tent of Meeting-
"The men which You gave me out of the (Jewish) world... they have kept Your word" (Jn. 17:6) compares with the Levites being "given" to Aaron / the priesthood out of Israel (Num. 3:9; 8:19; 18:6); at the time of the golden calf they "observed thy word, and kept thy covenant" (Dt. 33:9), as did the disciples. The relationship between Moses and the Levites was therefore that between Christ and the disciples- a sense of thankfulness that at least a minority were faithful. The Levites were given to God, through having been given to the priests. What we give to God's people we give to God (see too on Num. 17:5). Constantly we are being taught to see God as manifest in His people, and to treat them appropriately.

Num 18:7 You and your sons with you shall keep your priesthood for everything of the altar, and for that within the veil; and you shall serve. I give you the priesthood as a gift, and the stranger who comes near shall be put to death-
Serving God is presented as an honour, a gift from God (see on Num. 16:9). Although the Levites had no physical land inheritance amongst the people of Israel, this was compensated for by being given the gift of serving God. Of course, this would only have been perceived as a gift by the more spiritually minded. We are to see service to God even in repetitive things as a gift we have been given to do.

Num 18:8 Yahweh spoke to Aaron, I, behold, I have given you the responsibility for My wave offerings, even all the holy things of the children of Israel. To you have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to your sons, as a portion forever-
For all offerings, "the front leg, the two jaw-bones, and the rough stomach of ruminants, in which the digestion is completed" was to be given to the priest (Dt. 18:3). These were thought to be the best parts of an animal; and additionally a leg (Lev. 7:32) and the breast (Lev. 7:31) of the offering were also to be given to the priest if it was a peace offering (Num. 18:11).

Num 18:9 This shall be yours of the most holy things from the fire: every offering of theirs, even every grain offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render to Me, shall be most holy for you and for your sons-
"*The* fire" refers to the fire of the altar which was ideally intended to be that kindled at

the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day. Once the fire had consumed the fat, which burnt before the meat, then the meat was to be the priest's.

Num 18:10 You shall eat of it like the most holy things. Every male shall eat of it. It shall be holy to you-
Lev. 7:6 says it should be eaten "in the holy place". But here, AV and LXX have "In the most holy place". And the Hebrew supports this. When eating these most holy things, the holy place became as it were the most holy. It was as if they were in the very presence of Yahweh. Likewise the breaking of bread meeting, which is the new covenant's equivalent of eating the holy things, gives us some special sense of God's presence. I suggest that may be behind the otherwise enigmatic reference to the presence of the Angels in 1 Cor. 11:10- a passage in the context of the breaking of bread meeting.

Num 18:11 This is yours, too: the wave offering of their gift, even all the wave offerings of the children of Israel. I have given them to you, and to your sons and to your daughters with you, as a portion forever. Everyone who is clean in your house shall eat of it-
The theme of giving gifts continues; what was given as a gift to God, He gave as a gift to the priests. See on :6. The command that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel is referring back to how the priests had no material inheritance but lived off the sacrifices (Num. 18:11). And for us, the honour and wonder of preaching Christ should mean that we keep a loose hold on the material things of this life. And as we are *all* priests, we are all preachers.

What is specifically in view here are the sacrifices of the people which were of a lower level of sanctity than those earlier described, which could only be eaten by the males in the holy place (:10).

Num 18:12 All the best of the oil and all the best of the vintage and of the grain, the first fruits of them which they give to Yahweh, to you have I given them-
It was not impossible for God to accept non-blood sacrifices (Num. 15:17-21; 18:12,13; Dt. 26:1-4). Cain was rejected not because of this, but because he refused to accept the principle of the blood being God's, and because he hated his brother. Cain, the epitome

of 'the devil' (Jn. 8:44), was characterized by the attitude that he was not his brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9). But the Lord Jesus perhaps offered a commentary on the incident when he said that our offering can only be accepted if we are first reconciled to our brother (Mt. 5:24). Cain's insistent lack of responsibility for his brother was the real sin, and therefore his sacrifice wasn't accepted by God. He wanted to serve God his own way, disregard his brother, justify his disagreement with him... to be a private person. But this was the basis of his rejection.

Num 18:13 The first-ripe fruits of all that is in their land which they bring to Yahweh shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house shall eat of it-
There is no mention in Num. 18:12,13 of the first fleece being given to the priests. But it is mentioned in Dt. 18:4, and is an example of where Deuteronomy, 'the second law', is in places more demanding and in others more understanding.

Num 18:14 Everything devoted in Israel shall be yours-
This refers to general freewill devotion of things to God (e.g. Lev. 27:21).

Num 18:15 Everything that opens the womb, of all flesh which they offer to Yahweh, both of man and animal shall be yours; nevertheless you shall surely redeem the firstborn of man, and you shall redeem the firstborn of unclean animals-
Num. 3:41 seems to have been given at a later point. There, the Levite's cattle were just accepted for those of the Israelites. Ex. 13:13 and Num. 18:17 taught that the firstborn of clean animals were to be sacrificed; although the firstborn of unclean donkeys were to be redeemed; a moderation of the command here that all unclean firstborn animals were to be redeemed. The teaching was that God's redeemed were as unclean donkeys. But the sacrificing of the firstborn of all clean animals may well have been now considered by God as too difficult for the Israelites. Their devotion to Him was sadly not to that standard. And so He upheld His basic principle but reduced the demand, by accepting the Levite's cattle at this point in place of the firstborn of the clean animals of the Israelites. We see here God's flexible attitude, because He so wanted to save His people and have relationship with them even on a lower level than ideal. And in Deuteronomy, the second law, we will see many examples of amelioration of the laws.

Num 18:16 You shall redeem those who are to be redeemed of them from a month old, according to your estimation, for five shekels of money, after the shekel of the sanctuary (the same is twenty gerahs)-
This required the Levites to have money of their own. But it seems the tithes weren't paid, and so they didn't. And so as noted on :15, these laws were later ammended in accordance with the reality of Israel's effective spiritual situation.

Num 18:17 But you shall not redeem the firstborn of a cow, or the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat. They are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar-
To sprinkle blood upon something didn't necessarily mean the object was forgiven. For an inanimate altar didn't need forgiving. The blood of the covenant was sprinkled (s.w.) upon the people as a sign of their involvement with the covenant process of salvation, rather than as a statement of their forgiveness (Ex. 24:8). Likewise with the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb (2 Chron. 35:11). This was an act of identification rather than forgiveness of sin. The function of the altar was valid before God, or efficacious, because of its association with the blood of Christ; for the blood of the animals slain upon it couldn't bring salvation of itself, but only through God's way of looking at that blood is looking ahead to that of His Son (Heb. 10:4). And so the altar was associated with the blood which represented His blood.

And shall burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
“A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Num 18:18 Their flesh shall be yours, as the wave offering breast and as the right thigh, it shall be yours-
The portion to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and

anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16).

Num 18:19 All the wave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel give to Yahweh, have I given you and your sons and your daughters with you as a portion forever. It is a covenant of salt forever before Yahweh to you and to your seed with you-
The altar was understood as the table of Yahweh, where He ate together with the offerer. To eat bread and salt was a sign of fellowship and acceptance in covenant, and the presence of salt in the sacrifices was therefore insisted upon (Lev. 2:13). A "covenant of salt" was an eternal covenant (Num. 18:19). The reminder therefore was that our relationship with God is eternal, not a passing phase in our lives, nor just a mere religious crutch to help us get through this life. For truly, God is man's friend and accepts us at His table. The salt represents gracious speech (Col. 4:6) and peace with one another (Mk. 9:50); without these things, no matter how great our sacrifice, it cannot be accepted by God. Hence Jesus taught that we should not offer our sacrifices to God until we have done what we can to get at peace with our brother (Mt. 5:24). Salt was a symbol of covenant relationship with God; yet in the NT this salt stands for love, peace and kind speaking the one to the other (Mk. 9:50; Col. 4:6). This is the result of true membership in covenant relationship; a true and abiding love for all others in covenant.

Num 18:20 Yahweh said to Aaron, You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel-
The Levites had no material inheritance because "the sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel... are his inheritance... Yahweh God of Israel was their inheritance" (Josh. 13:14,33; Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9; 18:2). Notice how "Yahweh" is put for what is sacrificed to Him. His very existence is an imperative to sacrifice to Him, despising all material advantage in doing so. Job comments that to make gold our hope and wealth our confidence is to deny “the God that is above” (Job 31:24,28). To trust in material wealth is effectively to proclaim ourselves atheists. We are described as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), so all that was true for the Levites becomes true for us. We are not to seek material inheritance. God will provide for us in ways other than our possessing land and leaving an inheritance to our children. The wonder of serving Him is to more than compensate for this.

The Levites had no land nor great material wealth to leave to their children; but they had this unique relationship with God to pass on. Jeremiah in depression, having lost all he had, concludes that God is his portion (Lam. 3:24), clearly alluding to this verse. Even if materially we lose all we have- our relationship with God is our true portion and

inheritance, which we will eternally receive in the Kingdom. The writers of the Psalms, some of whom like David weren't Levites, could use the same Hebrew word to describe how God was their "portion" and inheritance (Ps. 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; 142:5). This should be our self-perception, whether or not we leave any material inheritance to anyone or not. Not for us the obsession with building up ownership of property, under the excuse we want to leave something to our children. Our service of God and His people is our inheritance, which we shall eternally receive back at the resurrection and the time of the Kingdom of God on earth. The priests and Levites were provided with enough to eat, but no great wealth. So it should be for all full time servants in God's house. By contrast, the priests of the surrounding tribes were generally more wealthy than the other people, and owned land, which was seen as especially holy (see Gen. 47:22).

Num 18:21 To the children of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, even the service of the Tent of Meeting-

But God's giving to the Levites depended upon Israel's giving to them. Israel didn't tithe, and so the Levites had no income and had to work in secular occupations. We think of the wandering Levites of the book of Judges, going around Israel looking for work. And so the Lord's promise that those who sacrifice to Him shall receive brothers, sisters and blessing in this life is dependent upon them finding this within the ecclesia. And because of human dysfunction, they may not always find it (Mk. 10:30).

Num 18:22 Henceforth the children of Israel shall not come near the Tent of Meeting, lest they bear sin, and die-

This is clearly given in the context of the rebellions of Num. 16,17, where the Israelites had tried to do this. And indeed it seems they had come near the tent of meeting and touched the holy things, and it was of grace that more of them had not been slain for doing so. I suggested on :1 that the priests had allowed the Levites and Israelites to come close to the sanctuary; they were not to ever do so again, and I suggest the unique cleansing sacrifice of the red heifer in Num. 19 was in order to cleanse them from this sin.

Num 18:23 But the Levites shall do the service of the Tent of Meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance-

The early church began by having all things common, in imitation of how the priests had "like portions to eat" (Dt. 18:8). Notice the stress on the equality of the priests and the studied irrelevance of their personal wealth (1 Chron. 24:31; 25:8; 26:12). The Law was

geared around the assumption that the priests would be so caught up in Yahweh's work that they would never be rich (consider Dt. 14:29), and the wonder of doing His work would compensate for their lack of physical possessions (Num. 18:23). Yet the early church couldn't sustain the intensity of their initial realization of these things.

Num 18:24 For the tithe of the children of Israel, which they offer as a wave offering to Yahweh, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance'-
The contrast is between having a land inheritance, which was intended to produce food, and receiving the tithes of the harvest from the rest of Israel. Including Levi, there were 13 tribes in Israel. Ten percent of all the harvests from the other 12 tribes would have amounted to more than ten percent of the total agricultural production. Although the Levites had to in turn give a tithe of that to the priests. Additionally, they were to have portions from the sacrifices and also the freewill offerings. We could see this as God's assumption that actually not strictly ten percent would be paid as tithe; or, as His desire to give the Levites more than average. Hence the constant emphasis that they were more than compensated for not having a land inheritance, remembering anyway that the land was ultimately Yahweh's and the other tribes only had it, as it were, on permanent leasehold. And there were to be super abundant harvests, if Israel were faithful to the covenant. The generosity to the Levites becomes even more marked when we recall that at this time they were the smallest of the tribes; there was to be a superabundance of provision per head of population within the tribe. See on :26.

Num 18:25 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The Levites were to receive the tithe, but were not to assume that they were therefore not required to personally donate (:25). The need to give was required even of the recipients. And that is an abiding principle for all who receive support from others, in whatever form. For personal generosity out of what we have is to be a characteristic of all God's people.

Num 18:26 Moreover you shall speak to the Levites, and tell them, 'When you take of the children of Israel the tithe which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall offer up a wave offering of it for Yahweh, a tithe of the tithe-
The Levites numbered 22,000 males over one month old (Num. 3:34); they were to receive the tithe of 600,000 grown men from the other tribes (Num. 1:46). This may appear to mean that the Levites were to be extremely well provided for. However it's more likely that this is an example of where God foresaw the likely failure of His people to obey His Law fully, and built into that very Law some provision for this. In this we see His sensitivity to our human failure. See on :25.

Num 18:27 Your wave offering shall be reckoned to you, as though it were the grain of the threshing floor, and as the fullness of the winepress-
The Septuagint uses the word translated “imputed” in the NT with regard to sacrifices [symbolic of Christ’s death on the cross] being “reckoned” to a person (Lev. 7:18; Num. 18:27,30); and of Shimei asking David not to “reckon” his guilt to him, to judge him not according to the obvious facts of the case (2 Sam. 19:20). The Old Testament is at pains to stress that Yahweh will *not* justify the guilty (Ex. 23:7; Is. 5:23; Prov. 17:15). This is where the unique significance of Jesus comes in. Because of *Him*, His death and our faith in it, our being in Him, God can justify the wicked in that they have died with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5), they are no longer, they are only “in Christ”, for them “to live is Christ”. They are counted as in Him, and in this way sinners end up justified.

Num 18:28 Thus you also shall offer a wave offering to Yahweh of all your tithes, which you receive of the children of Israel; and of it you shall give Yahweh’s wave offering to Aaron the priest-
The idea seems to be that the Levites tithed to the priests, who tithed to the High Priest.

Num 18:29 Out of all your gifts you shall offer every wave offering of Yahweh, of all its best, even the holy part of it out of it’-
"The best" is not defined. So much of the Mosaic legislation was an appeal to the conscience. What seems best and most desirable will differ between individuals, and over time. But we are to give what in our context is "the best" to Him. But "best" is s.w. "fat", and this may be a reference to the need never to take the fat for themselves but always to offer it to God.

Num 18:30 Therefore you shall tell them, ‘When you heave its best from it, then it shall be reckoned to the Levites as the increase of the threshing floor, and as the increase of the winepress-
The tithes were to be paid to the Levites, not the priests. The priests survived by eating the sacrifices made by Israel. It’s therefore incorrect for modern church leaders to demand a tithe be paid to them because they are equivalent of the priests. In any case, we are to be a community of priests (1 Pet. 2:5). The tithes were produce from the land, not money; although seeing money existed in some form, God could have commanded money to be given them. But the tithe was of agricultural produce, simply so that the Levites would have something to eat as they concentrated on God’s service- not in order to make them wealthy.

Num 18:31 You shall eat it in every place, you and your households; for it is your reward

in return for your service in the Tent of Meeting-
"Reward for service" is the phrase used in Ez. 29:18 for how God considered that even Gentile Nebuchadnezzar was worthy of a reward / wage for his service for God against the king of Tyre. This sense of some immediate recompense for service rendered to God is a major theme. And yet in the Christian dispensation, the reward for service is not now but at the Lord's coming, indeed this is one reason why there will be a day of judgment (Rev. 22:12).

Num 18:32 You shall bear no sin by reason of it, when you have heaved from it the best of it, and you shall not profane the holy things of the children of Israel, that you not die'-
They were not to fear eating the tithe, and yet they were to ensure that the wrong people didn't eat holy things. Although the Hebrew word for "holy things" can equally mean the holy place. Or the reference may specifically be to the tithe of the tithe, which would be profaned if they kept it for themselves and didn't give it to the priests. The principle may be that we can only enjoy anything if we have first subjected it and our lives to the spirit of giving.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 19

Num 19:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying-
This sacrifice was to provide purification from death through its ashes, which were to be mixed with water (:9), perhaps the running water from the rock, which water followed them through the wilderness- for what other source of "running [Heb. 'springing'] water" (:17) could they have had in the wilderness? It speaks very clearly of Christ's death; for He was without blemish and never came under the yoke of sin; He too was killed outside the camp of Israel (:3 cp. Heb. 13:12). Heb. 9:13 specifically alludes to how the ashes of this heifer were typical of Christ's sacrifice.

The material in Num. 19 is in a block of material which follows on from Num. 15. There we read of the presumptuous sin, and there have been examples of this in Israel's presumptuous entry into the land in Num. 14 and the various rebellions of Israel against God's grace. Pardon was obtained for these at times by Moses' word alone ["I have pardonned according to your word"], or by the incense offered by Aaron. All these were 'last minute' interventions by Moses and Aaron when God had already determined to destroy Israel. I have noted earlier that these atonements were not made on the basis of blood, without which there can be no remission of sin, according to God's own principle. They were the result of grace. I suggest that now God is asking Eleazar to make a time specific opportunity for forgiveness and cleansing to be obtained through this red heifer. Lest Israel assume that forgiveness for condemnation was too automatic and painlessly granted. All such Old Testament forgiveness was in any case only made

possible for the sake of the Lord's future sacrifice. And so the red heifer ritual in particular looks ahead to that. We note that the legislation about the red heifer was the last command given to Israel before they died in the desert. It was the chance for that generation to be cleansed of their sin and join Moses in hope of ultimate salvation, even if they couldn't enter the land in this life.

The red heifer was a "sin offering" (:9). But for what kind of sin? So far in Mosaic law, there had already been sacrifices prescribed for sins of human frailty, and for sins of ignorance. The only other kind of sin defined was that of presumption, from which some in Israel had received forgiveness by grace. I suggest the red heifer ritual was to explain that in these cases, the forgiveness was still related to the shedding of blood- but of a future sacrifice, of Messiah. However it has been apparent that even God's forgiveness of presumptuous sin, by grace, didn't achieve transformation of those thus benefitted. The red heifer sacrifice therefore had a function of purification, looking ahead to how the Lord's sacrifice according to Hebrews not only forgave, but empowered purification of the spirit.

Num 19:2 This is the statute of the law which Yahweh has commanded: Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without spot, in which is no blemish- No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19). So this looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

The red heifer appears to have been the source of the water of cleansing which was required by many situations envisaged under the Mosaic law. But it is unclear whether multiple red heifers were to be slain to provide enough ashes to create such water, or whether this was a one off sacrifice and cleansing ritual to be done only in the wilderness. It is a deconstruction of the Egyptian sacrifice of a spotless red bull to Typhon, the god of evil, broadly equivalent to the [mis]conception of 'satan' held by

many. It was deconstructed by this ritual, in that the red bull was to be offered to Yahweh, not a satan being; and would bring forgiveness and cleansing rather than safety from a 'satan' being. For human uncleanness rather than the supposed machinations of a 'satan' figure is where our focus should be.

And which was never yoked-
The red heifer as the source of cleansing through water [cp. baptism] looked ahead to the Lord Jesus. The naturalness which Jesus had with people reflects His respect for the freedom which God has given His people to chose for themselves. He was Himself supremely free, due to His pure conscience before the Father. He was typified by the red heifer “upon which never came yoke” (Num. 19:2). We were set free from sin by Christ through “freedom” (Gal. 5:1 RV). But we were set free by Him as a person. His freedom, His freedom from sin and the freedom that must have characterized His person, is what liberates us too. And it is the experience of that freedom, the freedom from sin that comes through forgiveness (Jn. 8:32), which can be ‘used’ to love others (Gal. 5:13).

Num 19:3 You shall give her to Eleazar the priest, and he shall bring her forth outside of the camp, and one shall kill her before his face-
The Red Heifer was to be slain before the face of the priest, "as he watches" (Num. 19:3-5 NIV), pointing forward to the Lord's slaughter in the personal presence of the Father. The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorossa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

NEB however takes "before its face" to mean "to the east of it", referring to the camp. The location of Golgotha is anyone's guess, but a case can be made that it was east of the temple in a public place on the east-west road along which the Romans often crucified people as a public warning. We note that Aaron camped to the east of the tabernacle (Num. 3:38). Eleazar then sprinkling the blood toward the front of the tent of meeting (:4) would then be more natural, if the heifer was slain to the east of it, facing toward it.

The specific mention of Eleazar leads us to think that this entire ritual was time limited, just for that generation. Possibly it was a ritual specifically to cleanse Israel from the sin of the golden calf [since Aaron was guilty of that sin, his son Eleazar had to perform the ritual], or more likely from the many dead bodies resulting from the 14,700 slain at the time of the rebellion in Num. 16. Possibly Aaron wasn't to do it because of the principle that he was not to depart from the sanctuary (Lev. 21:12), and this sacrifice was to be made outside the entire camp. We note that the animal was not to be sacrificed upon an altar- it was done outside the camp. It was a sacrifice quite unlike the previously explained sacrifices. The fat was not to be eaten, the offering priest was defiled by the ritual, the ashes have the power to cleanse going forward rather than the sacrifice needing to be repeated etc.

Num 19:4 Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle her blood toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times-

The implication is that this process of cleansing from the results of death was to be permanent; but the whole style of the command for Eleazar to kill the red heifer in :2,3 sounds as if only one red heifer was killed for all time. See on :11. I suggested on Lev. 1:1 that all of Leviticus may be referring just to the ceremony of the sanctification of the priests when the tabernacle was first built, and this section in Num. 19 may be the same. There is no command as to continuing to kill a red heifer, nor by whom or how often it should be done. The record may be framed to present the result of the red heifer's sacrifice as if it were eternal, clearly typifying Christ's sacrifice. Another option is that this entire ritual is to be understood in the context of the death of so many Israelites in the rebellion described in chapter 16. Chapters 17 and 18 provide the answer to the peoples' concerns arising out of that incident, and chapter 19 may also be in that context- describing how to avoid defilement by all the dead bodies which died in the plague. The specific mention of Eleazar, rather than a more generic reference to the High Priest or his son, could suggest that this red heifer ritual was a one off cleansing for the time. See on :11.

Num 19:5 One shall burn the heifer in his sight: her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn-

No part of the animal was to be kept and eaten by the priests or Levites. I will suggest on :11 that the entire ritual was a one off situation, providing cleansing for those who were now going to bury the 15000 people slain as a result of the rebellion against Moses and Aaron in Num. 16; and this would have included many Levites, who had aspired wrongly to the priesthood. So it would have been inappropriate if they had eaten of the sacrifice themselves.

The ritual was intended to recall that of the Day of Atonement, when the sacrifices "shall be carried forth outside the camp; and they shall burn their skins, their flesh, and their dung with fire. He who burns them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp" (Lev. 16:27,28). Again the person associated with the offering is made unclean. The idea is that the red heifer ritual was to produce an atonement, it was a "sin offering" (:9), but I have suggested that it was a one-time ritual and we never hear of it being practiced in any ongoing sense in Biblical history. The atonement I suggest was for the presumptuous sins that had been forgiven without the shedding of blood. For every other kind of sin already had a sacrifice stipulated for it in Leviticus. It is the ritual of atonement for the unforgiveable and the condemned, and points ahead to the Lord's work on the cross.

Num 19:6 and the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer-
All associated with the crucifixion of Christ. The Lord was intensely intellectually conscious throughout His sufferings. His mind was evidently full of the word, He would have seen the symbolism of everything far more than we can, from the thorns in His mock crown, to the hyssop being associated with Him at the very end (the hyssop was the fulfilment of types in Ex. 12:8,22; Lev. 14:4,6,49-52; Num. 19:6,18).

Cedar, hyssop and scarlet are all associated with the cleansing of leprosy, which I suggest was not Hansen's disease but a specific "stroke" of judgment. Miriam had been saved from this by Moses' intercession, she was as a walking corpse "like one who is dead" (Num. 12:12) as were the condemned Israelites in the desert whose corpses fell when they died; and the people had likewise been smitted but saved from it. Now they were being taught that these pardons still had to have their basis in the shedding of blood, even if the sacrifice was now offered some time later. And that is exactly how the Lord's later supreme sacrifice functioned, and for whose sake forgiveness was given in Mosaic times.

We note the dominance of the colour red. The red heifer, scarlet, the red cedar wood- and possibly hyssop too was a dark red colour. All this was to point up the huge significance of the blood in the cleansing- looking ahead to the blood of the Lord Jesus. A red heifer would have been rare and hard to find, again pointing forward to the Lord.

Num 19:7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the evening-
The defilement of the priest by the sacrifice is unique amongst all the offerings commanded. On one hand, it looks ahead to how the Lord Jesus died on the cross, and "cursed is every one who hangs on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). He was not made personally

sinful by the process of His death, but He was thereby definitely associated with all that is unclean. We think of 2 Cor. 5:21 AV: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". But in the immediate context, I suggest that these rituals were for the cleansing of the priesthood as well as the living supporters and relatives of those slain in the rebellion of the Levites in Num. 16. It could be that Aaron and the priesthood had given in to the pressure of the rebellious Levites and allowed some of them to come near to the sanctuary, and they had to bear guilt for this sin (Num. 18:1). Hence the commandment at this point that now they should never again allow Levites to come into the sanctuary (Num. 18:3,5). This makes better sense of the "henceforth..." in Num. 18:22: "Henceforth the children of Israel shall not come near the Tent of Meeting, lest they bear sin, and die". This is clearly given in the context of the rebellions of Num. 16,17, where the Israelites had tried to do this. And indeed it seems they had come near the tent of meeting and touched the holy things, and it was of grace that more of them had not been slain for doing so. I suggest that the priests had allowed the Levites and Israelites to come close to the sanctuary; they were not to ever do so again, and I suggest the unique cleansing sacrifice of the red heifer in Num. 19 was in order to cleanse them from this sin. According to the passages in Num. 18, the entire priesthood were worthy of death because of allowing the non priests into the sanctuary. But the red heifer ritual cleansed them from this sin unto death, and therefore becomes a powerful type of the Lord's stoning sacrifice for us as condemned sinners.

One great mystery of the red heifer ritual is that it made unclean those who performed it. Rabbinic interpretation likes to stress the paradoxes within the red heifer ritual and leave them as intentional paradoxes. That approach may have some mileage, in that atonement is ultimately a mystery. However the simpler reading may be that the red heifer incident specifically points forward to the Lord Jesus, and those who were involved in His death [especially the priesthood] were themselves made unclean by it. But the simple picture is that the red heifer ritual purified the defiled, and defiled the pure. And this is really what happens when human beings encoutner the Lord's sacrifice. Some will insist they don't need it because they are already pure, considering they are healthy and don't need a doctor, as the Lord put it. And they, the pure in their own eyes, are thereby defiled. And yet it cleanses those who accept they are defiled.

Num 19:8 He who burns her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the evening-

The ashes of the red heifer purified the impure / unclean, but defiled the clean. This is an intentional paradox, and is meant to highlight how the Lord's work can only benefit those who recognize their uncleanness. He is a doctor, and cannot heal those who consider they need no doctor. As explained on :7, the immediate context seems to be that the priesthood had been defiled by allowing the Levites to pressurize them to allow

them to come close to the sanctuary; and this explains why there is so much uncleanness upon the Levites and priests associated with this sacrifice.

Num 19:9 A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up outside of the camp in a clean place; and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water for impurity. It is a sin offering-
We may well enquire what particular sin had been committed. Cleansing from impurity which arose from touching dead bodies didn't require a sin offering. I have suggested on :7 that the sin in view could be the way the priesthood had bowed to pressure from the Levites and allowed them to enter the sanctuary. But more likely the sin is the presumptuous sins of the recent rebellions which had been forgiven at the time by grace and without the shedding of blood.

Num 19:10 He who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the evening. It shall be to the children of Israel, and to the stranger who lives as a foreigner among them, for a statute forever-
I have discussed on :8 why there is so much uncleanness upon the Levites and priests associated with this sacrifice. But the reference to "a statue forever" could admittedly tend against my suggestion that this was a one time sacrifice to deal with the uncleanness and sin associated with the events of Num. 16,17. But "a statute for ever" is the term used about the regular annual keeping of the Passover and other annual feasts (Ex. 12:14,17,43) so the idea may be that the gross sin of the priests in allowing the Levites and others into the sanctuary was to be remembered each year in the red heifer ritual. Or "a statute forever" could as well mean that this is a law about a sacrifice with eternal effect and consequence.

Num 19:11 He who touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days-
There was already ritual provided to deal with being unclean from touching a corpse. The red heifer ritual is therefore relating to some specific one time defilement by corpses. The context is the death of so many rebels in Num. 16. "Tent" in :14 again suggests this was not a ritual for all time, but specific to them at that point living in tents. The whole camp was thereby unclean. Their relatives wanted to bury them, but they all had to therefore engage with the red heifer ritual. Or perhaps this is mentioned because this was an example of how the water of cleansing, made from the ashes of the red heifer, could be used. But if it were to be used every time there was a death, then it would've required many ashes from red heifers. We wonder therefore if these commands are specifically for the Levites at the sanctuary. Otherwise, there would need to be red heifer sacrifices and ashes made throughout Israel. I discussed on :4 how the impression could be taken that this was to be one sacrifice for all time (another

element of how it typified the Lord's death), and that therefore it would only have been applicable to the wilderness situation. Perhaps what was specifically in view was the cleansing required for the 15000 people who had just been slain in the events of Num. 16,17, and who were now going to be buried. There would have been mass defilement of people during the burial and mourning process, and these people were sinners. Therefore there was this special cleansing ritual foreseen.

Num 19:12 The same shall purify himself with water on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he doesn't purify himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean-

This may have hints of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus on the third day, leading to our complete cleansing on the seventh day- God's Kingdom established on earth. See on :16.

The word *chata* "purify" occurs often here (:12,13,19,20). But this is the usual word translated 'sin' [or equivalent] about 200 times in the Hebrew Bible. Here the verb occurs in the piel and not the qal form. The sense is literally 'to un-sin'. No sacrifice in the Mosaic legislation so far could de-sin or un-sin a person. Such a word is hardly found in any other language, although German *entsündigen* may have something of the idea or English 'exonerate'. We have here a profound insight into the deep cleansing work of the Lord's sacrifice, a deep cleansing of the conscience beyond forgiveness. Truly here is a case where the closer one looks at God's word, the deeper is the beauty. We struggle with this experience because human forgiveness is not like this. It is at best a 'play on', an emotional position adopted by the forgiver, but the grant of human forgiveness cannot touch the conscience of the forgiven nor cleanse them before God. Only God's Son can say as He did to the woman in John 8, "I do not condemn you", and then speak of how that truth makes us free, we shall be "free indeed". Although the wonder of these things only has any moment if we are convicted of our sin first. Only then will our cleansing and freedom result in a flame of passionate devotion for Him who freed us.

And the wonder of it all is that the Lord's sacrifice is far more powerful than that of the red heifer: "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:13,14). The use of *chata* here may be intended to suggest that this red heifer ritual pointed ahead to a sacrifice which would un-sin to the point of cleansing the conscience.

Num 19:13 Whoever touches a dead person, the body of a man who has died, and doesn't purify himself, defiles the tent of Yahweh; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel. Because the water for impurity was not sprinkled on him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet on him-
This could mean that the dead bodies were of those who had defiled the tabernacle, referring to those of Korah's rebellion.

The sacrifice of the red heifer, like that of Christ, became meaningful and effective for the individual when mixed with water, which could suggest our need to appropriate the sacrifice of Christ to ourselves through baptism. This appears a very strict judgment for touching a corpse and then not having the red heifer ash water sprinkled. What if the red heifer hadn't been slain by the priest, what if the water wasn't available immediately, especially if the person was far from the sanctuary? But I have suggested on :7,11 that this is all in the specific context of the events of Num. 16,17; it was a one off requirement that those who were unclean because of those events should make use of the cleansing offered through the red heifer, or die in their sins. Likewise see on :20. There are many Biblical examples of men touching dead bodies, but there is never any future reference to the red heifer ritual. I suggest therefore that the dead bodies in view are specifically those of the slain rebels, and the red heifer legislation was uniquely relevant to them.

Being "cut off from Israel" may not mean that the person must be slain. For then the phrase "cut off from the earth" would have been used (as in Prov. 2:22 and often). The idea is that the person who ate leaven (Ex. 12:15) or was not circumcised (Gen. 17:14) was excluded from the community of God's people because they had broken or despised the covenant which made them His people. But there is no record of Israel keeping a list of 'cut off from Israel' Israelites and excluding them from keeping the feasts. So we conclude this means that God would consider such persons as cut off from His people. He would do the cutting off, and not men. In His book, they were "cut off". But there was no legal nor practical mechanism provided to Israel to manage the 'cutting off from Israel' of those who despised the covenant. The cutting off was done in God's eyes, in Heaven's record, and the Israelites were intended to continue to fellowship with such persons at the feasts. This is a strong argument for an open table, and for not seeking to make church excommunication the equivalent of this cutting off of the disobedient from the people of Israel. This explains why being "cut off from Israel" is the punishment stated for doing things which man could not see and judge- secretly breaking the Sabbath (Ex. 31:14), eating peace offerings whilst being unclean (Lev. 7:20- for how were others to know whether someone had touched the unclean, or was experiencing an unclean bodily emission), eating meat with blood still in it (Lev. 17:10,14), not adequately humbling the soul (Lev. 23:29), not keeping Passover (Num. 9:13), being presumptuous (Num. 15:30,31- only God can judge that), not washing after

touching a dead body (Num. 19:13,20). This is why Lev. 20:6 makes it explicit that "I [Yahweh personally] will set My face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people". It is Yahweh who does the cutting off and not men (also 1 Sam. 2:33).

Num 19:14 This is the law when a man dies in a tent: everyone who comes into the tent, and everyone who is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days-
Once settled in the land, people would generally live in houses and not tents. We enquire why this particular reference to tents. I suggested on :4,7,11 that the specific reference of this whole ritual is to those made unclean and condemned to death because of the events of Num. 16. Therefore the reference to tents is specifically to the tents of the rebels and their supporters (Num. 16:26).

Num 19:15 Every open vessel, which has no covering bound on it, is unclean-
This hyper strictness is explained on :8.

Num 19:16 Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain with a sword, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days-
The seven day period is that of :12. The dead bodies and bones in view are specifically of the recently slain rebels. See on :4,7,11.

The enigmatic Jn. 7:38 alludes here: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly ("innermost being", NIV) shall flow rivers of living (Gk. spring) water". What "scripture" did the Lord have in mind? Perhaps the references to spring water being used to cleanse men from leprosy and death (Lev. 14:5; 15:13; Num. 19:16). Out of the innermost being of the true believer, the spring(ing) water of the Gospel will *naturally* spring up and go out to heal men, both now and more fully in the Kingdom, aided then by the Spirit gifts. The believer, *every* believer, *whoever* believes, will preach the word to others *from his innermost being*, both now and in the Kingdom - without the need for preaching committees or special efforts (not that in themselves I'm decrying them). The tendency is to delegate our responsibilities to these committees. There is no essential difference between faith and works. If we believe, we will do the works of witness, quite spontaneously. And note how the water that sprung out of the Lord's smitten side is to be compared with the bride that came out of the smitten side of Adam. We, the bride, are the water; thanks to the inspiration of the cross, we go forth in witness, the water of life to this hard land in which we walk.

Num 19:17 For the unclean they shall take of the ashes of the burning of the sin offering; and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel-
The Lord taught that He was the rock, and we like Israel drink of what came out of Him.

The Law of Moses included several rituals which depended upon what is called " the running water" (Lev. 14:5,6,50-52; 15:18; Num. 19:17). "Running" translates a Hebrew word normally translated "living". This living water was what came out of the smitten rock. The Lord taught that the water that would come out of Him would only come after His glorification (Jn. 7:38)- an idea He seems to link with His death rather than His ascension (Jn. 12:28,41; 13:32; 17:1,5 cp. 21:19; Heb. 2:9). When He was glorified on the cross, then the water literally flowed from His side on His death. The rock was "smitten", and the water then came out. The Hebrew word used here is usually translated to slay, slaughter, murder. It occurs in two clearly Messianic passages: " ...they talk to the hurt of him [Christ] whom thou hast smitten" (Ps. 69:26); "we esteemed him [as He hung on the cross] smitten of God" (Is. 53:4). The living waters were representative of the Holy Spirit which is given to us- not the miraculous gifts, but the power of God within the human spirit, to bring us to have His Spirit and mind which was in Christ. It is this which now is the cleansing agent, making our sacrifices acceptable, cleansing our motives in a way in which we cannot do, at least not by any conscious intellectual process.

Num 19:18 and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it on the tent, and on all the vessels, and on the persons who were there, and on him who touched the bone, or the slain, or the dead, or the grave-
We note the association of hyssop with the Lord's death on the cross (Jn. 19:29). That hyssop had been dipped in red wine, representing blood, and the Lord surely saw the relevance to Himself. "I am that hyssop", He would have thought. On the cross, He was the door (Jn. 10:9), and He experienced hyssop with red wine (representing blood) brushed against Him. Just as the doors at Passover had blood brushed onto them using a hyssop plant, and this was the basis of Israel's salvation.

The "clean person" and "they" of :17 could be anyone. The red heifer cleansing differs from any other Mosaic ritual in that it didn't need to be administered by priests. This speaks of how the Lord's work for us, and the sovereign forgiveness of God, is ministered directly and without any priesthood as an interface. This is some kind of a foil to the recent declaration of Aaron and the Levites as God's method of priesthood (Num. 16,17). Ultimate forgiveness and total pardon was not actually achieved through them.

Num 19:19 The clean person shall sprinkle on the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day, and on the seventh day he shall purify him; and he shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at evening-
The importance of self examination at the breaking of bread is indirectly hinted at in Jn. 13:10: “He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet". This is surely a

reference to how Num. 19:19 prescribed that a Levite was required to take a plunge bath in order to be clean. The Lord is therefore saying that *all* His people, when they partake of His feast, are to present themselves as cleansed Levites. He understood His people as *all* being part of a priesthood. Additionally, we need to bear in mind that the Lord spoke those words just before the breaking of bread, in response to how Peter did not want to participate in the Lord's meal if it meant the Lord washing him. Surely the Lord was saying that baptism is a one time event- he has been thus bathed does not need to wash again, or be re-baptized. But, he does need to periodically wash his feet, which I would take to be a reference to the breaking of bread which Peter seemed to want to avoid. Thus whilst forgiveness is not mystically mediated through the bread and wine, there is all the same a very distinct connection between the memorial meeting and forgiveness, just as there is between baptism and forgiveness. To not break bread is to walk away from that forgiveness in the blood of Jesus, just as to refuse baptism is to do the same.

Num 19:20 But the man who shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of Yahweh. The water for impurity has not been sprinkled on him: he is unclean-
This appears a very strict judgment for touching a corpse and then not having the red heifer ash water sprinkled. What if the red heifer hadn't been slain by the priest, what if the water wasn't available immediately, especially if the person was far from the sanctuary? But I have suggested on :7,11 that this is all in the specific context of the events of Num. 16,17; it was a one off requirement that those who were unclean because of those events should make use of the cleansing offered through the red heifer, or die in their sins.

Num 19:21 It shall be a perpetual statute to them. He who sprinkles the water for impurity shall wash his clothes, and he who touches the water for impurity shall be unclean until evening-
The "water of separation" granted cleansing, in prophecy of the effect of the blood of Christ (Num. 19:21). But the Hebrew for "separation" is also translated 'uncleanness' (Lev. 20:21; Ezra 9:11; Zech. 13:1). Touching this water for any other reason made a man unclean. Only if used in the right context did it make him clean (Num. 19:21). This is why it is described with a word which has these two meanings. Thus the RSV gives "water of impurity", the LXX 'water of purifying'. And so it is with our contact with the work of the Lord, symbolized in the emblems. We are made unclean by it, we drink damnation to ourselves, if we don't discern it. Only if we properly discern it are we cleansed by it. The idea of the breaking of bread becoming a place of condemnation for the unworthy is to be found in Ps. 69:22, where those who crucify Messiah afresh are warned that their table will become a snare to them, and their own sense of peace will trap them.

I have discussed on :8 why there is so much uncleanness upon the Levites and priests associated with this sacrifice. But the reference to "a statue forever" could admittedly tend against my suggestion that this was a one time sacrifice to deal with the uncleanness and sin associated with the events of Num. 16,17. But "a statute for ever" is the term used about the regular annual keeping of the Passover and other annual feasts (Ex. 12:14,17,43) so the idea may be that the gross sin of the priests in allowing the Levites and others into the sanctuary was to be remembered each year in the red heifer ritual.

Num 19:22 Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the soul that touches it shall be unclean until evening-
I have discussed on :8 why there is so much uncleanness upon the Levites and priests associated with this sacrifice.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 20

Num 20:1 The children of Israel, even the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month; and the people stayed in Kadesh. Miriam died there, and was buried there-

"The whole congregation" or "all the congregation" is a phrase used always in the context of Israel's complaints or rebellions. The implication therefore is that those who still survived of the condemned generation (see on :3) and those of the younger generation- all failed now at the very border of the Kingdom of God. We can also infer that the complaints were not from a disgruntled minority, but were the spirit of the entire community. "The first month" when these things happened at Kadesh would appear to be in year 40 of the "journey", comparing with the itinerary in Num. 33:36-38.

Despite all the visible wrath of God against those who rebelled in Num. 16 with 15000 dying, the condemnation of the priesthood to death and then their being saved by the unique, saving provision of the red heifer (see on Num. 19:4,7,11)... the people still rebelled. This is all a classic case of where visible, empirical evidence doesn't of itself elicit true faith in God. And those who base their faith upon 'scientific evidence' on one hand or Pentecostal claims of miracles... need to be warned by this. We wonder whether the death of Miriam was related to her abiding sense of rebellion against her brothers Moses and Aaron. Perhaps the root of her name, Mara [bitter] became sadly true for her in her older age.

"The waters of strife in Kadesh" were the borders of the land, as defined in Ez. 47:19; 48:28. On the borders of the Kingdom, they rebelled and Moses sinned and disbelieved.

The rest of Numbers will be taken up with accounts of their failures right at the end. We marvel at this failure at the very end of the journey [for the record of the death of Aaron in the 40th year runs straight on from this narrative as if it was now the 40th year since leaving Egypt]. But it is of the same nature as the great apostacy foretold by the New Testament on the eve of the second coming, leading the Lord to muse as to whether He would find faith on the earth at His return.

Num 20:2 There was no water for the congregation. They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron-
Stephen in Acts 7 stresses the way in which Moses was rejected by Israel as a type of Christ. At age 40, Moses was "thrust away" by one of the Hebrews; and on the wilderness journey the Jews “thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt" (Acts 7:27,35,39). This suggests that there was far more antagonism between Moses and Israel than we gather from the Old Testament record- after the pattern of Israel's treatment of Jesus. It would seem from Acts 7:39 that after the golden calf incident, the majority of Israel cold shouldered Moses. Once the point sank in that they were not going to enter the land, this feelings must have turned into bitter resentment. They were probably unaware of how Moses had been willing to offer his eternal destiny for their salvation; they would not have entered into the intensity of Moses' prayers for their salvation. The record seems to place Moses and "the people" in juxtaposition around 100 times (e.g. Ex. 15:24; 17:2,3; 32:1 NIV; Num. 16:41 NIV; 20:2,3; 21:5). They accused Moses of being a cruel cult leader, bent on leading them out into the desert to kill them and steal their wealth from them (Num. 16:13,14)- when in fact Moses was delivering them from the house of bondage, and was willing to lay down his own salvation for theirs. The way Moses submerged his own pain is superb; both of their rejection of him and of God's rejection of him from entering the Kingdom. The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals this submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because you believed me not... you shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to “the Lord spake unto Moses” (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books.

"Assembling together against Moses" is the same phrase used in the record of Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:3,19,42) and the golden calf (Ex. 32:1). Likewise they "quarreled with" Moses (:3) is the same word used of how they did this in the previous rebellion about water in Ex. 17:2,7. “Why have you brought the Lord’s congregation into this wilderness for us... to die?” (:4) repeats the words of the rebellions by the previous generation: at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:11), at Kadesh (Num. 14:2) and in Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:13). No lessons had been learnt from all the salvations by grace at those times. “Why did you make us leave Egypt?” (:5) recalls the pining for all things Egyptian

which characterized the previous generation, at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:11), when they complained and were given Manna (Ex. 16:3), in Num. 11:5 at Kibroth-hattaavah, when the spies returned and they refused to enter Canaan (Num. 14:2), and at Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:13). In :4 they complain there are no figs, pomegranates nor vines in the desert. These were the very things brought back from Canaan as encouragement to persevere with Yahweh's path to enter it (Num. 13:23). This was an expression of serious doubt as to whether they would in fact enter the Kingdom. It was a very serious sin. We wonder why in the incident that follows, God appears to be very harsh in the level of judgment given to Moses. But we wonder whether in fact behind that there was not a desire to place their rightful judgment- of telling them "Well OK don't enter Canaan"- upon Moses. He bore their sin as ever.

This generation were just as rebellious as the previous one; that's the point of these connections. All the grace shown previously, the salvation from condemnation by desperate intercession, just had left no lasting mark on the people. Numbers seems to record what happened at the very start of the journey, the first year or so, and then from Num. 20 what happened in the last year or so. If the "whole assembly" (:1) here were mostly or exclusively those under 20 on leaving Egypt, we marvel that those about to enter the Kingdom actually didn't want to. What we will read for the rest of Numbers is a terrible spurning of grace and salvation. We see a studied repetition of the failures of the first generation as *they* approached the borders of the land. This new generation were no better, but were saved by grace.

Num 20:3 The people strove with Moses and spoke, saying, We wish that we had died when our brothers died before Yahweh!-

Israel “chode with Moses… they strove with the Lord” (Num. 20:3,13) uses the same Hebrew word for both “chode” and “strove”. To strive with Moses was to strive with the Lord- i.e. with the guardian Angel that was so closely associated with Moses? Num. 20:4 continues rather strangely with the Israelites addressing Moses in the plural: “The people chode with Moses, saying… Why have ye [you plural] brought up…”. Could it be that even they recognized his partnership with God? Likewise Num. 21:5: “And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye [plural] brought us up out of Egypt to die?”. "Our brothers" shows that the people were at one with the rebels who had died in the events of Num. 16, and hence Moses addresses them all as "rebels" (:10). He was on one hand full of spiritual perception, but lack of faith and unwise words on the other. This kind of terrible mixture of flesh and Spirit is sadly to be found in all God's children, even the very best of them like Moses.

The mention of brothers rather than fathers might suggest this complaint came from the last remnant of the condemned generation. The judgments at Kibroth-hattaavah (Num. 11:34) and Kadesh (Num. 14:37) had been upon not their brothers but their fathers.

They were bitter and complaining to the end, for at this point they are nearing the end of the 40 years wandering. Just like many elderly folk today who refuse to get it. But the stress on how the "whole congregation" were involved (:1) suggests more that the younger ones were referring to the previous generation as their "brothers" to show solidarity with them. Rather than being grateful that they were going to enter the land whereas that generation didn't. They who were about to enter the land lament that they hadn't died with earlier rebels. They had been told that the wanderings would be for 40 years, but now the time was coming to an end, they still rebelled and just didn't want the Kingdom. There is no sense of tip top joyful expectancy. The blindness of man to the soon possibility of God's Kingdom is likewise amazing.

Num 20:4 Why have you brought the assembly of Yahweh into this wilderness that we should die there, we and our animals?-
The obvious answer was that not Moses but God had brought them into the wilderness, they had went the way they were led by the Angel going before them in the pillar of cloud and fire. But they didn't want to accept that as any evidence. Again, as discussed on :1, visible, empirical evidence didn't persuade anyone of anything much. In their hearts they had returned to Egypt (Acts 7:39), and so they would see everything through the lens of their desire to return there. And so it is with those who love the world and simply do not want the things of the Kingdom. The manna was being given, but they disregarded it, and assumed they would die without the luxury foods of :5. We have a powerful insight into the mentality of so many. They are not satisfied with food and clothing, and for them, life is "death" without all the "extras".

The test as to "What shall we drink?" was a repeat of that in Ex. 15 and Ex. 17. The same basic test, although in regard to "What shall we eat?", was repeated in Ex. 16. The Lord alludes to this when warning us not to ask what we shall eat or drink but to live life trusting in God's provision. And this is how life goes- tests repeat, in essence, and we are intended to learn from how God provides and acts in earlier tests in our lives. And also from how He has provided historically, in the Biblical record. It's the same with how God had carefully instructed Moses how to use his rod, and therefore his failure with his rod was seen as so culpable.

These are the words of the rebellion in Ex. 17:3. Many had been saved by grace from the results of that rebellion. But even now in their old age (see on :3), all the grace meant nothing, and they learnt nothing from history. Thus is man without trust in Divine grace.

Num 20:5 Why have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in to this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there

any water to drink-
Their idea was that the desert was no place to plant seed. The idea may have been that they had camped for some time where they had planted seeds. But now they were in a desolate area. God's later comment upon this is "Have I been a wilderness to Israel?" (Jer. 2:31). They totally ignored God's hand and leadership in all this, taking out their anger with God upon His representatives- as happens to this day.

The answer was obviously 'Because you sinned'. But they totally discounted this, as many do today. They were bitter at the consequence of sin. Living in a fallen world becomes so depressing and bitter until we accept the huge significance of human sin.

Num 20:6 Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the Tent of Meeting, and fell on their faces, and the glory of Yahweh appeared to them-
When faced with unreasonable criticism and aggression, even from those amongst the people of God, our response should be not to argue back immediately, but take the situation to God. Moses' humility is surely revealed here; for he doesn't make the obvious responses to them which he could have made. Instead he falls on his face in appeal to God not to slay them. This points up the way that his sin in hitting the rock was indeed a very momentary and uncharacteristic failure. Although one take away from this sad narrative is that such failures are still sin and liable to judgment. "He just snapped..." is not in fact an excuse for sin, regardless of the provocation.

Num 20:7 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The invitation to take the rod naturally suggested that Moses was to use it as previously commanded. But this was a test as to whether Moses would serve God on the basis of careful obedience to His word; or upon the assumption that he would just repeat his previous obedience in a relatively mindless way. And he failed it. This incident therefore has powerful relevance to those who regularly attend church meetings and tend to go through the same spiritual patterns in their lives, repeating what they did previously. The command for Moses to take the rod which budded meant that he entered into the most holy, when this was only for Aaron to do once / year at the day of Atonement. So Moses was being encouraged to pay careful attention to God's specific words and act only upon them. The rod was the symbol that Moses and Aaron were indeed chosen by God.

Num 20:8 Take the rod and assemble the congregation. you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it give forth its water; and you shall bring forth to them water out of the rock; so you shall give the congregation and their livestock drink-
Note carefully the process of failure here. Moses and Aaron were told to *both* speak to the rock, and this would result in Moses personally bringing forth water: “Gather thou [singular] the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye [plural- both of them] unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou

[Moses personally] shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink" (Num. 20:8). But Moses seems to have dismissed Aaron's intended involvement and assumed that he alone could bring the water out with his rod. Yet Aaron was also condemned for this incident- presumably because he didn't speak to the rock but just let Moses smite the rock with his silence meaning consent.

"Speak to the rock" can as well be translated "speak upon the rock", or near the rock. The same construction is in the following: "Before the rock" (:10), "upon the rock" (Jud. 6:20; 7:25; 2 Sam. 21:10), "against the rock" (Ps. 137:9).

It could be that Moses was called to address the complaining Israel, perhaps "before the rock", with an assurance of grace. He does address them before the rock (:10 s.w. "to the rock"). But not with words of grace. And water would have flowed out as he did so. Instead he gave his own speech of condemnation of Israel, and hit the rock.

We note Moses was asked to do five things: "take the staff," "assemble the congregation," "speak to the rock," "bring forth water" and "let the congregation drink". In response, Moses (a) took the staff (b) assembled the people (c) spoke to the people (d) lifted up his hand (e) hit the rock twice. Instead of speaking *to the rock* he spoke *to the people*. It could be argued that he was being asked to provide them with water, by grace. Despite their nasty accusations and complaints. But instead of showing that intended grace, he addresses the people as "rebels"; and he raised his hand in defiance, defiance of God's grace. In this way he failed to sanctify God in that he refused to reflect His grace to the people; and he disbelieved God in that he disbelieved that God could show such grace to the people.

Moses was asked to *throw down* wood into the waters (Ex. 15:25). His staff, also made of wood, had to be *lifted up* in order to open the Red Sea. He was being taught careful obedience to commandment about wood, and yet he failed to learn- for the sin which excluded him from entering Canaan was that of not obeying commandment about his rod / the wood. He was told to take the rod in his hand but not use it. This may explain the apparent harshness of God's condemnation of him over this incident.

Num 20:9 Moses took the rod from before Yahweh as He commanded him-
The rod being "before Yahweh" refers back to how Aaron's rod that budded was placed before Yahweh (Num 17:22). So it was that rod which was used, and abused. The symbol of God's choice of Aaron was abused by Moses as if it had power of itself. We note that "his [Moses'] rod" in Num. 20:11 is lacking in the LXX and Vulgate, rendering simply "the rod". They used this symbolic piece of wood as if it had power in itself, just as some consider the physical wood of the Lord's cross to have some magic power. And

they were condemned for doing so. They were asked to hold the rod because it was the symbol of warning to a rebellious people.

The first time Moses struck the rock, he was standing in the presence of the Angel- "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock" (Ex. 17:6), but it would seem that the second time Moses took the rod "from before the LORD (the Angel)" (Num. 20:9) and went alone to the rock; this lack of Angelic presence perhaps accounts for his rashness at this time.

Paul in 1 Cor. 10:4 alludes to a Jewish tradition that the rock followed Israel through the wilderness, always giving water. Some traditions suggest Miriam carried it; the supposed “Rock of Moses” is a piece of rock which could have been carried. Paul emphasizes that the point of his allusion is that the water which they drank of represented “Christ”, the strength which comes from Him as the smitten rock; he alludes to the tradition just as he quotes pagan poets and makes a point out of their words (Acts 17:28). The Bible often features this kind of thing; and God isn’t so paranoiac and apologetic that He as it were has to footnote such things with a comment that “of course, this isn’t true”.

But the rock following them likely means that the water from the smitten rock followed them. Israel's complaint that they had no water was therefore really complaining that they didn't have any more water than that. Moses' failure to believe that from another rock could flow water (which is one possible reading of :10) was therefore indeed a terrible lack of faith (:12). For there was every evidence, provided 24/7, that God could provide water from a rock.

Num 20:10 Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock and he said to them, Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring water out of this rock for you?-
We are left to imagine in what tone of voice Moses said that, and compare it with the tone of voice he used when at the end of his life reminding them of how they had been rebellious. Israel had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh through disbelief, and therefore couldn't enter Canaan (Dt. 1:26; 9:7,23,24; 31:27; Num. 27:4); they were as the rebellious son who rebelled against his father's commandment (s.w. Dt. 21:18,20). For Moses himself had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and because of this was also barred from entering Canaan (Num. 20:24; 27:14). One reason for this was that he had called the Israelites "rebels" (Num. 20:10), and no sooner had he done so, than he himself rebelled against Yahweh's commandment just like them, but in a different way. He saw the whole congregation as no better than the rebels who had perished previously, 15000 of them, in the rebellion of Num. 16 which Israel were now in essence repeating.

The essence of the sin was lack of faith (:12), not simply striking the rock; for only Moses struck it, but Aaron was equally punished. The emphasis is perhaps upon "this rock" rather than "we". As if they didn't believe that from that rock could possibly flow water, although God had worked in that way before. Perhaps this is why he struck it once, and no water came, as if in demonstration of his point. And he struck it again- and God answered a fool according to his folly, and God made water come out of it.

Or we can read this as Moses not sanctifying God (:12) by speaking as if he could bring the water out of the rock alone, in his own strength. The people had just fired a series of questions at him, asking why *he* had brought them out of Egypt and led them through the desert. The obvious answer to their questions was that it was not Moses who had done these things, but God working through Moses. They failed to see God manifest in Moses, and looked at him merely as acting in his own strength. And it could be that in this moment, he came to see himself as they saw him. He sinned terribly because he allowed others' perceptions of him to become his own self perception. And we can take that lesson to ourselves in every generation.

Num 20:11 Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice: and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock-
Moses lifted his hand and then struck the rock. The action of lifting the hand could be in defiance. He was 'high handed'. This was the sin of high handed presumption (s.w.), but still he was saved from it ultimately. Despite his disobedience, the grace of it all was that water came out- and abundantly! Moses unfaithfulness and lack of grace contrasts with Yahweh's grace and faithfulness in the face of disobedience. Although we note that unlike at Rephidim 38 years earlier this was a one off. In Num. 21 we find the people again complaining about lack of water.

Moses had previously struck the rock and water came out (Ex. 17:6), but this time he was asked to speak to it- yet instead, he struck it. He was perhaps acting on autopilot, assuming things would repeat as they did before; he had used the rod in other miracles involving water, both in Egypt and in the desert (Num. 7:20; 14:16). Just as we can. And God counted this as a major sin. We think of how David's battle plans in 2 Sam. 5:19-23 were subtly altered to test his obedience. He was told to "go up" against the Philistines by frontal assault and he successfully did so. But in the second battle he was told not to "go up" but to wait until he heard the sound of the Angels above him, and to attack from behind. See on :10. Smiting the rock, which represented Christ (1 Cor. 10:4), could be understood as effectively crucifying Him, twice over (Heb. 6:6). Perhaps he became over familiar with God, assuming he could do as he wished without careful respect for God's word. He failed to believe in the power of the spoken word (:12), effectively he rebelled against the commandment (Num. 27:14); he assumed that detailed obedience wasn't necessary to God's commandment; and he gave the impression that he rather than God was giving the water ("shall *we* bring you water...?", :10). One angry sentence can reveal

so much about our attitudes. Moses had earlier asked that he be excluded from entering the land so that Israel might enter (Ex. 32:32- see note there). In a strange way, that prayer was heard. Although Moses sinned, repeatedly we read that he didn't himself enter the land for Israel's sake (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). They are blamed for provoking him to speak poorly (Ps. 106:33). God works through our sins in a strange way; and what we ask for in prayer, we have a way of receiving, in essence.

Moses was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation (Ex. 32:32). In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. For *their sakes* he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that therefore "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God by grace works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Thus Moses says that he must die "Because ye [plural] trespassed against me" (Dt. 32:51). This all helps explain why the Lord Jesus Christ had to die, apart from the fact that He was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, He felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangs on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). Moses is a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18).

The fact Aaron was also equally punished indicates that the essence of the sin was not striking the rock. For only Moses struck the rock. It was lack of faith (:12). God sees through to the essence of sin. Aaron inwardly assented to the language and conduct with which he was outwardly associated and was judged for it. And that is a challenge to good men who do nothing but go along with what they may say they disagree with. We note that "Speak [you both speak] to the rock" is in the plural; both of them were to speak to the rock. "Take the rod... assemble the people" are addressed to a singular individual, but to speak to the rock was a command to both Moses and Aaron. Aaron said nothing, and Moses instead spoke to the people not to the rock. We see here the weight of sins of omission.

Why did Moses strike the rock twice? Presumably if water had come out of the rock the first time, he wouldn't have needed to strike a second time. Presumably nothing, or very little, came out after the first strike. This surely was God trying to restrain him. But he drove right over the red light and insisted in more disobedience by hitting it again. And God heard that disobedience and gave water from the rock. Perhaps this is how Yahweh sanctified Himself in this incident, through glorifying His grace.

Num 20:12 Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, Because you didn't believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this

assembly into the land which I have given them-
Disbelief in God was the reason Israel too were barred from entering Canaan (s.w. Dt. 1:32). When Moses reminded them of this in Dt. 1:32, he was alluding to how he was in essence no better than them, having also been rejected from entering Canaan for disbelief (Num. 20:12). So we wonder in what tine of voice he reminded them of this. For he appealed to them as a fellow sinner, in this sense no better than them. And this was the potential power of his appeal.

Although Moses didn't believe in God as he should have done, God still did the miracle. He is prepared to accept even imperfect faith. For Moses' faith slips for a moment; his spirit is provoked by Israel, so that he speaks unadvisedly with his lips and is therefore barred from entering the land (although maybe such an apparently temporary slip was the reflection of deeper problems?). Yet it does seem uncharacteristic, a tragic slip down the graph of ever rising spirituality. There must have almost been tears in Heaven. Being easily provoked was one of Moses' characteristics; consider how he *turned himself* and stormed out from Pharaoh (Ex. 10:6; 11:8); how his anger waxed hot when he returned from the mount, how he went out from Pharaoh in great anger, how he first of all feared the wrath of Pharaoh and then stopped fearing it; how Moses was "very wroth" at Israel's suggestion that he was appropriating the sacrifices for himself; how he was "angry" with Eleazer (Ex. 32:19; 11:8; Num. 16:15; Lev. 10:16,17). This temperament explains his swings of faith. Was the Lord Jesus likewise afflicted?

Moses doubtless had faith of a sort to hit the rock, having gathered all Israel there, and expect water to come out. Indeed, the water did come out, the miracle happened... but God's ultimate comment was that in that event, Moses actually did not have faith.

The style of Moses' writing in Num. 20:12-14 reveals a submerging of his own pain. He speaks of himself in the third person, omitting any personal reflection on his own feelings: "The Lord spake unto Moses... Because ye believed me not... ye shall not bring the congregation into the land... and Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the King of Edom...". Likewise all the references to "the Lord spake unto Moses" (Lev. 1:1). Moses submerged his own personality in writing his books. See on Acts 7:39.

We may feel the judgment was extreme, for a few rash words uttered under huge provocation (Ps. 106:32,33). But studded throughout the Bible are examples of where apparently heavy judgments are given for what we might consider minor infringements: Eating the fruit when told it was OK to do so by the serpent, the disobedient prophet who was told by another prophet he could eat and drink when God had told him not to, Moses and Aaron barred from entering the land because Moses hit the rock as he did previously, rather than speaking to it [and Aaron "only" just said nothing], Ananias and Sapphira for exaggerating their generosity. The rest of the Biblical narrative is full of God tolerating a huge amount of sin. But these incidents are scattered throughout the Bible

to remind us of the seriousness of sin. We commit these kinds of sins, of omission, of silence when we should speak, of being misled... multiple times / day.

God led the condemned generation "to see what was in their hearts"- why do that, if they were merely being led to their deaths? Is there not a hint that God was looking at any possible heart change that might enable Him to forgive and eternally save them, even if they had to die in the wilderness? For Moses too couldn't see nor enter the promised land, and yet will be saved. He sinned at Kadesh (Num. 20:1), exactly where Israel did (Num. 13:25). Both Moses and Israel are charged with the sins of "disbelief" (Num. 14:11; 20:12) and "rebellion" (Num. 14:9; 20:24) and are banned from entering the land. But Moses had hope of resurrection to eternal inheritance. They were to see in Moses a possible pattern for themselves. The ten unfaithful spies were smitten with death; but the condemned generation were kept alive. Whilst there is life there's hope, and surely man is always capable of repentance whilst still alive. And I suggest God was nudging even that condemned generation towards that. He had sworn they would die in the wilderness, but still they could be resurrected to eternal inheritance of the land if they repented.

What is the element of disbelief, of lacking faith? The sin was not so much in technical disobedience to commands [to strike the rock rather than speaking to it]. If this were all God were concerned with, then He would've punished only Moses and not Aaron. For only Moses actually hit the rock rather than speaking to it. Although we could argue that passive 'going along' with sin, as Aaron did, is highly culpable. We think of the holocaust, and above all the decision to crucify the Lord. Ultimately, sin is unbelief, not trusting in God's grace to save. The sin in Eden was essentially disbelief rather than merely an act of disobedience. Perhaps his calling them "rebels" suggested his disbelief in God's gracious plan to save them through resurrection at the last day, even though they must die in the desert. And so Moses was appropriately punished. He too was to die in the desert, to be resurrected by the grace which he was unwilling to believe in for the condemned generation. Dt. 1:37 has Moses recalling how he was not to enter the land because of his failure towards the end of the 40 years, but he inserts that memory in the midst of recounting how Israel had been banned from entering the land at the start of the 40 years. Both incidents occurred at Kadesh. The point is that Moses was experiencing their condemnation although he would be saved out of it. Although the Lord didn't personally sin, He also experienced the condemnation of being the sinner who hung upon a tree, and felt forsaken by God as do those separated from God.

It is this disbelief in God's grace which failed to sanctify God. Israel didn't enter the land because they disbelieved (Num. 14:3), and so now Moses and Aaron will not because they disbelieved that the people could still be ultimately saved. The entire Israelite congregation at this time were still seen as without sin by God, according to what we will soon read in Balaam's speeches. To deny Him this grace, to consider Him an angry

God who lashes out at sinners without any grace nor intention of ultimate salvation... This is to make Him common and to fail to honour His sanctity, the holiness of His grace. The word which they rebelled against in :24 was therefore not just the command to speak to the rock, but the whole word or plan of salvation of the lost generation. 2 Chron. 20:21 praises God for the beauty of His holiness and His hesed, His grace to save His people. Ps. 138:2 urges us to praise God in His holiness for His mercy / hesed / grace. So to disbelieve that grace is to as it were un holy God, to not sanctify Him. What makes Yahweh uniquely separate / holy from other gods is His amazing grace. The mistake is often made of thinking that allowing His grace to other sinners is to somehow infringe or desecrate His holiness. But by perceiving His grace we are actually appreciating and glorifying His holiness. His Name is holy as we are often reminded, but His Name as declared to Moses was all about salvation by grace.

We note that three times, Moses claims at the end of his life that his ban from entering Canaan was the fault of the people (Dt. 1:37-40; 3:23-29; 4:21-24). And yet the record three times states it was his fault (Num. 20:1–13, 27:12–14; Dt. 32:48–52). We conclude that even at the end of his life, Moses was imperfect- he wouldn't accept full guilt for his behaviour. And yet without doubt he will be saved. We are not to expect perfection by the end of our lives, neither from ourselves nor from others. For we are all saved by grace. Another take on this apparent contradiction is that some do cause others to stumble, but the stumbler is still culpable as well as them. Reflect too that the Divinely given reason as to why Moses would not enter the land was given to Moses and Aaaron privately. The people at no point knew. All they knew was from the public speech of Moses in Deuteronomy, where he pinned the blame on them. We see here a fleck of pride in Moses, in not telling the people what had actually been said by God to him. Yet he was the meekest man, in God's view. Despite flecks of pride, God viewed him so positively. By grace and through love.

The ban on entering the land was really a way of fulfilling Moses' earlier request, that his name be removed from the book [cp. entry to the land, Ez. 13:9 "they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel"] so that Israel might enter. Yahweh worked through Moses' own weakness to make that actually happen. Through Moses' representative death, the whole congregation (:1) who had rebelled were allowed to enter the land.

As the narrative now approaches the end of the 40 years, it's as if the scale of Israel's failure increases. They have failed as a congregation, the Levites have failed in the events of Num. 16,17; and now Moses and Aaron fail. All this highlights Israel's entry to the land was a salvation by grace. An it encourages us that we too will enter that land by that same grace.

Yahweh was not sanctified by Moses in that on this occasion, unlike in previous incidents, he didn't intercede for their salvation but calls them "rebels". He gave Yahweh's grace no chance to be revealed, so the Name was not sanctified. For the Yahweh Name has salvation by grace at its core. And this disbelief in the extent of God's grace led to his ban from entering the land. And yet Num. 12:3 has stated God's opinion, that there was not a man on earth who was as faithful, full of faith, and also humble... as Moses. This incident shows an uncharacteristic pride and lack of faith. But still God's judgment of him stands, for Hebrews quotes it in the New Testament as still standing, Moses was faithful in all God's house, and Hebrews 11 highlights his faith. God clearly overlooks lapses although in this case judged Moses for them.

A simpler reading would be that getting water out of rocks with magic sticks, divining rods, was common claim amongst the nomads. Moses was perhaps making out that he could do this by magic, rather than giving all glory for it to a Yahweh miracle. Even in that case, his rash behaviour was a denial of God's grace.

Num 20:13 These are the waters of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with Yahweh, and He was sanctified in them-
Somehow God is never beaten; man can do nothing against the Truth, only for it (2 Cor. 13:8). He wasn't beaten when Moses failed to sanctify Him (:12); He sanctified Himself through His judgment of that failure: "Ye believed me not, *to sanctify me* in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and *he was sanctified* in them" (Num. 20:12,13). And 'sanctified' is from the same root as 'Kadesh' where they were encamped. Perhaps it was later named that to memorialize how God all the same was sanctified. Somehow God's word never returns unto Him void, somehow the lost sheep is always found. These are not just expressions of the essential hopefulness of the Father and Son (although this in itself is something to be truly inspired by); these are statements which reflect the way in which within God's scheme of working, everything works out to His glory.

God was sanctified or declared His holiness. Kadesh means holiness. How was God sanctified in what happened? How was His holiness displayed and how did Moses not sanctify Him, limiting the manifestation of that holiness? By considering the people "rebels" (LXX 'disobedient'), Moses was assuming they could not now receive the grace of Divine salvation ultimately. I discussed on :12 the connection between holiness and grace. How then did God still declare His holiness? Perhaps in that although Moses was to die without entering the land, by grace he would still be saved even though he failed to reflect that grace shown to him. Perhaps grace to the ungracious is the supreme holiness of Yahweh. Perhaps His holiness was shown [He was sanctified] through the grace of still giving them water anyway, despite Moses' disobedience. The water was still

given even though Moses didn't do as commanded for it to appear. This was grace and thus God was sanctified / declared Himself holy despite Moses not being willing to sanctify Him. For holiness isn't a bright light or awesome visual representation. It is something moral, and all God's morality comes to a climax in grace.

Num 20:14 Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom, saying: Thus says your brother Israel: 'You know all the travail that has happened to us-
"Esau is Edom". God always had a strange and strong respect for Esau as also in some kind of potential covenant relationship with Him (Dt. 2:2-4; 23:7; Am. 1:9,11; Obadiah 10,12; Mal. 1:2). Israel had initially approached Canaan from the south, but now they were being sent far to the east and north to enter across the Jordan opposite Jericho. It could possibly be that God's intention was that Esau would not only allow Israel easier passage there, but even join them and also inherit the land which was promised to them- if they wished to accept the covenant. But they refused, satisfied with what they already had in the desert.

Esau is Edom and so this meeting with Esau clearly recalls Jacob's meeting with Esau and salvation by grace. But it seems that grace from Esau was now as it were denied. For the condemned generation had made it plain they didn't want to enter the land but preferred to return to Egypt. And they were counted as having done so in their hearts.

Num 20:15 how our fathers went down into Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and our fathers-
These incidents are now at the end of the wanderings. "With us" would have referred to those under 20 on leaving Egypt, and to Moses and Aaron personally.

Num 20:16 and when we cried to Yahweh, He heard our voice, and sent an angel, and brought us forth out of Egypt; and behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost extremity of your border-
This message was on behalf of all Israel (:14). But they had just been bitterly complaining that it was Moses personally who had brought them out of Egypt (:5), and not God. So their words here are somewhat insincere, as in their hearts they had returned to Egypt. We see how forms of words can be used as statements of faith, when our hearts are far from believing them.

Num 20:17 Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or through vineyard, neither will we drink of the water of the wells. We will go along the king's highway. We will not turn aside to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed your border-

Their confidence that they didn't need any water was because the water from the rock was following them (1 Cor. 10:4). This points up Moses' lack of faith in :10,11 that the rock in question could give water. We see how even in the best of us like Moses, faith can go up and down very quickly.

Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers as implied if we read the 600 thousands of Ex. 12:37 literally. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night. The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers.

Num 20:18 Edom said to him, You shall not pass through me, lest I come out with the sword against you-

These words were said with hearts melting with fear of Israel (Ex. 15:16). Dt. 2:4 was but a conditional promise: "Command the people saying, 'You are to pass through the border of your brothers the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir, and they will be afraid of you". For in Num. 20:18 we learn that "Edom said to him, You shall not pass through", and they came out against them. I suggest that instead of believing these words, and the promise that the hearts of all would fear them (Ex. 15:16), the Israelites feared Esau- just as faithless Jacob had done. And so things were transferred the other war around. Esau was not afraid of Israel, as potentially they could have feared.

Dt. 2:29 says that the Edomites and Moabites sold Israel food and water as they passed through. But Dt. 23:3,4 says that the Moabites didn't do this and were cursed because of it. Perhaps a few Moabites did do so, but Moab generally didn't. Or perhaps the sense of Dt. 2:29 is that Moab and Edom did let Israel pass through without harassing them, hence GNB "All we want to do is to pass through your country... The descendants of Esau, who live in Edom, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, allowed us to pass through their territory". But Edom didn't let Israel pass through (Num. 20:18). So the point of Dt. 2:29 may be that Sihon was warned that Edom and Moab had been asked to do this but had not done so, and Sihon was to take warning from this, to learn from the mistakes of others. However, we should note that Dt. 2:29 speaks of "the children of Esau who dwell in Seir". These Edomites perhaps did let Israel pass through, whereas the Edomites in the Kadesh area didn't.

Num 20:19 The children of Israel said to him, We will go up by the highway; and if we drink of your water, I and my livestock, then will I give its price. Let me only, without doing anything else, pass through on my feet-
Dt. 2:4,6 sounds like definite prophecy: "Command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau... and they shall be afraid of you...ye shall buy meat of them for money.... ye shall also buy water of them for money". And yet when Israel came to these people and tried to pass through, and offered them money for bread and water, they were rejected by them (Num. 20:16-21; Jud. 11:17). The condition- that Edom had the freedom to reject them- isn't mentioned, but it nonetheless stood. Prophecy is an imperative to action- it isn't just a fascinating study of how predictions have been matched with reality.

Num 20:20 He said, You shall not pass through. Edom came out against him with many people, and with a strong hand-
We must put this together with Ex. 15:15 "Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed the way". So when Edom "refused to give Israel passage through his border" (Num. 20:21), their refusal was because they were "dismayed" and terrified, not because they had

some nonchalant confidence against Israel. This is an example of where we must place scripture together to get an accurate picture.

Num 20:21 Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border, so Israel turned away from him-
Soon after this incident, Israel were commanded not to despise an Edomite (Dt. 23:7)- although this is just what Edom had done to them. We aren't to treat others as they treat us, but leave their judgment with God. These incidents took place in the 40th year of their wanderings (Num. 33:38), and the commands of Deuteronomy were given at the same time. Moses could have reasoned that "the elder (Esau) shall serve the younger (Jacob)" (Gen. 25:23) and engaged him in battle. But the way of wisdom is to always walk away from conflict with our brethren, even if they are unreasonable.

Num 20:22 They travelled from Kadesh: and the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor-
"Even the whole congregation" may suggest that by this point, all the rebels and those over the age of 20 on leaving Egypt had now died (Dt. 4:4). Or perhaps the idea is that there was not a single person lost as a result of the confrontation with Edom.

Num 20:23 Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the border of the land of Edom, saying-
"Hor" and "mount" are the same word in Hebrew. Dt. 10:6 defines the point as "Moserah". "Moserah" means 'place of chastisement / correction'. Aaron and Moses will be in the Kingdom despite their sin, but it needed Aaron's death for them to be corrected. And perhaps it was only in his time of dying that Aaron was fully corrected. The form of our death can be used by God to bring us to the spiritual point He wishes us to reach. The punishment was therefore their correction, and was not the angry lashing out of an offended Deity. Moses only mentions this place name at the end of his life, indicating how he looked back and perceived that indeed he had been corrected and learned his lesson, even if it cost him his life.

Num 20:24 Aaron shall be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter into the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because you rebelled against my word at the waters of Meribah-
Disbelief in God's word (Num. 20:12) was rebellion against it. The point is made that they were wrong to address Israel as "rebels" (:10) for they were no better. Perhaps it is only in our time of dying that we fully realize our sinfulness, and that we are no better than other sinners; see on :23.

Num 20:25 Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor-
The death of Aaron was typical of the end of the Mosaic system and priesthood, able to only bring Israel to see the Kingdom, but unable to enable them to enter it. That was the work of Joshua / Jesus. Eleazar could be seen then as the priest who replaced Aaron, and also a type of the Lord Jesus. Aaron, an apparently Egyptian name with no clear meaning and not used about any other Biblical character, was replaced by Eleazar, 'helped by God' or 'helper of God', seeing that God was ultimately Israel's saviour. The numerical value [gematria] of "Eleazar the priest" is the same as "Joshua", the Greek form of which is "Jesus".

Num 20:26 and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be taken, and shall die there-
It was a sad moment, but surely these men had faith in the implication of the promises to Abraham, that they would be resurrected to eternal inheritance of the land which Moses and Aaron couldn't enter. The Hebrew phrase for stripping off garments is that earlier used of Aaron in Lev. 16:23. He was to do this during the ritual of the Day of Atonement, as if in some sense he was the priest who was dying in order to make atonement.

Num 20:27 Moses did as Yahweh commanded; and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation-
Just as Aaron had sinned in the sight of all the congregation, so he was to die in their sight. The harsh condemnation of Moses and Aaron was evidence for all time that sins of stress, however momentary, are felt by God and judged by Him.

Num 20:28 Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them on Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain; and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain-
The strict obedience of Moses is stressed; cp. :26 and :28. Moses' great level of obedience looked forward to that of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 3:2,5).

Num 20:29 When all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they wept for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel-
"All the house of Israel" is noted because we have been reading over the last few chapters of consistent and deep opposition to Aaron's priesthood. But the man's basic integrity made even his critics and pretenders bow their heads in respect when he died.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 21

Num 21:1 The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the South-
This may not be in chronological order; it could be that in these chapters we have a series of conflicts with the surrounding tribes at the start of the journey. It could also be that this defeat by Arad was part of a series of defeats of those who insisted on trying to enter the land after they had been told they must wander in the wilderness for a generation. It would be as if they tried to go by the 'way of the spies' again, but how at Arad their way was finally blocked. In this case, the victory against the Canaanites of :3 would refer to a later victory against them.

Heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atharim-
Heb. 'the way of the spies'. History was being intentionally repeated, in the hope that the Israelites would learn the lesson, reflecting that they were taking the same road the spies had taken, and challenging themselves to have more faith than they did. And history likewise repeats in our lives for the same reason.

And he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive-
The promise that an obedient Israel would make their enemies flee before them was not operational here. The conclusion is surely that Israel had sinned and therefore were defeated. These words are frequently used about Israel's judgment at the hand of their enemies because of their sinfulness. All this lends weight to the conclusion that this was another attempt by Israel to enter Canaan as happened immediately after the news of their rejection (Dt. 1:44). Those rejected from the Kingdom at judgment day will likewise desperately want to be there, nobody will be passive in that day, nor shrugging their shoulders as people do today when encountering the possibility that they may not be there. The wilderness journey speaks of our lives after baptism. It's not a story of glorious victory after glorious victory. There are defeats and failures, partly from our failures, and partly because God in His wisdom knows that this too is part of our path towards the Kingdom. The initial defeat was required in order to make the people trust in Yahweh for victory (:2); and we have multiple such experiences in life.

Num 21:2 Israel vowed a vow to Yahweh, and said, If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities-
The Hebrew for "utterly destroy" means to devote. Whatever comes into our hands during our wilderness journey should be devoted to the Lord. But it was in any case a command to “utterly destroy” the Canaanites (Dt. 7:2; 12:2; 20:17). We shouldn’t consider that which is our duty to do as some kind of special dedication to God which deserves His reward. But so eager is God for relationship with His people that He all the same agreed (:3).

Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into

the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

Num 21:3 Yahweh listened to the voice of Israel, and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. The name of the place was called Hormah- Hormah means 'devoted', LXX 'Anathema'. Paul spoke of those who leave the faith as 'Anathema' (1 Cor. 16:22), but the idea was likely that we should consider even those we separate from as 'devoted' to the Lord. We do not condemn, but pass them to the Lord, in the hope that they will finally be devoted to Him. There's a powerful logic in all this- we are to be devoted to the Lord in any case, either by condemnation or by willing devotion of ourselves to Him in this life, that we might be eternally devoted to Him. The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof- and all finally returns to Him in any case. This idea sheds light on the reference in 1 Cor. 5:5 to delivering a wrongdoer to "Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved". The idea of delivering over in Hebrew thought was understood as delivering over to God. The 'satan' may therefore refer to a Divine Angel or some other Divine agent who would attempt to work to bring back the straying sheep, that it might be saved at the end. All separation, therefore, should be in a spirit of desiring the individual's salvation, and not as an expression of our own personal anger or dislike.

Num 21:4 They travelled from Mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom; and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way- "Much discouraged" is Heb. 'reaped down', the same word used about how they felt in Egypt (Ex. 6:9). They adopted the same attitude they had in Egypt, ever searching for something better, and now not wanting to accept what God had planned for them, not looking at the end of their journey but just caught up in the immediacy of their daily feelings. Yet they had just had the exhilaration of having made a vow to God about the cities of Canaan, obeying it, and seeing God answer them. Before that, they had sinned (see on :1). And now, they were again discouraged and low. This is the yo-yo path through the wilderness we all experience. It's not going to be entirely positive. They likely reasoned that God should have spared them this awful part of the journey because they

had just been obedient to Him. But that's not how the path to the Kingdom is. The sequence in this chapter so far was: Disobedience- Cursing - Obedience - Blessing- Cursing. And sometimes [as in the blessing of Isaac materially after his lying about his wife] the sequence can be: Disobedience- Blessing- Blessing. There is no clear connection between obedience and immediate blessing or cursing. God sees a far wider and longer picture and perspective than we do.

Their route took them back on themselves at this point, heading back towards Egypt. This may have been the psychological trigger for their desire to be back in Egypt (:5). We must try to avoid things and situations which may stimulate a desire to leave the way to the Kingdom and return to the world.

"Because of the way" reflects how this was indeed geographically one of the worst parts of Israel's journey, through shifting sands blown by the strong sirocco winds. Only camels can survive here, so it's likely that the sheep and oxen Israel had brought from Egypt would've died at this point. And this was just immediately prior to their entry of Canaan (Num. 33:41, so this may look forward to the final tribulation for His people before the Lord's return.

There is in the Hebrew text of Jud. 10:16 something which defies translation. We read there that God was so hurt by Israel's sufferings that in sympathy with them, "His *nephesh* ["soul"] was shortened" or expended. The phrase is used in Num. 21:4 and Jud. 16:16 about death or the diminishment of life. God's pain was such that this was how He felt, because He so internalized the sufferings of His people. And how much more in the death of His Son?

Num 21:5 The people spoke against God, and against Moses, Why have you brought us up out of Egypt-

See on Num. 20:3. Israel “chode with Moses… they strove with the Lord” (Num. 20:3,13) uses the same Hebrew word for both “chode” and “strove”. To strive with Moses was to strive with the Lord- i.e. with the guardian Angel that was so closely associated with Moses? Num. 20:4 continues rather strangely with the Israelites addressing Moses in the plural: “The people chode with Moses, saying… Why have ye [you plural] brought up…”. Could it be that even they recognized his partnership with God? Likewise Num. 21:5: “And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye [plural] brought us up out of Egypt to die?”.

To die in the wilderness-

This was the punishment and consequence of their own sins; but we easily blame others, and even God, for the consequence of our own sins.

For there is no bread, and there is no water-
An exaggeration, because they go on to say that they hated the "light bread", the manna, which they were given. We can likewise assume we have nothing when in fact we do have God's basic provision. Likewise "no water" was surely untrue- the water from the rock followed them (1 Cor. 10:10). But they forgot God's daily material blessings and felt they had nothing at all. For good reason should we regularly give thanks for our food and not forget that we are daily loaded with His material blessings. See on 21:16 *I will give them water*.

It would seem from Dt. 8:2,3 that Israel went hungry- because they refused to eat the manna. How God works through sin is revealed in the way that although God always provided food for Israel in the wilderness, He 'suffered them to hunger' for 40 years, in order to try to teach them that man lives not by bread alone, but by God's word (Dt. 8:2,3). The Jews in the wilderness despised the food God gave them as worthless; they went hungry not literally, but in the sense that they despised the manna of God's provision. And He allowed them to have that hunger, in order that He might [try to] teach them about the value of His word. He didn't simply punish them for their ingratitude. He sought to work through it in order to teach them something. Even the process of rejection results in the victims coming to 'know the Lord'.

And our soul loathes this light bread-
The Hebrew translated "light" is usually used in the sense of 'cursing', which in Semitic thought means to make light of a person or thing. They felt the bread was inadequate for their needs, and it was a sign of their cursing by God. So easily do men come to the same attitude towards the manna we are given in the wilderness- the word of the Lord Jesus. They accept it is given, but consider it inadequate for their needs.

Num 21:6 Yahweh sent fiery snakes among the people, and they bit the people; and many people of Israel died-
Again we find the Bible written from the perspective of how people felt at the time [hence the language of demons in the New Testament]. The fire was in the feeling of fire within the person bitten and injected with venom, which would have felt like fire. It wasn't that the snakes literally breathed fire.

This incident is interpreted in Jn. 3:14-16 as a symbol of Christ lifted up on the pole at His death; looking toward the snake is seen as faith in Him; and healing from the snake bite as eternal life. This is another reason for thinking that the 'cross' of Christ wasn't as traditionally understood; the Greek word *stauros* translated "cross" means a tree trunk or pole. The snake was a symbol of sin- but it was as it were dead in Christ. As He hung there, He was so deeply identified with our sins (despite never sinning personally) that a snake can legitimately be used as a symbol for Him there. We are in the position of the Israelites feeling the poisonous venom rising within them, knowing they had limited time left in this life, recognizing they had indeed sinned and deserved death and yet didn't

wish to die. In an encampment of over three million people living in single storey dwellings, i.e. tents, it would have taken some people several kilometers walk to get to the bronze snake. To walk when you have been bitten by a snake is dangerous; you shouldn't let your heart work any more than necessary so that the venom isn't spread. So they were commanded to do that which is counter-instinctive, what is totally against worldly wisdom and sense. Our faith in Christ is similar. But it could be that the people were told about the existence of the bronze snake, and had to look toward it in faith from where they were, believing it was there, although not seeing it. This would be similar to our faith in Christ's death. We didn't see it, there is no physical representation of it within our sight, but we look to it from far away in time, space and understanding, and believe it was there- and believe that really, 2000 years ago, on a day in April, on a Friday afternoon, on a hill outside Jerusalem, it really did happen. We can imagine the relief of the people as they felt the temperature subside, the fever go; and their gratitude afterwards, their eager vowing to give their saved lives to God and not rebel again. These should be our emotions as we reflect on our salvation in Christ.

Various parts of the Bible become better understandable once we enquire about perspective. The "fiery serpents" of Num. 21:6 are not described from the perspective of observers or us as the audience- they didn't literally spit fire. They are described from the perspective of the bitten person, for whom their bite would have felt like fire. The parables especially repay helpful reflection when we read them asking ourselves 'From whose perspective is this?'. But the perspective can change in almost mid-sentence. The Lord comments on the parable of the lost sheep that there is joy in Heaven over the one who repents rather than over the "ninety nine just persons who need no repentance" (Lk. 15:7). They were *not* justified, and they also needed to repent. But the Lord speaks from their perspective; they *thought* they were justified and without need of repentance.

Num 21:7 The people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, because we have spoken against Yahweh, and against you. Pray to Yahweh, that He take away the serpents from us. Moses prayed for the people-
The people again complain, and God punishes them with serpents; Moses' prayer for them is accepted. These prayers for others' salvation must have required intense faith and acceptability to be heard. "We have sinned… pray for us… taken away…" [the plague] is all language reminiscent of Pharaoh's dialogue with Moses. They are presented in the record as no better than Pharaoh; they had been brought out of Egypt but the spirit of Egypt remained with them. You can take a man out of Egypt but you can't always take the Egypt out of the man.

Previously in such situations, God had just accepted Moses' prayer. But now He asked the people to additionally make some personal effort to demonstrate their faith. Quickly

dashing off a request for Christ's mediation in the case of sin may sometimes be met by God seeking to convict us more deeply of our sin and asking us to make some more concrete effort. But yet again we see how the power of a third party's mediation can bring about forgiveness, as in Mk. 2:5; James 5:20. This is endless encouragement to intercede for others.

Num 21:8 Yahweh said to Moses, Make a fiery snake, and set it on an ensign pole; and it shall happen, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks to it, shall live-
With the sun reflecting upon it, the bronze image would've looked like the snakes. The Lord clearly states that the serpent lifted up represented Him on the cross. But just as the crucifix has been misused and turned into a talisman, so was this brass snake in Israel's later history (2 Kings 18:4). Israel were to believe that the snake was dead- if they looked upon it in faith. Likewise the power of sin, which seems so powerful to us, is actually dead- in the crucified, human Jesus. But they had to drag themselves into sight of it, rather than trusting in family and friends or the various cures against snake bites which primitive cultures are full of. The power of the cross is foolishness to unbelievers. The serpent was a symbol of healing and good luck in the surrounding cultures, as can be seen even today in the symbol displayed by some dispensing chemists; but for God's people, starting in Gen. 3:15, the snake was to be understood as a symbol of sin and evil.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). It was the serpent which gave salvation to sin-stricken Israel, not Moses; and the serpent represented Christ in this case. Moses "lifted up" the serpent in the same way as the Jews "lifted up" Christ in crucifying him (Jn. 8:28). Moses drew attention to serpent and it's power to save, in the same way as his Law drew attention to how sin would be condemned in Christ as the means of our salvation. The connection between Moses "lifting up" Christ and Israel doing likewise is another indicator of how Moses was representative of Israel (cp. Christ).

The command to look upon a snake was counter intuitive for people of that age. As in many primitive societies today, there was the belief that after a snakebite, looking upon a snake would cause death. They were told that having been bitten by a snake, they were to look upon a snake to be healed. And this is the same counter instinctive message of the cross.

Num 21:9 Moses made a snake of brass, and set it on the ensign pole; and it happened, that if a snake had bitten any man, when he looked toward the snake of brass, he lived-
Another reason for thinking the 'cross' was a stake of wood rather than a crucifix. The lifting up of Christ on the pole resulted in all men being drawn unto him (Jn. 12:32); but this is taking language from Isaiah's prophecies of how the Lord Jesus at His return

would be raised up like an ensign (s.w. pole, Num. 21:9), and all people would be gathered to Him for judgment (Is. 5:26; 11:10; 18:3; 49:22; 62:10). There is evidently a connection between the Lord's lifting up on the pole / cross and gathering all men to Him, and the way in which all men will be gathered to Him at His return. His cross was a foretaste of the judgment. Our feelings before His cross *now* will be those we experience before Him at the final judgment. Jn. 3:14 uses the Greek word *semeion* for the standard / pole on which the serpent was lifted up, representing as it did the cross of Christ. But *semeion* is the word which John seven times uses to describe the sign-miracles worked by the Lord in His ministry. Interestingly, the Jewish Midrash on Num. 21:9 likewise associates the pole with something miraculous: “Moses made a serpent of brass, and set it up by a miracle. He cast it into the air and it stayed there" (Soncino translation). Surely John’s point is the same as Paul’s in 1 Cor. 1:22-25: the Jews want signs / miracles, but Christ crucified is the power of God, the greatest sign. And maybe this is why John alone of the Gospel writers doesn’t record any miracle within the narrative of the crucifixion. The simple, actual death of Jesus was and is the greatest and most convicting sign.

There are many allusions to the serpent on the pole in John's Gospel. Take Jn. 6:40: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day". This is similar language to that concerning the lifted up snake, where everyone who “looked upon the serpent of brass... lived" (Num. 21:9). God’s will is that we should look upon the cross, with the faith that comes from a true understanding, and accept that great salvation. This is why the cross must be central to our whole living and thinking and conception of our faith and doctrine.

Num 21:10 The children of Israel travelled, and encamped in Oboth-
Heb. 'water skins'. One wonders whether they had to take the water from the rock with them in skins; and we note the later provision of water at 21:16, as if the water in their water skins had now run out. Perhaps they were being shown that in essence they were no better than Hagar (Gen. 21:15), whose line of descent they were by grace separate from and superior to in spiritual covenant terms. Or perhaps just as they despised the manna and wanted additional food, so they despised the water from the rock which followed them, and wanted flavoured spring water which they took with them in skins.

Num 21:11 They travelled from Oboth, and encamped at Iyeabarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sunrise-
Iyeabarim means heaps or ruins. Perhaps now as they approached the promised land, they were being encouraged that once mighty civilizations all rise and fall, so nothing is invincible- even if at one stage it may appear that way. We too are constantly given encouragement, even if apparently obliquely, along the route of our journey towards the Kingdom.

Num 21:12 From there they travelled, and encamped in the valley of Zered-
Or, 'by the brook Zered'. This was a tiny brook that could be walked over easily without hardly getting the feet wet. The idea is that they had been unable to cross this tiny river which was seen as the boundary of the promised land- for 38 years (Dt. 2:14). The tiny brook is given such significance to demonstrate to them how easy entrance into the land really was. It seems this was when the manna and water from the rock ceased (hence the need to buy water soon afterwards, Dt. 2:28).

Num 21:13 From there they travelled, and encamped on the other side of the Arnon, which is in the wilderness, that comes out of the border of the Amorites (for the Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites)-
The Arnon river at this point is very difficult to cross. Num. 21:14 AV connects crossing the Arnon with crossing the Red Sea, so perhaps there was a similar miracle here; preparing the people to have faith that God would also bring them across the Jordan into Canaan. We continually have encouragements and situations in our journey which are preparations for the next stage. The fact Sihon had recently crossed into Canaan and conquered the area around Jericho was likewise encouragement for Israel that they could do the same.

Num 21:14 Therefore it is said in the book of the Wars of Yahweh, Vaheb in Suphah, the valleys of the Arnon-
AV "What He did in the Red Sea and at the brooks of Arnon". The suggestion could be that here was another miraculous water crossing, just as there was at the Red Sea. The essence of the Red Sea deliverance continues throughout our wilderness journey, just as the cloud of water which enveloped them at the Red Sea actually continued over them throughout the journey.

The book of the wars of Yahweh may be a book written especially by Moses for Joshua's encouragement, a kind of spiritual diary kept by the two men (Ex. 17:14-16) and continued later by Joshua (Josh. 10:13).

Num 21:15 the slope of the valleys that incline toward the dwelling of Ar, leans on the border of Moab-
This was the capital of Moab at the time (Is. 15:1). The victory here made the Moabites fear (Num. 22:3) and this lead to them seeking the help of Balaam to curse Israel.

Num 21:16 From there they travelled to Beer; that is the well of which Yahweh said to Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water-
This would suggest that they did not have provision of water continually, or that the

water and manna ended when they reached Zered; see on :12; Dt. 2:14. And yet 1 Cor. 10:10 seems to say that water from the rock followed them. Perhaps it was that they did have water but wanted more, or fresher, cooler water- see on :5. Or maybe they had to ask for water, or the flow of water from the rock which "followed them" did at times dry up?

Num 21:17 Then sang Israel this song: Spring up, O well; sing to it:-
Marvin Vincent [*Vincent's Word Studies*] comments: "Paul appears to recall a rabbinic tradition that there was a well formed out of the spring in Horeb, which gathered itself up into a rock like a swarm of bees, and followed the people for forty years; sometimes rolling itself, sometimes carried by Miriam, and always addressed by the elders, when they encamped, with the words, “Spring up, O well!” (Num. 21:17)". Whether this is true or not, Paul is alluding to this idea in 1 Cor. 10:10- hence the rather awkward idiom to non-Jewish readers.

Num 21:18 the well, which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people dug-
Digging was not usually for princes, so perhaps the idea is that the princes did the work which usually only manual workers did. We recall how the man in the parable was ashamed to dig, as it was the lowest work (Lk. 16:3). Perhaps this song was sung or chanted during the digging work. It has a rhythmic quality to it.

With the sceptre-
Or, "by the direction of the lawgiver", Moses.

And with their poles. From the wilderness they travelled to Mattanah-Moses had used his staff to strike the rocks previously in order to get water. The association between staves and the provision of water continues, but the idea is that the elders were being trained up to take over from Moses; and he lead them in this process. Thus God provided water for Israel in various ways, and the variation in His methods was in order to try to instruct them. His ways likewise vary in the way He leads and provides for us.

It's worth noting that a group of men would not in practice dig a well with poles or scepters. These are not digging instruments. The idea may just be that these men, princes who were not manual labourers, used what they had, and all the same it was blessed by God and water was found- encouragement for white collar workers who feel that they are hopelessly inadequate at practical service for their Lord. Or it could be that we are intended to make the fairly obvious connection between those poles / scepters and the divining rods used to locate water and sink wells. Many desert peoples had paganic ideas about how to locate water, and it could be in this case that God worked through the paganic ideas- just as He did with Jacob through the myths relating to animal conception before rods.

Num 21:19 and from Mattanah to Nahaliel; and from Nahaliel to Bamoth-
From the 'valley / streams of God' to Bamoth, 'the high places' . Probably Bamoth-Baal (Num. 22:41; Josh. 13:17), which is mentioned on the Moabite stone.

Num 21:20 and from Bamoth to the valley that is in the field of Moab, to the top of Pisgah, which looks down on the desert-
Literally, "the Pisgah". This "seems to have been the name applied to the broken edge of the Moabite plateau where it falls steeply to the Dead Sea and the Jordan valley; and 'the top, or head, of the Pisgah' (Num. 23:14, Dt. 3:27; 34:1) is a collective term for the projections or promontories slightly lower than the main plateau.

Num 21:21 Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying-
This situation repeats that in Num. 20 with Edom. But the outcome was different- they did fight with the Amorites, whereas they didn't with Edom. On our wilderness journey we likewise find situations repeating, to reinforce lessons and give us a chance to practice what we have learned. But the outcome of the situations is often different each time.

Num 21:22 Let me pass through your land. We will not turn aside into field, or into vineyard; we will not drink of the water of the wells; we will go by the king's highway, until we have passed your border-
Their confidence that they didn't need any water was because the water from the rock was following them (1 Cor. 10:4). This points up Moses' lack of faith in Num. 20:10,11 that the rock in question could give water. We see how even in the best of us like Moses, faith can go up and down very quickly. But the water may have finished at Zered (see on :12); but it seems the sequence of events recorded here is not strictly chronological.

Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers as implied if we read the 600 thousands of Ex. 12:37 literally. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night. The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of

5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers.

Num 21:23 Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his border; but Sihon gathered all his people together, and went out against Israel into the wilderness, and came to Jahaz; and he fought against Israel-

"Jahaz" is the word for 'threshing floor', and suggests the victory was therefore a foretaste of judgment upon the tribes opposing Israel. But they could have avoided that condemnation- for peace was offered to them first (:26).

Num 21:24 Israel struck him with the edge of the sword, and possessed his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, even to the children of Ammon; for the border of the children of Ammon was strong-

Israel had first asked to pass through Sihon's territory in peace. But Dt. 2:24 commanded: "Rise up, take your journey and pass over the valley of the Arnon. Behold, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite king of Heshbon and his land; begin to possess it and contend with him in battle". The implication could be that Moses was disobedient to this and tried to avoid confrontation with him (Dt. 2:27). But we can't ultimately avoid the confrontations which God at times puts in our path (Dt. 2:32). Moses seems to express his own weakness in his final speeches to Israel in

Deuteronomy. He recalls how even towards the end of the wilderness journey, God told him to contend with Sihon in battle (Dt. 2:24); and yet Moses admits: "I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the highway, I will turn neither unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me food for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only let me pass through on my feet" (Dt. 2:26-28). And yet God by grace to Moses hardened Sihon's heart so that there was a battle in which, again by grace, he gave Israel victory. "Was strong" is LXX "at Jazer".

Num 21:25 Israel took all these cities; and Israel lived in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all its towns-
This would have been Israel's first experience of major battle, victory and possession of conquered cities. It was in order to encourage them that the opposition in Canaan would likewise crumble before them. We continually sense His hand working to educate us in the path of faith.

Num 21:26 For Heshbon was the city of Sihon the king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab, and taken all his land out of his hand, even to the Arnon-
Again this was encouragement to Israel, even on a subliminal level, that conquest of others' territory was possible. And they had Yahweh behind them. Constantly we are encouraged that inheritance of the Kingdom is really possible. The events of this time were to become a point of contention with the Ammonites in Jud. 11:13-19. Jephthah's response reflected a fluent knowledge of these verses now before us. This man who had to make a living as a highwayman and robber, the son of a whore who had been rejected by his father's sons, had turned to the scriptures because of his experiences. We cannot judge people. We simply don't know who deep down is searching for God, nor what thief or lowlife is secretly reading the Bible on their phone

Num 21:27 Therefore those who speak in proverbs say, Come to Heshbon. Let the city of Sihon be built and established-
I suggest that all the verbs in the following song should be read in the past tense. It is a taunt song by the Israelites, as if "Why do you not come and rebuild your fallen capital, for you shewed prowess enough in the past when you conquered Moab!".

Num 21:28 for a fire has gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon. It has devoured Ar of Moab, The lords of the high places of the Arnon-
This taunt song, about what Sihon had done to Moab, is pretty much quoted in Jer. 48:45. But it is there quoted as a prophecy about what would happen to Moab again at

the last day, when the Lord Jesus as the "star out of Jacob" will destroy the latter day equivalent of Moab, and any Jews who have taken refuge with her. It is mixed together with the prophecy of Num. 24:17. We have an example here of how God's word is reused, reapplied and reinterpreted by Him over time. This is why many quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament are apparently cited in a context which is out of step with their original context.

Num 21:29 Woe to you, Moab! You are undone, people of Chemosh! He has given his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity, to Sihon king of the Amorites-
This taunt song mocks Chemosh, god of the Moabites; but that same god was called Molech by the Ammonites. Yet Israel carried the tabernacle of Moloch / Chemosh with them on their wilderness journeys (Acts 7:43), and it seems continued worshipping this god even once settled in Canaan. So we can take a powerful contemporary lesson: we may sing [even with great zest] words in hymns and worship songs, which in our personal lives we deny. And live exactly the opposite to. For this is what Israel were doing at this point.

Num 21:30 We have shot at them. Heshbon has perished even to Dibon. We have laid waste even to Nophah, which reaches to Medeba-
LXX "And their seed shall perish from Esebon to Daebon; and their women have yet farther kindled a fire against Moab". The idea was that 'even' women won victories against Moab. Or "we have wasted even unto Nophah- with fire unto Medeba". Again this was encouragement to Israel, even on a subliminal level, that conquest of others' territory was possible. And they had Yahweh behind them. Constantly we too are encouraged that inheritance of the Kingdom is really possible.

Num 21:31 Thus Israel lived in the land of the Amorites-
All this happened quite soon before the conquest of Canaan. Even on our wilderness journey, before we have possessed the Kingdom, we do have some foretastes of that Kingdom; in the same way as Israel began to possess the promised land in some limited sense whilst still in the desert.

Num 21:32 Moses sent to spy out Jazer; and they took its towns, and drove out the Amorites who were there-
"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham.

But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Num 21:33 They turned and went up by the way of Bashan; and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei-
As noted on Dt. 3:4,10, some of the places they had known in their wilderness journeys (cp. our life now after baptism, which is like crossing the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:1,2) were revisited and taken by Joshua (Josh. 12:4), and incorporated into God's Kingdom. Perhaps situations and places we know in this life will then become eternally ours when we possess them in God's Kingdom.

Og lived in Ashtaroth (Dt. 1:4). Ashtaroth was the name of one of the deities which the surrounding tribes worshipped; Edrei means "strength". The message is that the apparent strength of the idols and those who trusted in them had been overcome. And having won victories which were foretastes of those Israel would win in Canaan, Moses now urges the people to go forward in faith. In Yahweh's strength, they could overcome the idol worshipping tribes, despite their apparent strength. But Israel still kept those idols with them.

Num 21:34 Yahweh said to Moses, Don't fear him; for I have delivered him into your hand, and all his people, and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon-
Fear is always the antithesis of faith. God is often called an "awesome God" (Dt. 7:21 etc.). The Hebrew word for "awesome" is that for 'fear' (s.w. Gen. 3:10; 15:1; 18;15 etc.). The idea is that God's people are to be in such fear / awe of Him that they fear / are in awe of nothing else. Hence Dt. 7:21 says that Israel should "not be scared of" their enemies, because their God is "awesome", He is the one to be feared.

Moses seems to have appreciated fully his representative role when he addressed Israel: "The Lord said unto *me*... I will deliver [Og] into thy [singular] hand... so the Lord our God delivered into *our* hands Og" (Dt. 3:2,3). David recognized this unity between Moses and Israel; David describes both Israel and Moses as God's chosen (Ps. 16:5,23). All these things looked forward to our victory on account of being "in" Christ; through baptism, and then through a life lived in Him and in identity with Him.

Num 21:35 So they struck him, and his sons and all his people, until there was none left him remaining; and they possessed his land-
Yet Israel presumably moved on from this land. We too have some foretaste of the possession of the Kingdom in this life, but the full literal fulfilment of it all is yet future. These victories were surely to develop the faith of the Israelites and to show them that military conquest of the promised land was far from impossible for them.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 22

Num 22:1 The children of Israel travelled, and encamped in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan at Jericho-
To describe the Israelite encampment as beyond Jordan implies the author is west of Jordan. Moses' writing here may well have been edited under inspiration later.

Num 22:2 Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites-
"Zippor" is the male form of Zipporah, the wife of Moses, who was also from Midian. It seems Balak was a Midianite who was asked to become king of Moab, who had been left weakened by their conflicts with the Amorites. Balak knew Balaam, and we can deduce that Balaam may have picked up his knowledge of Yahweh from Moses whilst Moses lived in Midian married to Zipporah. Who may even have been Balak's sister.

Num 22:3 Moab was very afraid of the people, because they were many; and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel-
The fear of the tribes surrounding Israel is stressed in the record, yet Israel were so fearful of *them*. The obstacles to our inheriting the Kingdom aren't as insurmountable as they appear.

Num 22:4 Moab said to the elders of Midian, Now this multitude will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field-
God had specifically told Moses not to fight with Moab (Dt. 2:9), and I have suggested on :2 that there was some contact between Balak and Moses. When Israel passed along the highways, they had been careful not stray from the route and had not drunk from the wells of those whom they passed through. Moab need have had no fear that Israel would lick up all around. It was only those who came out against Israel in battle who had been defeated, and Balak would have been wiser to learn from this. But God gave them according to their fears by saying He would make Israel like a powerful ox (Num. 23:22).

Balak the son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time-
"Was king of Moab" supports the idea that Balak was a Midianite who was ruling Moab "at that time".

Num 22:5 He sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor, to Pethor, which is by the River, to the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people who came out from Egypt. Behold, they cover the surface of the earth, and they are staying opposite me-
LXX "to Phathura, which is on a river of the land of the sons of his people". Balak was a Midianite elder who was now appointed king of Moab; see on :2. He sends for Balaam whom he knew from Midian. Moses had also lived in Midian, for 40 years, and his estranged wife was there. So he figures Balaam was the best positioned to curse the people of Moses.

Num 22:6 Please come now therefore and curse this people for me; for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall prevail, that we may strike them, and that I may drive them out of the land-
The path of Israel was clear- they were not seeking to antagonize anyone, were careful to not stray from the highway, promised not to eat food or drink well water without paying for it; and had only fought with those who attacked them. Balak would have been far better not to let fear so dominate him, but rather to believe that it was Canaan who needed to fear Israel- and not himself. As so often happens, it was fear which led to unwise decisions which were to his damnation.

For I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed-
This is so similar in wording to the promise of Yahweh's blessing upon Israel and cursing of those who curse them. It sets up a great standoff- between the word of Yahweh and the word of Balaam. Yahweh says He will curse whoever curses Israel. And Balak wants Balaam to curse Israel- and risk being cursed by Yahweh. That Balaam so earnestly wants to risk doing this reflects the depth of his love of wealth (Jude 11).

Num 22:7 The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards for the divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and spoke to him the words of Balak-
The simple lesson is that God's blessing is one of those things which money can't buy. The zoom of the Divine cameraman is close up- we see these men leaving with bags of precious stones, gold etc. in their hands. Although LXX "their divining instruments were in their hands".

Num 22:8 He said to them, Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as Yahweh shall speak to me. The princes of Moab stayed with Balaam-

He should surely have immediately sent them away. He knew that whoever cursed Abraham's seed would be cursed, and had had experience of this (:6; Gen. 12:3). The longer we keep the possibility of sinning before us, the more likely it is that we shall fall into it. As we read the Biblical narratives, we are invited by the nature of the text to ask questions such as "What should he have said / done at this point?". And this is a clear example.

Num 22:9 God came to Balaam and said, Who are these men with you?-
God knew. It was a rhetorical question, designed to make Balaam reflect that here in his home he had the enemies of God's people. To invite someone to stay was an act of fellowship- with those who wanted him to curse Israel. Knowing that whoever cursed Israel would be cursed by Yahweh. God likewise at times makes us stop and think, sometimes making us put into words out loud the situation we are really in.

This is the same question in the same context given to Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:14. He failed to see the similarity and learn the lesson. Both men were flattered that a king had sent messengers to him. They valued standing before men more than standing before God. Likewise he failed to see the similarities between himself and Jacob, on the same journey, meeting an Angel etc.

Num 22:10 Balaam said to God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, has said to me-
"God" is clearly God's representative in an Angel or prophet. The one who functions as God can be spoken of as God, but this doesn't mean they are God Himself; and of course this applies especially to the Lord Jesus. Failure to understand this has lead to so much misunderstanding of Him, and the false doctrine of the Trinity.

Num 22:11 'Behold, the people that has come out of Egypt, it covers the surface of the earth. Now, come curse me them; perhaps I shall be able to fight against them, and shall drive them out'-
Dt. 5 says that Balaam's request for a curse wasn't answered by God because He so loved Israel; and his curse was turned by God into a blessing. But here in Num. 22, Balaam simply states what Balak has told him. He asks for nothing. But we don't need to specifically verbalize requests in order for God to perceive the request. God's answer in :12 reflects how He perceived this apparent statement as in fact a request for permission to go with the men and curse Israel. God reads our attitudes as prayers, and sees the requests implicit in our words. "I, even I only am left" was Elijah's cry to God as he realized the depth of Israel's apostasy (1 Kings 19:10). But this was interpreted by God as a prayer for God to condemn Israel (Rom. 11:2,3). God read what was in Elijah's heart, and counted this as his prayer. Elijah prayed to God against Israel when he told

Him that he alone was left faithful- i.e. he was asking God to destroy the nation now. Our essential feelings are read by the Father as prayers.

Balaam alters Balak's words to try to make the request not include cursing. But he shows a pathetic failure to accept that God sees and knows all. Balaam changes Balak's "a people" to "the people" when he tells God what Balak had said. This is a tacit recognition that he understood Israel to be the sole people of Yahweh .

Num 22:12 God said to Balaam, You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people; for they are blessed-
When Balaam was determined to curse Israel, the spirit of God made him speak out a blessing on them instead (Num. 24:1-13 cf. Dt. 23:5). He could not 'escape from' God's word (Num. 22:12 Heb.). Jude says that he intended to write a letter about a totally different theme to the one he ended up writing about, because "I was constrained to write..." (Jude 3 RV)- by the Holy Spirit inspiring him.

Num 22:13 Balaam rose up in the morning, and said to the princes of Balak, Go to your land; for Yahweh refuses to permit me to go with you-
There's a hint of resentment against God here; and Balaam should've told them direct that he was not going to curse God's people. It's rather like us excusing ourselves from doing something sinful by telling people that our "stupid religion" doesn't allow it- rather than personally identifying ourselves with the reason why we will not do it.

"To go with you" may have been said by Balaam with the emphasis on "you". Because Balak's response is to send more powerful princes with greater offers of reward. Perhaps Balaam spun the prohibition to go with them into "I cannot go with you" lesser princes. We have an insight here into how many seek to wriggle around God's word, to support what they would like to be true.

Num 22:14 The princes of Moab rose up, and they went to Balak, and said, Balaam refuses to come with us-
The repetition of "rose up" in :13,14 may be to hint that in fact Balaam and the princes were of one heart together, despite Balaam's negative response.

Num 22:15 Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they-
We see here the desperate power of man's religious need; by absolutely all means, Balak wanted to have a 'man of God' blessing him and cursing his enemies. Deuteronomy says Balaam was called from Mesopotamia- a 400 mile journey each way.

Num 22:16 They came to Balaam, and said to him, Thus says Balak the son of Zippor, 'Please let nothing hinder you from coming to me-
"Hinder" is the word used in Num. 24:11 for how "Yahweh has kept you back [s.w.] from honour". Repeatedly, God is the one who hinders or keeps back (Gen. 30:2; 1 Sam. 25:26,34; Neh. 9:20 etc.). Balak seems to be effectively saying 'Don't let Yahweh hinder you'. Balak recognizes that it was Yahweh and not Balaam who had hindered, and his words are really a lament that Yahweh had kept back Balaam. He knew that Balaam was eager for it. "Don't let your God / religion stop you..." is the call of temptation which the world makes to God's people of every generation. And heeding it is to go in the way of Balaam.

Num 22:17 for I will promote you to very great honour, and whatever you say to me I will do. Please come therefore, and curse this people for me'-
But Balaam was aware that he could only *do* according to what God *said* (Num. 23:26). Balak says that whatever Balaam *says*, he will *do* (Num. 22:17). He is therefore inviting Balaam to play God, to give words of command to be obeyed, to receive the greatest honour / glory, and to be the ultimate source of blessing and cursing for Israel and the nations. This temptation to play God was at the root of the situation in the garden of Eden, and it continues to be at the root of all temptation.

Num 22:18 Balaam answered the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I can't go beyond the word of Yahweh my God, to do less or more-
The term Yahweh occurs 13 times in the Balaam story; even Balak uses it in asking Balaam to get Yahweh to curse His people. "Yahweh my God" indicates that Balaam was a prophet of Yahweh and considered Yahweh his God. His behaviour therefore is all the more reprehensible. But in the very similar statement Balaam makes in Num. 24:13 he omits reference to Yahweh as "my God". Balaam knew that when Divine words of prophecy came to him, he had to speak them out, and could not add to or diminish from them (Num. 22:18) nor add any good or bad to them according to what was in his own mind (Num. 24:13). This is all a helpful insight into what it meant for a prophet to be Divinely inspired. The words they uttered were from God and were not their own opinions at all. For Balaam would dearly loved to have cursed Israel and not to have uttered the words of blessing which he did.

Literally, I cannot transgress the word. Perhaps he felt that he had no concept nor possibility of personal sin because he was speaking God's word.

Num 22:19 Now therefore, please wait also here this night, that I may know what Yahweh will speak to me more-

Clearly Balaam wanted to go with them, because he loved the idea of getting the promised wealth (2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11). If he had sent them away immediately, the spiritual crisis would've passed. And that is what he should have done. Any idea of cursing God's people, when God had made it clear to Abraham that he would curse whoever cursed them, should have been unthinkable to Balaam. But instead, God confirmed Balaam in the sinful way he wished to go- for He now permitted Balaam to go with them, but to only speak His word (:20). By going with them- and it was a very long journey- Balaam was going deeper into temptation. This is an example of how whilst the process of temptation is internal (James 1:13-15), God can lead sinful people further into situations of temptation if this is what they wish in their hearts. Hence we should pray that God will not lead *us* into temptation (Mt. 6:13). Hence God was angry with Balaam because he went (:22), even though God told him to go (:20)- God led him further into temptation, but was angered that Balaam went that way. It's rather like the Father giving the prodigal son the things he asked for.

Num 22:20 God came to Balaam at night, and said to him, If the men have come to call you, rise up, go with them; but only the word which I speak to you, that you shall do-
Balak sent a messenger to ask Balaam to come to him. Balaam asked God whether he should go. The answer was that he should not go. Then the messenger came again; and this time, God told Balaam to go with them, but only to speak God's word. It was as if God was pushing Balaam down the road to spiritual ruin. The end result of Balaam meeting Balak was that he advised Balak to make Israel sin with his women, which would mean that God would curse Israel. And for this Balaam was condemned. If Balaam had not gone with the messengers in the first place, he would not have fallen into this sin. But God told him to go with them (Num. 22:20).

Num 22:21 Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab-
Balaam was told to go with the elders of Moab, but only speak God's word. He was told to go (:20) but God was angry that he did (:22). The intention was that he fall down and repent, and refuse to go with them. But he went with them, ostensibly in obedience to God's word of command which was leading him to self destruction. The rebels in Num. 16:6 were in a similar position. They were told to take censers and offer incense, which was exactly how Nadab and Abihu were slain (Lev. 10:2). So this was the kind of leading into temptation which we are to pray shall not happen to us (Mt. 6:13). Their path to repentance was being offered to them, but the consequences of refusing it were now higher. The intended response was 'No. We give in. To offer incense like that and come near to the incense altar in the holy place is not for us. We would rightly be slain for doing so. So, we give in and retreat from our position'. But human pride was in the way. And they took up the offer, leading to their justifiable destruction. For by knowingly

doing what they knew would lead to destruction, they were committing the sin of presumption which forms a context to that account (Num. 15:30,31). The command to "put fire in them" was because they had "gone too far" (Num. 16:7). So that they were being led down the path to destruction, unless they dropped everything and repented. God likewise works with people today.

The detail that he rose and saddled his donkey is the cameraman of Divine inspiration zooming in close. We see him going forth on a path that he had been warned not to. The text is clearly quoting Gen. 22:3 where Abraham arises, saddles his ass, and goes on a journey of obedience. Also with two servants, as Balaam did (:21,22). Again, an Angel and a sword are to feature in it. Although Balaam was also from Mesopotomaia as was Abraham, he is set up as the very inverse of Abraham's seed.

Num 22:22 God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of Yahweh placed himself in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him-
The Hebrew word for adversary is "satan". Good people, Angels, even God Himself, can be 'satans' or adversaries. 'Satan' carries no bad connotation of itself as a word; it has been loaded with this meaning by the wrong idea that there is a personal 'satan' out in the cosmos who is in radical opposition to God. This isn't a Biblical idea. The wicked Balaam was opposed by an Angel of God, who stood in the walled path as an adversary, or *Satan* to him, so that his donkey couldn't pass by (Num. 22:22). This shows that a good being can act as a Satan to a person. Interestingly, the Septuagint translates this with the word *endiaballein*, 'to set something across one's path'; a *diabolos* is a person who performs this act. The same idea repeats in the New Testament, where Peter is described by Jesus as a stumbling block across His path to the cross, and thus Peter is a 'Satan' (Mt. 16:23).

Num 22:23 The donkey saw the angel of Yahweh standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand; and the donkey turned aside out of the way, and went into the field. Balaam struck the donkey, to turn her into the way-
The two times Balaam faces the Angel, albeit unknowingly, refer to the two times that Balak's messengers had come to him. Balaam didn't see God in it all; and he was angry with the donkey for perceiving God in a situation where he himself couldn't perceive God. The triple meetings of the Angel with Balaam may reflect how God deals with those who go against His word. The first encounter blocks their path, but gives them an option to pass around the blockage, in Balaam's case, through the field. There is no pain, just some inconvenience and frustration. Then if the path continues, there is a blockage of the way which causes personal pain- Balaam's foot crushed against the wall. And if the person still continues, then there is the meeting with God in

condemnation, where there is no way to turn. And Balaam was saved from that by grace alone.

Balaam was finally slain with a sword, Num. 31:8; Josh. 13:22. But God's patience in warning him ahead of time was amazing.

Num 22:24 Then the angel of Yahweh stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side-
Num. 22:22 describes how an Angel of God stood in a narrow, walled path before Balaam, so that his donkey fell down beneath him. That Angel is described as a "satan", an adversary, to Balaam. Job comments how the sufferings which the 'Satan' brought upon him were God 'walling up my way that I cannot pass' (Job 19:8). The connection is clear- and surely indicates that Job's satan was a satan-Angel, acting as an adversary to Job just as such an Angel did to Balaam. See on Job 1:6. Job and Balaam have certain similarities- both were prophets (in Job's case see Job 4:4; 23:12; 29:4 cp. 15:8; Amos 3:7; James 5:10,11); both had genuine difficulty in understanding God's ways, but they to varying degrees consciously rebelled against what they did understand; both thus became angry with God (in the Angel), and were reproved by God through being brought to consider the Angel-controlled natural creation. What happened at this point was what later happened to Judah (Hos. 2:6), and like Balaam they insisted on pressing on when God had closed in their path. For the significance of the path through the vineyards, see on :26.

In these three encounters, the Angel as it were retreats ["went forward" in :26 really means 'he proceeded to...' rather than being a statement of moving physically forward]. And so in a sense does God, in desperate attempts to bring us to our senses, seeking not to hurt us, but often having to put us in a position where we can't go forward further.

Num 22:25 The donkey saw the angel of Yahweh, and she thrust herself to the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall; and he struck her again-
It would seem that the natural creation may see the Angels when they are invisible to us- thus Balaam's donkey saw the Angel standing in the way and was too frightened by the realness of it to go further (Num. 22:25). This was to teach Balaam that he ought to have seen the Angelic presence at work without having his eyes specially opened to see the Angel, in the same way as the ass didn't need it's eyes opened to see the Angel.

"Crushed" is the word used throughout the Pentateuch for the 'oppression' of Israel in Egypt, and most of the other occurrences speak of Israel's oppression by the Gentiles. Balaam was representative of Israel, going against what God wanted, and being oppressed / crushed in order that they might stop in their tracks and repent. But they generally refused.

Num. 23:3 [Hebrew] describes Balaam as lame or limping. Presumably from this incident. He was following the path of Jacob returning to Canaan from the east, who likewise met an Angel and became lame. But Balaam failed to learn from this precedent and refused to humble himself and resign his hope for material blessings as Jacob had done.

Num 22:26 The angel of Yahweh went further, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left-
The New Testament describes Balaam as rushing headlong on this journey, running greedily for the money (Jude 11), in "madness" (2 Pet. 2:15). This is the effect which the hope of wealth can have upon people. Finally God brings people to confrontation with Him, when there is no possibility of avoiding the issues. The very same phrase for not turning aside to the right nor left has just been used about Israel's path towards Canaan, also passing through vineyards as Balaam did in :24 (Num. 20:17; 21:22). Clearly Balaam is being set up as representative of Israel, who also had an Angel involved with them on their journey. The intention of their being closed in on their path was that they would not turn to the right nor left before God, and that figure is used to describe apostacy.

If he could not go forward nor turn to either side, the only way out was back. But Balaam urged the donkey forward. He was intended to turn back, but his words to the Angel showed only half hearted commitment to this option. He refused to repent and so he was told to go forward.

Num 22:27 The donkey saw the angel of Yahweh, and she lay down under Balaam; and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff-
This suggests association with Moses in anger wrongly striking the rock, leading to his condemnation. A donkey laying down is the very phrase used in Ex. 23:5 of a donkey collapsing under a burden too heavy for it, imposed by a cruel master. The donkey collapsed under the weight of Balaam's refusal to stop and turn back.

Num 22:28 Yahweh opened the mouth of the donkey, and she said to Balaam, What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?-
The Angel repeats these words in :32, asking why Balaam smote the donkey three times. This was to show that the donkey was speaking from God. Why had he beaten the donkey? Because he was spiritually blind. So he should not claim to have any special spiritual revelation from God. This was a call for humility. But instead he madly continues, hoping he can somehow get a word from Yahweh to curse Israel. The fury of Balaam with the donkey, because he three times sees what he doesn't, is the fury of Balak with Balaam when he obstinately [apparently] blesses Israel rather than curses

them, because his eyes have been opened. But additionally, Balaam's anger was kindled with the donkey (:27) just as God's anger had been with Balaam(:22). Again Balaam is being identifed with the donkey. Both Balaam and the donkey are inspired with God's word [the Angel repeats these words in :32, asking why Balaam smote the donkey three times]. Again Balaam is being asked to identify with the donkey; he refuses to at this point, but he has to see the similarity in the end. "Balak said to Balaam, What have you done to me?" (Num. 23:11), reflecting the words of the donkey to Balaam "What have I done to you?" (Num. 22:28). Again Balaam is being led to see himself as the donkey he had so despised. The Hebrew word for "struck" is that used in Num. 22:6 "that we may strike them". Balaam is being shown that any attempt to strike Israel was as foolish as his striking of his donkey. But he refuses to 'get it' because he is obsessed by the scent of wealth if he can in fact curse Israel so that Moab strikes them.

2 Pet. 2:16 comments: "But he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spoke with a man's voice and hindered the madness of the prophet". Peter was unafraid to rebuke the high flying intellectuals who were wrecking the first century ecclesia. He likens his rebuke of them to the "dumb ass speaking with man's voice" which rebuked Balaam. This was what he chose to identify himself with; that inspired donkey. There was no great trained intellect in Peter; yet his zeal for God's word puts us to shame. As the time of the end progresses, it seems that more and more of Christ's church (in the Western world) are educated people. In this I see a tremendous danger. A man who could probably not read, who probably wrote his inspired letters by dictation because he couldn't write himself, had a zeal for understanding which puts us to shame. Paul correctly made the point (and who more aware that his intellectuality could run away with him than Paul) that God has chosen the weak things to confound the mighty; He has chosen the simple of this world to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1 and 2). I get some kind of intuitive feeling that Paul had Peter at the back of his mind as he wrote this letter to working class Corinth (1 Cor. 1:26). The deep mutual respect between theologian Paul and fisherman Peter is a real working model for our ecclesias.

The dumb ass was speaking God's word. But that word was spoken in order to save Balaam from destruction at the hand of the Angel who stood in front of him. We see here God's justice and grace working together. God made the Angel go out to kill Balaam; and made the ass speak to Balaam and collapse beneath him so that this didn't happen. It's rather like the Angel of death going out to destroy all the firstborn on Passover night, including that of the Israelites; but turning away from the houses over which the Passover Angel hovered. Thus one Angel delivered people from another Angel. There is no contradiction here; rather an insight into the careful balance within all God's operations with men. He doesn't simply operate on auto-pilot.

The donkey resisted three times, but so far Balaam has resisted God only twice. But we will go on to read that Balaam three times gives oracles which he hoped would be

against Israel- if we read Numbers 24 as just one oracle [Balak laments that Balaam has blessed Israel three times]. The hope was that Balaam would look back and perceive that he had three times resisted God, just as he had done when riding his donkey against the Angel with drawn sword. The legendary stubborness of the donkey, which Balaam despised, was to be understood as the stubborn obedience to God's will which He asks of His people. All that Balaam despised in the donkey was actually how he should have been behaving spiritually.

Num 22:29 Balaam said to the donkey, Because you have mocked me, I wish there were a sword in my hand, for now I would have killed you-
Moments later, Balaam sees the Angel with a sword in his hand, thinking of killing him, but refraining by grace. God was trying to teach Balaam that He is indeed gracious, far more than Balaam was. But Balaam was so madly obsessed with trying to obtain more material wealth, even though he had servants and donkeys and a house fit to entertain princes, that he paid no attention to things like God's grace and hand in his life.

Num 22:30 The donkey said to Balaam, Am I not your donkey, on which you have ridden all your life long to this day? Was I ever in the habit of doing so to you? He said, No-
The donkey had not literally carried Balaam all his life, as donkeys don't have such long life spans. Balaam was clearly intended to see a similarity between his God and his donkey, who had faithfully been there for him all his life long, and had never been unreasonable to him. The humility of God was not ashamed to compare Himself to the humble beast of burden, ridden, used and abused by His people. "Was I ever in the habit of doing so to you?" is LXX "did I ever do thus to thee, utterly disregarding thee?". Balaam was so blinded by his desire for wealth that he disregarded his donkey, his God, his people and even the Angel clearly opposing him. This is the power of human desire for wealth.

Num 22:31 Then Yahweh opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of Yahweh standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand; and he bowed his head, and fell on his face-
His eyes were opened to the Angel blocking his way, and when he realized how he had closed his spiritual vision to the Angel trying to stop him going to Balak, he fell down on his face. But when he is later given a vision of Balak's judgment, the vision which Balaam didn't want to see, he describes himself as "the man whose eye was closed" and yet had to see the vision with his eyes open (Num. 24:3,4 RV). He didn't learn the lesson. He closed his eyes so as not to see the vision, and yet God forced him to open his eyes and see it. And again, he fell down upon his face (Num. 24:4,16 RV), as he had when the Angel blocked his path earlier. He wouldn't learn his lesson, he wouldn't

perceive how circumstances were being repeated in God's desperate effort to get him to repent.

Num 22:32 The angel of Yahweh said to him, Why have you struck your donkey these three times? Behold, I have come forth as an adversary, because your way is perverse before me-

Balaam "ran" for reward, so wanting to do Balak's will in order to receive the promised "hire" (Jude 11); and the Angel and donkey tried to arrest him in his headlong rush. He paid no attention, just as the efforts of Jude and Peter to arrest the madness of these men were not being heeded. The language of a righteous Angel coming forth as a satan / adversary is similar to the scene in Job. The questions were to elicit the answer 'I kept hitting the donkey because I was paying no attention to God's hand in my life, I was obsessed with running in the wrong way'. But there was apparently no answer from Balaam, and so after the silence, the Angel continues- explaining that indeed "your way is perverse before Me". Balaam's way was before Yahweh. God saw every part and aspect of it.

"Because your way is perverse" could be translated "Although..." (s.w. Gen. 48:14). In this case the sense is that the Angel was standing as an adversary to Balaam in order to save him from destruction and eternal judgment; and the Angel did this kindness, even though Balaam's way was perverse and obnoxious to the Angel.

Num 22:33 and the donkey saw me, and turned aside before me these three times. Unless she had turned aside from me, surely now I would have killed you, and saved her alive-

The Jewish commentators insist that this should be translated as in LXX "And if she had not turned out of the way, surely now, I should have slain thee, and should have saved her alive". The implication is that the Angel killed the donkey for having turned out of the way when first confronted by the Angel. This turning out of the way was seen as wrong; the donkey should have fallen down in awe and reverence. Turning out of the way is a common figure for apostacy. The Angel is by all means trying to show Balaam that his life had been saved by grace. He ought to have died; but his donkey did, because like him, it had turned out of the way the first time instead of falling down in fear and respect. Perhaps when it fell down, it never arose; for the Angel slew it. Being deprived of his means of transport was surely also a sign to Balaam that he was intended to return. The death of his faithful, loyal donkey in order to save him, the just for the unjust, looked ahead to the spirit of the death of the Lord Jesus. It is intended to elicit in us repentance. But so many are untouched with it, as was Balaam, because of the madness of their headlong obsession with themselves and wealth.

Num 22:34 Balaam said to the angel of Yahweh, I have sinned; for I didn't know that you stood in the way against me. Now therefore, if it displeases you, I will go back again-
Still Balaam doesn't get it. Surely he knew his journey was displeasing to God. Sometimes people are pulled up by God in their path- and still they refuse to understand. They are blinded by the headlong desire for material things, rather than seeing God's perspective. Balaam's claim that "I didn't know..." of God's opposition to his journey to curse Israel was untrue (Num. 22:34); so he is made to say in prophecy that he did know God's will (Num. 24:16). "I have sinned" recalls the same words on the lips of Pharaoh and Saul, again insincerely. Confession of sin can so easily be mere words. Balaam immediately goes on with a qualification of why he had sinned- and claims that he did so in ignorance. Confession of sin is to have no qualifications added to it.

This appears untrue because in Num. 24:16 he is inspired to state that he did know God's will. We can know but choose not to know. He claims he has sinned but in ignorance, when this was not true.

Num 22:35 The angel of Yahweh said to Balaam, Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak to you, that you shall speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak-
Again God leads him further into temptation, seeing he didn't himself decide to return home. God was pushing him onwards down the destructive road he so eagerly chose to go, headlong. That way was perverse to God and "contrary to Me" (:32), but He pushed him along it as that was the path he chose. The dynamic in both the downward and upward spiral is the Spirit of God, an evil spirit from the Lord or the Holy Spirit, the spirit of holiness. We could translate "But only whatever I shall speak, that you will speak", as if God is not commanding him anything but rather warning him that he is going to be overtaken by His Spirit to utter blessings and not curses upon Israel- which is exactly what happened.

Num 22:36 When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him to the City of Moab, which is on the border of the Arnon, which is in the utmost part of the border-
That Balak came out to meet Balaam again reflects his desperate desire to have this religious man on his side. We see here the power of the human need for religion. Rather like a terrible criminal somehow needs the religious man at his side as he finally comes to his deathbed in prison.

Num 22:37 Balak said to Balaam, Didn't I earnestly send to you to call you? Why didn't you come to me? Am I not able indeed to promote you to honour?-

Balak sees himself as the ultimate source of blessing and promotion. But like Balaam, he was playing God by saying this. He assumed Balaam's delay in coming was because he doubted whether Balak had the resources to reward him. He refused to accept that Balaam was circumscribed by Yahweh.

Num 22:38 Balaam said to Balak, Behold, I have come to you. Have I now any power at all to speak anything? The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak-
As discussed on :35, this can be read not as a statement of obedient loyalty to God, but rather informing Balak that God's Spirit would come upon him and make him speak what He wished; and that, unfortunately, he had no power over that process. As often in reading the Bible, we do well to reflect in what tone of voice Balaam said these things to Balak, and what additional, unrecorded things he said.

Num 22:39 Balaam went with Balak, and they came to Kiriath Huzoth-
LXX "and they came to the cities of streets".

Num 22:40 Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep, and sent to Balaam, and to the princes who were with him-
The idea was that eating sacrifices together was a statement of religious unity and fellowship. Balaam on one hand could speak of Yahweh as "my God" (:18) and yet on the other, eagerly accept fellowship with idolatry.

Num 22:41 It happened in the morning, that Balak took Balaam, and brought him up into the high places of Baal; and he saw from there the utmost part of the people-
LXX "And brought him up to the pillar of Baal". The significance of "he saw from there..." was that Balak expected to use the "evil eye" upon Israel. But as he began to do this, God's Spirit took him over and made him bless them. It would be an example of where the Bible deconstructs belief in things like the evil eye and other connections with a supposed supernatural source of evil. Even if these things were true, then God's Spirit power was far greater than them. This would then be the significance of the descriptions of Balaam as "the man whose eye was closed". We note "eye" in the singular, not the plural. The idea may be that Balaam had tried to use superstitions about the 'evil eye' against Israel and had lifted up his eyes against Israel in this way (see on Num. 24:2). But his [evil] eye had been closed by God and he was now taken over by God's Spirit in order to bless Israel.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 23

Num 23:1 Balaam said to Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bulls and seven rams-
The number seven may have been a reference to the seven planets which were then known. This was a mixture of Yahweh worship and paganism, performed at the site of a Baal sanctuary (Num. 22:41).

Num 23:2 Balak did as Balaam had spoken; and Balak and Balaam offered on every altar a bull and a ram-
We note the eager obedience of Balak to Balaam, recorded several times. There is an earnest desire to perform religious ritual, give money or whatever the modern equivalents are- and we see the power of religiosity so strongly in Balak.

Num 23:3 Balaam said to Balak, Stand by your burnt offering, and I will go. Perhaps Yahweh will come to meet me; and whatever He shows me I will tell you. He went to a bare height-
They were on the heights or high places of Baal (Num. 22:41), and Balaam tells Balak that he must remain by the altars, whilst Balaam goes off for a walk on his own to meet Yahweh. Surely he was intending to pretend he had met Yahweh and then return to Balak by the altars and then to utter some words of cursing, supposedly from Yahweh.

"He went to a bare height" is only one of many possible translations of a difficult Hebrew expression. Some Rabbis offer "He limped". Presumably from the incident of the donkey crushing his leg against the wall. He was following the path of Jacob returning to Canaan from the east, who likewise met an Angel and became lame. But Balaam failed to learn from this precedent and refused to humble himself and resign his hope for material blessings as Jacob had done.

Num 23:4 God met Balaam, and he said to Him, I have prepared the seven altars, and I have offered up a bull and a ram on every altar-
I suggest on 1 Sam. 28 that the witch of Endor was intending to give Saul some general message supposedly from Samuel, but of her own device. But then she screams in genuine fright when Samuel himself is actually resurrected. And so it was here. Balaam walks off further up the mountain, intending to return pretending he had met God and received a message from Him. But he does actually meet God, just as he had run into "God" in the Angel on his way to Balak. Rather flustered, Balaam claims he has just offered sacrifice to Yahweh, even though he was there standing at the high places of Baal (Num. 22:41) intending to curse Israel. And it is stressed that Balak had offered some of the sacrifices (:2,6).

Num 23:5 Yahweh put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak-
As discussed on 3,4, Balaam indeed returns to Balak having had a meeting with Yahweh and having received a message.

To have spiritual gifts doesn't mean that a person is spiritual or Godly. Men and women will claim to have prophesied and done great works in the Lord's Name- but in fact they never knew Him (Mt. 7:22,23). Caiaphas and Balaam uttered prophecies but that doesn't mean they were spiritual people. Balaam did actually curse Israel, but what came out of his mouth was blessing of them (Dt. 23:5; Josh. 24:10; Neh. 13:2). This is so emphasized. We see here the real nature of Divine inspiration. Balaam was forced to speak a message, including statements about himself, that he of himself didn't want to.

Num 23:6 He returned to him, and behold, he was standing by his burnt offering, he, and all the princes of Moab-
The cameraman is zoomed close in. We see Balak standing obediently by the altar where he had offered his offering, with the princes of Moab having now appeared. And they await with eagerness Balaam's return. As he walks toward them, they are all set up to hear the expected words of curse upon Israel.

Num 23:7 He took up his parable, and said, From Aram has Balak brought me, the king of Moab from the mountains of the East. Come, curse Jacob for me, come, defy Israel-
As discussed on :3,4,6, Balak had gone away from the group further up the mountain, planning on returning claiming he had met Yahweh and then uttering curses upon Israel. But instead, he does actually meet Yahweh, and a word from Him is put in his mouth which he inevitably had to speak to the eager group of leaders... who were awaiting the pronouncement of a curse upon Israel.

Very often, the name Jacob is associated with the way that God sees His people of Jacob / Israel as righteous when in fact they are not (Num. 23:7,10,21; 24:5; Ps. 47:4; 105:6; 135:4; Is. 41:8). The names "Jacob" and "Israel" are often used together (e.g. Hos. 12:12) to show how God saw the Jacob as Israel, without forgetting he was still Jacob. That is especially true with Balaam; he is inspired to use the names in parallel on many occasions (Num. 23:7,10,21,23 [twice]; 24:5,17,18,19). The idea is that God sees Jacob as Israel, just as He so loved and counted righteous the historical Jacob.

Num 23:8 How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? How shall I defy whom Yahweh has not defied?-
"Defy" is LXX "devote", the idea being that Israel was to be devoted to destruction, just

as Yahweh Himself had several times stated He wished to do. The same Hebrew word is used of God's anger with His people in the wilderness (Ps. 78:49 "He threw on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, trouble"). Perhaps Balak and Balaam had used this in the complex self justification of how they could try to curse Israel, when God had said that whoever cursed Israel would be cursed. But now God says that He has not defied / devoted His people to destruction. But He had done. The contradiction is intentional; for what comes out of Balaam's prophecies is the theme of imputed righteousness. God passionately loved Israel, and counted them as spotless, especially in defending them to the world. Just as the Lord Jesus was very positive about His disciples to the world, although very critical of them when they were with Him.

The Abrahamic blessing is in a sense irrevocable. It is in this sense that God's salvation was declared to be "for ever", despite the apostacy of the exiles at the time of Is. 51:6-8. Recall Isaac's comment about Jacob "yes, he shall be blessed" (Gen. 27:33). Nothing at all, not the will of Isaac nor Esau, could change it. And we have received that blessing. Thus :19 says that God will never change His intention to bless Israel. This is the idea in Mic. 6:8 where the incident is cited as evidence of God's absolute grace to Israel.

Num 23:9 For from the top of the rocks I see him, from the hills I see him-
The significance of "I see him" is that his intention to 'see' Israel with the supposed 'evil eye' was being turned right around. See on Num. 22:41 He was instead 'seeing' blessing for them, from "the top of the rocks", the promontory to which he had climbed up in :3.

Behold, it is a people that dwells alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations-
We could translate Num. 22:35 "But only whatever I shall speak, that you will speak", as if God is not commanding him anything but rather warning him that he is going to be overtaken by His Spirit to utter blessings and not curses upon Israel- which is exactly what happened. But Balaam was to seek to work against this statement that Israel "shall not be reckoned among the nations" by encouraging Israel to unite with Moab in the adultery of Beth Peor, so that they would be united with the nations and so God's words would become untrue- and curse rather than blessing would come. For Balaam perceived that these words speak of God's intentions from His side; Israel themselves still had to choose not to be reckoned amongst the nations.

These words are so true of all God's true Israel, no matter how surrounded they are by family and society. "The people shall dwell alone". It is our lead characteristic. Balaam tried to undo this by getting the men of Israel to join with Moab in sex and idolatry. Yet still God saw them as separate. The people dwelling alone could possibly mean that Israel alone would inherit the eternal Kingdom, when God has made an end of all nations apart from them (Jer. 30:11; 46:28; Dt. 32:12). This is why Balaam says in :10 that he wants to die the death of Israel, counted righteous and assured of future salvation.

The very phrase about dwelling alone is that used in Lev. 13:46 of how the leper shall dwell alone outside the camp. Israel's unique specialness was perhaps in that they as sinners had such unique love lavished upon them. And that is the theme of these oracles; that God so loves sinful, weak Israel that He will not allow any curse to harm them because He counts them as righteous. Israel was thus unique amongst the nations, as is the new Israel, because of her experience of Divine grace.

Num 23:10 Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous! Let my last end be like his!-
The multiplication of Abraham's seed was promised in the same breath as the warning that whoever cursed Israel would be cursed. Here, Balaam is being made to say that the Abrahamic promises were all still valid, the covenant was in force. And likewise the curses upon those who cursed Israel. This was surely a sign to Balaam to retreat, to go back, to give up. But his headlong rush to try to attain wealth, and also his pride, would not be arrested. He was made to express his wish that he might die "righteous" or upright [Heb.], to die as a true Israelite- who were counted righteous by grace, to be part of that "dust cloud of Jacob", the innumerable seed like the dust of Gen. 13:16.

Num 23:11 Balak said to Balaam, What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemies, and behold, you have blessed them altogether-
Dt. 23:5 LXX speaks of Balaam's plural curses being turned into plural blessings, because God refused to listen to Balaam. We learn from this that Balaam wanted to curse Israel [for he so loved the money being offered for doing so], indeed be perhaps began to utter curses, but the Spirit of God overpowered him and made him utter blessings instead. We learn from this that the Spirit of God working upon a person is no guarantee of their personal acceptance with Him. And we marvel at how the love of money drove Balaam to attempt to do what he was clearly not intended to, i.e. to curse Israel. Maybe his unexpressed desires were read by God as a prayer, and to that prayer "Yahweh your God wouldn't listen" (Dt. 23:5). Prayer is therefore not just in the form of spoken words; for then the more verbally articulate would be, as it were, better at prayer. God reads situations and unspoken desires as prayers. For this is what prayer "in the spirit" is all about.

"Balak said to Balaam, What have you done to me?" (Num. 23:11), reflecting the words of the donkey to Balaam "What have I done to you?" (Num. 22:28). Again Balaam is being led to see himself as the donkey he had so despised.

Num 23:12 He answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which Yahweh puts in my mouth?-
Clearly Balaam didn't want to say the words he did. The process of Divine inspiration

means that men spoke God's word even against their will; they were moved, carried along, by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:15,16). The Bible is therefore not the words of men but those of God, and the fact some of those who gave the original words did so *against their own will* – and Balaam would be a classic example- is proof that it is indeed the word of God and not of men.

Num 23:13 Balak said to him, Please come with me to another place, where you may see them. You shall see but the utmost part of them, and shall not see them all; and curse me them from there-
The place from where Balaam saw Israel was felt to be significant because they were intending for Balaam to use the supposed evil eye against Israel. But as he began to do this, God's Spirit took him over and made him bless them. It would be an example of where the Bible deconstructs belief in things like the evil eye and other connections with a supposed supernatural source of evil. Even if these things were true, then God's Spirit power was far greater than them. This would then be the significance of the descriptions of Balaam as "the man whose eye was closed". We note "eye" in the singular, not the plural. The idea may be that Balaam had tried to use superstitions about the 'evil eye' against Israel and had lifted up his eyes against Israel in this way (see on Num. 24:2). But his [evil] eye had been closed by God and he was now taken over by God's Spirit in order to bless Israel.

Num 23:14 He took him into the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah, and built seven altars, and offered up a bull and a ram on every altar-Literally, "the Pisgah". This "seems to have been the name applied to the broken edge of the Moabite plateau where it falls steeply to the Dead Sea and the Jordan valley; and 'the top, or head, of the Pisgah' (Num. 23:14, Dt. 3:27; 34:1) is a collective term for the projections or promontories slightly lower than the main plateau.

Num 23:15 He said to Balak, Stand here by your burnt offering, while I meet over there-
He repeats what was tried previously, in the hope that Yahweh will not meet him as He had done before. Surely he was intending to pretend he had met Yahweh and then return to Balak by the altars and then to utter some words of cursing, supposedly from Yahweh. He omits reference to "God" ["while I meet over there"], perhaps thinking that this was what had led Yahweh to actually meet him.

Num 23:16 Yahweh met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Return to Balak, and say this-
I suggest on 1 Sam. 28 that the witch of Endor was intending to give Saul some general message supposedly from Samuel, but of her own device. But then she screams in genuine fright when Samuel himself is actually resurrected. And so it was here. Balaam

walks off further up the mountain, intending to return pretending he had met God and received a message from Him to curse Israel. But he does actually meet God, just as he had run into "God" in the Angel on his way to Balak.

Num 23:17 He came to him, and behold, he was standing by his burnt offering, and the princes of Moab with him. Balak said to him, What has Yahweh spoken?-
Balak specifically wants a message from Yahweh against Israel, rather than some general cursing of them- which any of his magicians could have arranged. This was why he was so insistent that Balaam, as a prophet of Yahweh, should come and utter this curse from Yahweh. This makes Balaam's behaviour the more culpable and awful. That he continued in it provides us with a warning as to the tremendous power of human hungering for wealth.

Num 23:18 He took up his parable, and said, Rise up, Balak, and hear! Listen to Me, you son of Zippor-
"Zippor" is the male form of Zipporah, the wife of Moses, who was also from Midian. It seems Balak was a Midianite who was asked to become king of Moab, who had been left weakened by their conflicts with the Amorites. Balak knew Balaam, and we can deduce that Balaam may have picked up his knowledge of Yahweh from Moses whilst Moses lived in Midian married to Zipporah. Who may even have been Balak's sister. Yahweh may be appealing to Balak, warning him that he had responsibility to Him because he was not ignorant of His ways.

Num 23:19 God is not a man, that He should lie, nor the son of man, that He should change His mind-
God does change His mind about some things due to His great sensitivity to His people; but He will not change His basic love for them (Mal. 3:6). He will not arbitrarily decide now to curse His beloved people. Balak specifically wanted a word from Yahweh to the effect that Israel were now cursed; see on :17. But Yahweh tells him that He will not change from blessing to cursing His people just like that, because Balak has paid Balaam money to do so. By baptism, the same blessings are made to us. They cannot be revoked by man; and whilst this doesn't mean 'once saved always saved', if we abide in the seed, the Lord Jesus, the assured blessing cannot be changed. Hence in :20 Balaam laments that the blessing simply cannot be revoked by him, try as he may.

“God is not a man” (Num. 23:19; Hos. 11:9); yet the Lord Jesus Christ was clearly “the Son of man” or, as He is called in the New Testament, “the *man* Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). The Trinity is a very wrong understanding of the Father and Son. For clearly enough, the Lord Jesus is not therefore God. The Greek text calls Him “son of *anthropos*”, i.e. of mankind, rather than “son of *aner*” [husband, man]. In Hebrew thought, “the Son of

man" meant an ordinary, mortal man (Is. 51:12). "For since by man [Adam] came death, by man [Jesus] came also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:21).

Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?-
God had promised to give His people the promised land, as He has promised to give us the Kingdom, and there is no way He will renege on that promise.

Num 23:20 Behold, I have received a command to bless. He has blessed, and I can't reverse it-
Balaam may mean that he had tried to "reverse it", knowing that God is indeed open to persuasion and willing to change, as the record of Moses demonstrates. But, Balaam laments that he had been unable to "reverse it".

Num 23:21 He has not seen iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel. Yahweh his God is with him, the shout of a king is among them-
This statement comes sandwiched between the apostasy of Num. 21 and that of Num. 25. But God was intent on bringing His people in to Canaan it seems regardless of their desire to return to Egypt. Imputed righteousness is they key to our salvation by grace. When Balaam tried to curse Israel, it was impossible because God saw them as righteous, even though they were not: "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness (Jacob-ness) in Israel". God overlooked Jacob's natural characteristics. It is no accident that God repeatedly described His people at this time with the title of 'Jacob' (Num. 23:7,10,21,23; 24:5,17,19).

There was indeed much iniquity in Jacob- notice how Jacob's old name is used rather than the new name, Israel. They took with them the gods of Egypt (Ez. 20:7,8), and the tabernacle of another god as well as that of Yahweh (Acts 7:43). But God did not 'see' that sin; this is an Old Testament presentiment of the 'imputed righteousness' of which Paul speaks in the New Testament. God doesn't count sin, doesn't 'see' it, in His people; for this really is what love is about, seeing someone in a positive light and not imputing their weakness to them.

God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). He fulfilled His promise at Sinai that if they were obedient, He would make them His people; and He did, counting them as obedient. Yet the events of the intervening forty years hardly sound like Israel being obedient; He "suffered their manners" forty years (Ps. 95:10; Acts 13:18). Yet this is how they were counted (Ex. 19:5 cp. Dt. 27:9). He saw them as a young woman 'going after' Him in the wilderness years, attracted to Him (Jer. 2:2). Even when we do read of the sin of Israel at this time, God *grieved* over the carcasses of those He slew (Heb. 3:17).

Balaam's response to this truth which he was made to utter was to make Israel fall into sin. For he correctly figured that God's imputation of righteousness cannot mean that

He makes willfully wicked and sinful people somehow whitewashed so that they can continue in sin and unfaithfulness to Him.

The reason Yahweh did not see iniquity or deceit, Jacob, in Israel was that Yahweh his God is with him. This is Emmanuel, God with us, a prediction of the Lord Jesus. We could translate "He does not see the iniquity that is in Jacob ".

Num 23:22 God brings them out of Egypt, he has as it were the strength of the wild ox-
But Israel had felt so weak before the apparent strength of the Canaanites. They believed the faithless words of the ten spies. They failed to appreciate their potential strength. In Num. 22:4 we learn that the Moabites feared that "Now this multitude will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field". God had specifically told Moses not to fight with Moab (Dt. 2:9), and I suggested on Num. 22:2 that there was some contact between Balak and Moses. When Israel passed along the highways, they had been careful not stray from the route and had not drunk from the wells of those whom they passed through. Moab need have had no fear that Israel would lick up all around. It was only those who came out against Israel in battle who had been defeated, and Balak would have been wiser to learn from this. But God gave them according to their fears by saying He would make Israel like a powerful ox (Num. 23:22).

Here and in Num. 24:8 we read that God *is bringing* Israel out of Egypt. And yet even the generation of under 20s at the time of the Exodus apparently didn't want to enter Canaan, but liked the idea of returning to Egypt. We see again here God's grace in almost forcing through His plan to save His people.

Or we may translate "He [God] is for them like the horns of the wild ox", repeated in Num. 24:8. Balak's fears that Israel would act like an ox were groundless if he had accepted God's word for Israel to ignore Moab. But seeing Moab wanted conflict, then his fears would come true- and Yahweh would empower Israel to act as an angry ox.

Num 23:23 Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob; neither is there any divination possible against Israel-
All attempts to use divination were vain. There was no power in these practices; and even if people insisted that there were supernatural cosmic powers of evil, they were irrelevant to the people of God.

Now it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What has God done!-
The salvation of Israel was indeed by grace, given their great spiritual weakness. It was the doing of God by grace and not the work of man, and indeed was to be praised as such. Or we could translate "It shall be told to Jacob and to Israel what God works", i.e. His plans would be revealed to His people by the prophets.

Num 23:24 Behold, the people rises up as a lioness, as a lion he lifts himself up. He shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drinks the blood of the slain-
As noted on :22, this all refers to their potential strength. They were in God's eyes potentially as strong as a lion against all the others 'beasts of the land', the other tribes there. But Israel feared the Canaanites and submitted to them, just as they had believed the faithless words of the ten spies. They failed to appreciate their potential strength.

Num 23:25 Balak said to Balaam, Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all-
Balak clearly had the idea that Balaam was still somehow in control of what he was saying. He had never seen true Divine inspiration at work before. For a person was totally taken over by the Spirit in order to speak forth the inspired word.

Num 23:26 But Balaam answered Balak, Didn't I tell you, saying, 'All that Yahweh speaks, that I must do?'-
Again there is a resentment in Balaam, repeating God's word to others but not personally identifying with it, bemoaning the limitations of it. Balaam was aware that he could only *do* according to what God *said* (Num. 23:26). Balak says that whatever Balaam *says*, he will *do* (Num. 22:17). He is therefore inviting Balaam to play God, to give words of command to be obeyed, to receive the greatest honour / glory, and to be the ultimate source of blessing and cursing for Israel and the nations. This temptation to play God was at the root of the situation in the garden of Eden, and it continues to be at the root of all temptation.

Num 23:27 Balak said to Balaam, Come now, I will take you to another place; perhaps it will please God that you may curse me them from there-
Balaam ought to have recognized that the geographical location of a prophet was not going to affect whether or not a curse was successful. But they were both clinging on to the hope that from some location, Balaam might be able to use the supposed power of the 'evil eye'; see on :13.

Num 23:28 Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor, that looks down on the desert-
LXX Phogor; which Eusebius says was a mountain opposite Jericho. They were literally on the borders of entry into Canaan. Peor was associated with Baal worship (Num. 25:3,5). It was whilst here that Balaam formed his plan- to use the sexual rites associated with the Baal or Peor to seduce the Israelites to sin, and thereby bring curses upon themselves rather than blessings. We noted on :17 that Balak wants blessing from Yahweh; but he takes Balaam to sites of idol worship in order to get it. This mixture of true and false worship was the abiding characteristic of Israel, and it remains in essence

are major temptation.

Num 23:29 Balaam said to Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bulls and seven rams-
We are given the impression that Balak [or his men] now did all this somewhat wearily.

Num 23:30 Balak did as Balaam had said, and offered up a bull and a ram on every altar-
Balak and Balaam have just heard God's warning that no form of enchantment will work against Israel (:23). And that Yahweh is not going to change His mind about blessing them. Despite all that, they still go ahead with their attempt at Yahweh worship. What emerges from the record is the way that despite every evidence, men choose to disregard God's clearest statements in His inspired word. Because they are obsessed by their own fears (in Balak's case, even irrational ones), and addictions to wealth and power, as in Balaam's case.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 24

Num 24:1 When Balaam perceived that it pleased Yahweh to bless Israel, he didn't go as at the other times to meet with enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness-
The blessing was in that God was imputing righteousness to Israel, covering their sins, and seeing them as saved- despite their weaknesses. The connection between blessing and forgiveness / salvation is widespread throughout Scripture: Dt. 33:23; Ps. 5:12 (blessing = grace) Dt. 30:19; Ps. 3:8; 24:5; 28:9; 133:3 (= salvation); Ex. 12:32; 32:29; Num. 24:1; 2 Sam. 21:3; Ps. 67:1 (cp. context); Lk. 6:28; Acts 3:26; Rom. 4:7,8; 1 Cor. 10:16; Gal. 3:14 (= forgiveness). The setting his face to the desert rather than looking at Israel appears another desperate attempt to make the "evil eye" myth work (see on :2,3).

Num 24:2 Balaam lifted up his eyes-
This could be understood as meaning that he began to pray to God, seeking for a curse upon Israel. A feature of Biblical prayers is the way they start with some reference to God, often involving several clauses. This is to be connected with the idea of lifting the eyes to Heaven at the start of a prayer (Ps. 121:1; 123:1; Ez. 23:27; Dan. 4:34; Lk. 16:23; 18:13; Jn. 11:41; 17:1). There are enough of these references to make us wonder whether other references to lifting up the eyes to Heaven is an idiom for prayer. This seems likely in Num. 24:2; Josh. 5:13; Jud. 19:17 and 1 Chron. 21:16 among others. The simple implication of all this is that we should begin our prayers with a conscious imagination and personalization of the Father to whom we pray; "Our Father, *who is* in Heaven" says it all.

And he saw Israel dwelling according to their tribes; and the Spirit of God came on him-
The lifting up his eyes could be a reference to Balaam trying to use the belief in the 'evil eye' upon Israel. But as he began to do this, God's Spirit took him over and made him bless them. It would be an example of where the Bible deconstructs belief in things like the evil eye and other connections with a supposed supernatural source of evil. Even if these things were true, then God's Spirit power was far greater than them. See on :3.

Num 24:3 He took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor says, the man whose eye was closed says-
The idea may be that Balaam had tried to use superstitions about the 'evil eye' against Israel and had lifted up his eyes against Israel in this way (see on :2). But his [evil] eye had been closed by God and he was now taken over by God's Spirit in order to as it were have his eye opened to bless Israel. We note "eye" in the singular, not the plural. But he was being directed to remember how his eyes had been closed to the Angel standing in the way, opposing him. And then they had been opened. He was still being nudged towards repentance, despite committing the presumptuous sin of trying to curse God's people, knowing that whoever cursed them would be cursed. These considerations explain the similarity and confusion within the Hebrew word for "closed" and "opened" used here.

Num 24:4 he says, who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, and having his eyes open-
His eyes were opened to the Angel blocking his way, and when he realized how he had closed his spiritual vision to the Angel trying to stop him going to Balak, he fell down on his face (Num. 22:31). But when he is later given a vision of Balak's judgment, the vision which Balaam didn't want to see, he describes himself as "the man whose eye was closed" and yet had to see the vision with his eyes open (Num. 24:3). He didn't learn the lesson. He closed his eyes so as not to see the vision, and yet God forced him to open his eyes and see it. And again, he fell down upon his face (Num. 24:4,16 RV), as he had when the Angel blocked his path earlier. He wouldn't learn his lesson, he wouldn't perceive how circumstances were being repeated in God's desperate effort to get him to repent.

The idea was that Balaam shut his eyes and fell down so as not to see or receive the oracle of Divine blessing, but notwithstanding, his eyes were opened and he was made to speak out blessing rather than the curse that he so wanted to pronounce.

Num 24:5 How beautiful are your tents, Jacob, and your tents, Israel!-
But in their tents they sinned, "they murmured in their tents, and didn't listen to Yahweh's voice" (Ps. 106:25). But they were counted righteous. The repeated parallel of Jacob and Israel was to reflect how God imputed righteousness to the historical Jacob,

changing his name in recognition of it, and He was doing the same to Israel's people. God is described in the prophets as being in love with Israel at this time (Ez. 16:8), just as He is with us on our wilderness journey towards His Kingdom. He didn't 'see' their sin (see on Num. 23:21). Very often, the name Jacob is associated with the way that God sees His people of Jacob / Israel as righteous when in fact they are not (Num. 23:7,10,21; 24:5; Ps. 47:4; 105:6; 135:4; Is. 41:8). The names "Jacob" and "Israel" are often used together (e.g. Hos. 12:12) to show how God saw the Jacob as Israel, without forgetting he was still Jacob.

Num 24:6 As valleys they are spread forth, as gardens by the riverside, as aloes which Yahweh has planted-
Or, as the tents which the Lord has pitched (s.w. :5). 'Planted' is an image frequently used about how God would plant His people permanently in Canaan, and the figure is sometimes used along with the idea of 'never to be removed' (Ex. 15:17; 2 Sam. 7:10; Ps. 44:2; 80:8,15; Is. 5:2; Jer. 2:21). As Yahweh planted the garden of Eden, so He speaks here of how He had already planted His people- the first step towards a potential restoration of Eden (Gen. 2:8). But the reality was that at the time Balaam was speaking, the people of Israel were in tents, waiting to enter the land. But God saw them as if they were already there and established- just as He sees us even in our wilderness years as His Kingdom, even though it is not yet literally established.

The picture of Israel as luxuriant trees planted by abundant waters was of course very different to how they were at that point in the dry desert. But it was how God saw them.

As cedar trees beside the waters-
The repeated use of the idea of "as" was perhaps to reflect how God saw them- as if they were righteous. Mic. 6:4,5 records God's response to Balak and Balaam is a parade example of His saving grace to Israel, which was intended to encourage the Israel of Micah's day. Hos. 9:10 speaks of this time- God "found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at its first season; but they came to Baal Peor, and consecrated themselves to the shameful thing". God saw them as if they were so wonderful- but they turned to worship Baalpeor (Num. 25:3). Our response to imputed righteousness must not be the same.

Unless we read "palms" for "cedar trees", we must note that cedars do not grow beside water; although cedars were considered to have been planted by Yahweh (Ps. 104:16). This would then connect with the earlier thought about the aloes, that they were planted "contrary to nature" by God in Canaan.

Gen. 2:5 explains how God created "every plant of the field before it was in the earth / eretz / land [promised to Abraham]". Quite simply, the plants Israel knew had been

made by God and somehow transplanted or moved into the land, just as one does when developing a garden. It was Moses' understanding that on entering the land, God would be planting Israel there (Ex. 15:17; Num. 24:6), just as God had planted in Eden (Gen. 2:8 s.w.). The "gardens" may be an intensive plural- the great garden, of Eden, which Yahweh had planted. We note that here there is reference to trees planted by a river, which is again the language of Eden, repeated in Revelation 21. The reference in :17 to the crushing of enemies by the star / Messsiah figure is an allusion to Gen. 3:15. God saw Israel as His undefiled garden of Eden, just as we are the Kingdom in embryo.

Num 24:7 Water shall flow from his buckets, his seed shall be in many waters, his king shall be higher than Agag; his kingdom shall be exalted-
"His King" is Israel's King. There is here an intimation that Israel's seed and king-Messiah would have personal conflict with 'Gog', a leader of a coalition of surrounding nations. Throughout the chapter, a total of nine neighbouring nations are mentioned, under the leadership of a tenth individual- Agag / Gog. Such victories never happened in Israel's history because they failed to live up to the potential power they were given in this prophecy, but the essence will come true in Messiah's latter day victories against another group of nine Arab nations headed up by a Gog / Agag figure, as outlined in Ez. 38. See on :24. "Agag" was a generic name for the kings of Amalek, rather like 'Abimelech', 'Caesar' or 'Pharaoh'.

The seed in many waters may refer to how seeds such as rice multiply and thrive when underwater, under ample irrigation.

Num 24:8 God brings him out of Egypt; he has as it were the strength of the wild ox-
But Israel had felt so weak before the apparent strength of the Canaanites. They believed the faithless words of the ten spies. They failed to appreciate their potential strength. In Num. 22:4 we learn that the Moabites feared that "Now this multitude will lick up all that is around us, as the ox licks up the grass of the field". God had specifically told Moses not to fight with Moab (Dt. 2:9), and I suggested on Num. 22:2 that there was some contact between Balak and Moses. When Israel passed along the highways, they had been careful not stray from the route and had not drunk from the wells of those whom they passed through. Moab need have had no fear that Israel would lick up all around. It was only those who came out against Israel in battle who had been defeated, and Balak would have been wiser to learn from this. But God gave them according to their fears by saying He would make Israel like a powerful ox (also Num. 23:22).

Here and in Num. 23:22 we read that God is bringing Israel out of Egypt. And yet even the generation of under 20s at the time of the Exodus apparently didn't want to enter Canaan, but liked the idea of returning to Egypt. We see again here God's grace in

almost forcing through His plan to save His people.

Or we may translate "He [God] is for them like the horns of the wild ox", repeated in Num. 23:22. Balak's fears that Israel would act like an ox were groundless if he had accepted God's word for Israel to ignore Moab. But seeing Moab wanted conflict, then his fears would come true- and Yahweh would empower Israel to act as an angry ox.

He shall eat up the nations his adversaries, shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them with his arrows-
The shame was that God saw Israel as triumphing over their enemies- but instead, they were beguiled by them, slept with their women and worshipped their idols. They were to "pierce them through with [their] arrows" - and Phinehas therefore pierced through the Midianite woman with a javelin (Num. 25:8), just as Levi was to pierce through his enemies (Dt. 33:11).

Num 24:9 He couched, he lay down as a lion, as a lioness; who shall rouse him up?-
The past tenses suggest God saw Israel as already having entered and possessed Canaan; He likens them to a lion which couched down before it sprung in to Canaan and destroyed the tribes. But the sad record of Joshua and Judges is that Israel feared their enemies and were oppressed by them. The great potential didn't come true. It was so sad for God, and is the understandable basis for His anger in chapter 25 when Israel did the very opposite and joined themselves in sexual and moral submission to the Baal of Peor. These prophecies would come to have their ultimate fulfilment in the Lord Jesus as the lion of Judah; for Israel didn't have the boldness of a lion when they entered Canaan.

"Who shall rouse him up?" begs the answer: 'A fool'. And that was what Balak was seeking to do.

This is a quotation from Gen. 49:9 about the lion of Judah, the Lord Jesus. The reference to a scepter in :17 likewise alludes to the scepter not departing from Judah (Gen. 49:10). The idea seems to be that the blessing of Abraham, cited in the next sentence, was operative on account of the future seed, the Lord Jesus. And so we have in essence the idea we encounter in Romans and Galatians, that those in Christ, the seed, are the seed of Abraham- and are blessed, regardless of all other curses that may come upon us for our disobedience. What is critical is abiding in the covenant. Human sinfulness will not break that covenant relationship of itself.

Everyone who blesses you is blessed, everyone who curses you is cursed-
This was a sober reminder to Balaam, out of his own mouth, that whoever cursed Israel as he was trying to do- would be cursed. We too are in the Abrahamic covenant by

baptism. The blessing upon us cannot be taken away, even by our sin, as long as we abide in the covenant. This is what faith / trust is about. Belief we are loved, faith is not simply vague hope that requests we pray for will possibly be given in the short or medium term of human life. More essentially, faith is belief and trust that we will be saved.

Num 24:10 Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together; and Balak said to Balaam, I called you to curse my enemies, and, behold, you have altogether blessed them these three times-
Balaam ought to have perceived that each time he tried to curse Israel and ended up blessing them, it was like him trying those three times to ride his donkey down the lane with God standing in the way to block him. The same phrase "these three times" occurs three times in that record (Num. 22:28,32,33).

Num 24:11 Therefore now flee you to your place! I thought to promote you to great honour; but, behold, Yahweh has kept you back from honour-
"Kept you back" is the word used in Num. 22:16 for how Balak urged Balaam initially: "Please let nothing hinder you [s.w.] from coming to me". Repeatedly, God is the one who hinders or keeps back (Gen. 30:2; 1 Sam. 25:26,34; Neh. 9:20 etc.). Balak seems to be effectively saying 'Don't let Yahweh hinder you'. Balak recognizes that it was Yahweh and not Balaam who had hindered, and his words are really a lament that Yahweh had kept back Balaam. He knew that Balaam was eager for it. "Don't let your God / religion stop you..." is the call of temptation which the world makes to God's people of every generation. And heeding it is to go in the way of Balaam.

Num 24:12 Balaam said to Balak, Didn't I also tell your messengers whom you sent to me, saying-
"Messengers" is the Hebrew *malak* , the same word translated "Angels". The Angels as in supernatural beings cannot sin. They are of Divine nature. Any passengers which appear to talk of Angels sinning are using *malak* in the sense it is used here, of human beings who were messengers or servants. The idea is that Balaam should have turned back from them as He turned back from Yahweh's Angel whom he encountered.

Num 24:13 'If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I can't go beyond the word of Yahweh, to do either good or bad of my own mind. I will say what Yahweh says?'-
Clearly Balaam really wanted the promised reward from Balak. He wanted God to curse Israel; Dt. 23:5 and Josh. 24:10 state that God did not hear Balaam's prayers about this. But there is no record that he prayed to God to curse Israel. But clearly his unspoken desires were read by God as a prayer, just as Elijah's feelings about Israel were read as his making intercession to God against Israel. Likewise our ability to verbalize is not the same as ability in prayer. Our deepest, unspoken feelings are seen by God as prayer.

Neh. 13:2 goes so far as to say that God turned Balaam's curse into a blessing- implying Balaam's thoughts were read by God as asking Him to curse Israel. See on 25:11.

Peter alludes here in his defence: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). He told the Sanhedrin that to make true Christians agree not to preach was simply an inappropriate suggestion, because "we cannot but speak" out- it was something which went part and parcel with the experience of the risen Lord Jesus. Peter was not just an illiterate fisherman; so many of his words and phrasing indicate a thorough familiarity with the Greek Old Testament. Here, he seems to have Num. 24:13 at the back of his mind; Balaam says that although Balak is forbidding him to speak, he cannot but speak what God has inspired him with, even if it is intensely unpopular with those around him.

In the very similar statement Balaam makes in Num. 22:18 he speaks of Yahweh as "my God". Now he omits reference to Yahweh as "my God". Balaam knew that when Divine words of prophecy came to him, he had to speak them out, and could not add to or diminish from them (Num. 22:18) nor add any good or bad to them according to what was in his own mind (Num. 24:13). This is all a helpful insight into what it meant for a prophet to be Divinely inspired. The words they uttered were from God and were not their own opinions at all. For Balaam would dearly loved to have cursed Israel and not to have uttered the words of blessing which he did.

Num 24:14 Now, behold, I go to my people. Come, I will inform you what this people shall do to your people in the latter days-
Balaam understood the 'last days' to be when the Davidic dynasty would arise (Num. 24:14 cp. Is. 2:2; Mic. 4:1)- and so I take this as another indication that in some sense, Solomon could have been the Messiah of the 'last days'. But he like many such figures, failed to live up to the potential possible. This is the tragic story of so many lives.

Num 24:15 He took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor says, the man whose eye was closed says-
This may imply he was a 'seer' who didn't want to see. He was seeing and stating that which was not at all what he wanted to. See on :1-4.

Num 24:16 he says, who hears the words of God, knows the knowledge of the Most High, and who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down, and having his eyes open-
Balaam's claim that "I didn't know..." of God's opposition to his journey to curse Israel was untrue (Num. 22:34); so he is made to say in prophecy that he did know God's will (Num. 24:16).

We can know but choose not to know. He claimed he had sinned but in ignorance, when this was not true.

See on :1-4. Falling down with open eyes is to direct Balaam back to how he had fallen down before the Angel with his eyes now open to the Angel. We marvel at how God was continually trying to nudge him even at this stage towards repentance.

Num 24:17 I see him, but not now; I see him, but not near-
The idea is 'I see him (Israel), but not (as he is) now; I see him, but not (camped as he is now) near (to me)'. This is quite the argument against Messiah's literal pre-existence. As Adam Clarke put it, "I shall see him, but he is not now. I shall behold him, but not nigh - I shall have a full view of him, but the time is yet distant. That is, The person of whom I am now prophesying does not at present exist".

A star will come out of Jacob, a sceptre will rise out of Israel, and shall strike through the corners of Moab, and break down all the sons of Sheth-
This star and sceptre would seem to refer to Israel's Messiah, the Lord Jesus.There are many Biblical connections between Messiah and a star, reflected in the Bar-Kochba revolt, a false Messiah claiming to be the Messianic star. It seems He will yet win a resounding victory against Israel's Arab enemies, represented here by Moab, and be higher than Agag (:7), or Gog. Ez. 38:1-7 speaks of Christ's latter day conflict with Gog. It seems there will be a final conflict around the time of Christ's return, in which He will finally save Israel from all their surrounding enemies. The wise men said that they had seen the star of the King of Israel and were following it- they were clearly alluding to this prophecy, and the Star was therefore ultimately the Lord Jesus. "Corners" can also be rendered "forehead", so we have an allusion to Gen. 3:15. Moab are being presented as the seed of the serpent, to be crushed before the seed of the woman, Israel's Messiah. But the immediate idea is that the victory of the seed of the woman is counted to all Israel weak as they were spiritually. And this points forward to the Lord's victory being counted to us as Abraham's weak seed.

Moab had begun by wanting to curse Israel. Their desire was counted as if they had cursed Israel, even though Balaam never actually got to utter any curses. And so true to the Abrahamic covenant, he who cursed Israel was now being cursed. And the whole sad history would've been avoidable had men just humbly accepted God's word to Moses, not to interfere with Moab. Moab had nothing to fear, but their fears led them to try to curse Israel and that led to their being cursed. We note that Balaam curses Edom too, whom Israel likewise had been told not to fight with. Perhaps they too had some input into the desire to curse Israel at this time, again from needless fear.

The future king was to be totally out of Israel, an Israelite indeed. This is an eloquent prophecy of the Lord's human nature and lack of any personal pre-existence. Likewise :19, He was to "arise out of Jacob". See on Num. 21:28. David was the future king who would smite Moab (2 Sam. 8:2), so we look forward to David's great Messianic son doing

this- the Lord Jesus.

Num 24:18 Edom shall be a possession. Seir, his enemies, also shall be a possession, while Israel does valiantly-
Despite occasional victories against these powers, Israel never possessed them and they revolted against Israel repeatedly (under Solomon, 1 Kings 11:14; Joram, 2 Kings 8:20; Ahaz, 2 Chron. 28:17 and during the Babylonian invasion, Ez. 35:15; Obad. 10,13). Yet total dominion over them was potentially possible for Israel. These things will only come fully true in the last days. Edom in the last days will be possessed by their enemies, i.e. Christ and his true Israel, referring back to the promise that Abraham's seed would physically and spiritually possess the gates of his enemies (Num. 24:18 cp. Gen. 22:17,18).

As noted on :17, there is an incipient fulfilment of these things in David, to whom Edom became servants (2 Sam. 8:14). So we are bidden to look forward to David's great Messianic son doing this- the Lord Jesus. Obadiah 21 seems to specifically apply this to the Lord's latter day victory over Israel's neighbours, as the shorter term possibilities were not realized to the extent they could have been: "And saviours shall come upon Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's".

Num 24:19 Out of Jacob shall come one who shall have dominion, and shall destroy the remnant from the city-
Perhaps the city in view immediately was "Ar" which means "the city". Had Moab not hired Balaam, then God's original intention that Moab not be touched would have come true (Dt. 2:9). We see here the open nature of God's purpose, ever able to change according to human response and behaviour. But the idea was that a Messianic figure would appear at that time. I have suggested on Joshua 1 that Joshua was that figure, and his name is the Hebrew equivalent of "Jesus". But he didn't live up to his potentials. And so he became but a type of the future Lord Jesus Christ.

Or we can read this as "And dominion will be exercised out of Jacob, and the remnant (of Israel's enemies) will be destroyed out of the city". In this case, "out of Jacob" is parallel with "out of the city", and in a latter day context this would apply to Zion and the emergence from there of the Lord Jesus against Israel's enemies.

Num 24:20 He looked at Amalek and took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations, but his latter end shall come to destruction-
The "latter end" may refer to a specific fulfilment in the last days or some latter day equivalent of Amalek. There were various fulfillments at the time of Saul (who also took Agag prisoner, 1 Sam. 15:7,8), David (1 Sam. 27:8) and Hezekiah (1 Chron. 4:41-43). But all those kings of Judah failed to fully live up to the Messianic potential they had. So they

became types of the final latter day fulfilment in the Lord Jesus. Amalek was "first of the nations" in that they were the first to attack Israel (Ex. 17:8-16). We are seeing in these prophecies how all who cursed Israel were going to be cursed. The Abrahamic covenant still stood despite Israel's moral weakness at the time; and that is the comfort for we who are also sinners but who are in the same covenant by baptism into the Lord Jesus.

Num 24:21 He looked at the Kenite, and took up his parable and said, Your dwelling place is strong, your nest is set in the rock-
There is a word play upon the very similar words for "nest" and "Kayin" or "Kain", whence "Kenite". Moses' first wife Zipporah was the daughter of a Kenite (Jud. 1:16). Balak was the son of Zippor, the male form of Zipporah. Balaam was known to them. I have earlier suggested that they knew of Yahweh from the 40 years Moses lived with them, and now after his divorce with Zipporah, they had turned against Israel. And because of their knowledge of Yahweh and wilful attempt to curse His people, they had more responsibility and were to be judged severely. The word for "Kayin" or "Kain" can mean a smith, "the forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron" (Gen. 4:22). And so they are presented as the descendants of unrighteous Cain.

Num 24:22 Nevertheless Kain shall be wasted, until Asshur carries you away captive-
The Assyrians and Babylonians took the ten tribes and Judah into captivity, and we assume the Kenites were taken with them- for there were Kenites amongst the Jewish exiles who returned from Babylon (1 Chron. 2:55). This kind of internal corroboration within the records is to me the most powerful evidence of the Divine inspiration of the Bible.

Num 24:23 He took up his parable and said, Alas, who shall live when God does this?-
Heb. "On account of God appointing him", referring to Asshur. "Who shall live...?" was a rhetorical question which begged the answer 'Those who repent'. And as noted on :22, some Kenites apparently did. At this point in time, these people were trying to curse Israel, fully aware that he who curses Israel shall be cursed. We marvel at God's patient desire for their repentance.

Num 24:24 But ships shall come from the coast of Kittim; they shall afflict Asshur, and shall afflict Eber. He also shall come to destruction-
Balaam's prophecy about Israel's final destiny speaks of how finally both Assyria and Eber will be judged for their abuse of Israel in the last days. "Eber" is 'the other side', a similar meaning as the words 'Syria' and 'Aram' in Hebrew, and effectively referring to Syria; or to those 'on the other side' of the Euphrates, namely Iran. They are mentioned together because they will be operating together- and now we see that they actually are coming together (Num. 24:24). Whilst we must remember that Syria and Assyria were historically different, the current talk of a ‘Greater Syria’ and ‘The Islamic state of Iraq

and Greater Syria' is nothing less than Biblical 'Assyria' born again.

Kittim or Kitti was a town in Cyprus. Because it became a naval base, it came to be put for powers further to the west whose ships used it. Thus it was a term used for Greece (1 Maccabees 1:1; 8:5 and cp. Gen. 10:4 where Kittim is a son of Javan / Greece) and also for Rome (Dan. 11:30); hence the Vulgate here reads "Italia" for "Kittim". Kittim became a general term for maritime powers to the west of Israel (Jer. 2:10; Ez. 27:6). Something similar happened to the term "Tarshish", which originally referred to the maritime port of Tyre, just as "Kittim" was originally Kitti in Cyprus. But "Tarshish" then came to apply to various maritime powers to the west of Israel, and doesn't have just one specific application to any single power.

The ships from Kittim may simply speak of Western powers afflicting Eastern powers (Assur and Eber). Then the Western powers too will finally be destroyed.

Num 24:25 Balaam rose up and went and returned to his place, and Balak also went his way-
Balaam figured that if Israel sinned against their God, then the prophecies of blessing and victory would not come true. He understood prophecy as conditional. He advised Balak to tempt Israel to commit fornication with the pagan gods so that the prophecies would not come true (Num. 31:16; Rev. 2:14). Balaam is seen as the prototypical false teacher *within Israel* in 2 Pet. 2:15 and Jude 11. It could be that he entered the camp of Israel and told them the prophecies he had been inspired to make- and this would explain the [human] source of this material which Moses incorporated in Numbers- and having gotten their confidence, then encouraged them to commit fornication with Moab. This rings true, in that then Balaam was exactly prototypical of the false prophets *within the first century Israel of God* who were also teaching the new Israel to commit fornication and worship idols, having credibility because they had also uttered true prophecies. The latter day equivalent to this may be specific temptations for God's people in the very last days, on the borders of the Kingdom, which will involve sexual and idolatry issues.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 25

Num 25:1 Israel stayed in Shittim; and the people began to play the prostitute with the daughters of Moab-
We learn from Num. 31:16 and Rev. 2:14 that at this time, Balaam advised Balak to entice Israel with Moabite prostitutes, so that the people would be cursed by their God for immorality. The events of chapter 25 were therefore on Balaam's advice. This desperate strategy reflects how headlong was Balaam's desire to receive the wealth promised him, and how he sacrificed the welfare of God's people upon that altar. In essence we can do the same today. We note that Israel are called prostitutes because

they slept with the Moabite prostitutes. They had committed prostitution against Yahweh. For the covenant at Sinai was their marital covenant.

We enquire why the reason for the sin isn't revealed at this point; for only later do we learn that this prostitution was on Balaam's advice. Possibly this is because God wants to show how sin is sin regardless of the reason. This was Adam and Eve's problem- when confronted over their sin, excuses and reasons for sin trumped the simple confession of sin which God looks for. And so it is almost always in human sin and failure. The reasons for sin assume huge proportion and dwarf the simple fact of sin. Perhaps that's why the reasons for the sin aren't mentioned at this point.

Num 25:2 for they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods; and the people ate, and bowed down to their gods-
Israel bowed down to the gods of Moab (Num. 25:1). But Israel were potentially *above* the Midianites (24:7,18); the Midianites vexed *them* (Num. 25:18) when Israel had been prophesied as vexing *them* (hence they were told to now *vex* the Midianites in :17).

Ps. 106:28 adds: "They joined themselves also to Baal Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead". To join oneself is the language of marriage. To eat sacrifice was a sign of fellowship with the god at whose table you were eating. And by doing these things they were effectively breaking their covenant relationship with Yahweh. But despite that, He still worked to save them and to preserve them nationally as His people. His grace is the more amazing, because He disregarded even their breaking of covenant with Him- because He was and is so passionate to save.

We see the connections between eating in spiritual fellowship with idols, and prostitution. These connections continued, and were the root reason why the church at Corinth came to have sexual immorality and inappropriate feasting and alcoholic drinking happening at the breaking of bread service. They turned the Christian fellowship meal into an idol feast.

Num 25:3 Israel joined himself to Baal Peor, and the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel-
Baal Peor refers to the Baal who was worshipped at the town of Peor, near where they were now encamping (Dt. 3:29; 4:46). Each town and geographical area had its own gods, rather like today there is a geography to religion, different parts of the world or even areas within a country tend to have their local religions. The true God and His Truth is the same worldwide, which allows a unique international bond between those who know Him and are in His Son.

"Israel *joined* himself unto Baalpeor" (Num. 25:3) in a sexual context, and by doing so they were being unfaithful to Yahweh as their husband; see on :1. Hos. 9:10 comments

on this as meaning that Israel "Separated themselves unto" Baalpeor. We cannot be 'joined to' something unless we are 'separated from' something else, and in this case, they were thereby separating themselves from Yahweh. If we are truly joined to Christ and each other, we *must* be separated from idolatry. It is impossible to experience this 'joining' with believers who are not 'separated'- one cannot be 'joined' in intercourse to more than one person. We *cannot* serve two masters without *hating* God.

Paul's selfless relationship with Corinth was inspired by that of Moses with Israel. Thus Paul warns Corinth not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14), or else he would come to them and not spare. He is quoting the LXX of Num. 25:3 concerning how Israel joined themselves to Baal-peor, resulting in Moses commanding the murder of all those guilty- just as Paul later did to Corinth.

The earlier cases of Israel's apostacy all featured the account of their sin, the anger of Yahweh arising- and then Moses makes intercession to save them. But he doesn't do so now. It seems that after his own rejection from entering the land he became bitter with Israel, accusing them of being the reason he wasn't entering. And so his desire to intercede for them waned. And thus we see him come to his end somewhat lower than the spiritual peaks that he had reached at previous points of intercession. And this seems quite a theme- that God's people often die at spiritual points below the finest moments they achieved during their lives. Gideon, Noah, Samson, David, Elijah all come to mind.

Num 25:4 Yahweh said to Moses, Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them up to Yahweh before the sun, that the fierce anger of Yahweh may turn away from Israel-
It seems that because Phinehas turned away God's wrath (:11), this command was not actually obeyed. Deuteronomy says that all who worshipped Baal Peor were destroyed, so these who were saved from that destruction although deserving it, had righteousness imputed to them.

The wrath of God can be turned away by the actions of those He is angry with (Num. 25:4; Dt. 13:15-17; Ezra 10:14; Jonah 3:7,10; 2 Chron. 12:7; Jer. 4:4; 21:12). And yet that wrath can also be turned away by the prayers of a third party (Ps. 106:23 "He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, so that He wouldn't destroy them"; Jer. 18:20 "I stood before You to speak good for them, to turn away Your wrath from them"; Job 42:7 "Yahweh said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against you... My servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept him, that I not deal with you according to your folly"). This means that in some cases, our prayers for others can be counted as if they have repented. We can gain our brother for God's Kingdom (Mt. 18:15), as Noah saved his own house by his faithful preparation (Heb. 11:7). That all the tribal chiefs were to be executed shows the

need for a purge of the leadership, and how widespread was idolatry. LXX "and make them examples of judgment for the Lord".

Ezra 10:14 speaks of God's wrath turning away because those who had married Gentile women divorced them. God's wrath is also turned away by the death of the sinner- the heads of the sinners in Num. 25:4 were to be 'hung up' before the Lord so that His wrath would turn away. A similar example is to be found in Josh. 7:26. Jeremiah often comments that God's wrath is turned away by the execution of judgment upon the sinner (e.g. Jer. 30:24). In this sense His anger and wrath are poured out or 'accomplished', i.e. they are no more because they have been poured out (Lam. 4:11). The Lord's death on the cross as a representative of sinners therefore achieved the same. We are saved from wrath through Him.

Num 25:5 Moses said to the judges of Israel, Everyone kill his men who have joined themselves to Baal Peor-
This command perhaps didn't need to be carried out, because Phinehas took the initiative in killing the chief offenders (:7,8) and this act so impressed God that the plague was ended (:11). Here we have an example of how God sets up one plan or purpose, but is prepared to amend or change it according to human initiative suggesting another one, as Moses did several times. We see here therefore how open God is to dialogue, to living relationship with His people. Or it could be that we have in :5 an explanation of how :4 came about; the princes of Israel were slain by the judges of Israel.

The whole situation is so similar to that with the golden calf. Yahweh's anger burns (:2) as it did then (Ex. 32:10 "let My anger burn against them"). On both occasions there was a plague (Ex. 32:35 = Num. 25:9). "Let each man slay his men who attached themselves to Baal Peor" (Num. 25:5)is the call to Levi of Ex. 32:27: "Let each man slay his brother, and each man his neighbor, and each man him who is close to him". As the Levites were rewarded with their ministry, so is Phinehas. The reward is in fact to continue serving God's people. Yahweh's anger waxes hot but is appeased, this time by Phinehas rather than Moses. Moses then sought to "make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30), as Phinehas did: "And he atoned for the children of Israel" (Num. 25:13). Moses presents here as passive whereas with the golden calf, he was proactive. We sense his enthusiasm had waned for yet another intercession for the people. He died somewhat weaker in passion than in his earlier days- but will still be ultimately saved. Indeed a case could be made that Moses was being disobedient here. He had been commanded to execute the chiefs of the people and hang up their heads; instead he tells the leadership of Israel to murder their people who had joined themselves to Baal. Moses' anger seems against the people; and he repeatedly blames his ban on entering Canaan upon "the people". He invites a far greater slaughter than Yahweh had initially envisaged.

Although as noted, the initiative of Phinehas meant that these executions didn't happen.

Num 25:6 Behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought to his brothers a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the Tent of Meeting-
Seeing that multiple Israelites slept with Moabites, there must have been particular significance in this man and woman. The whole incident is called "the matter of Cozbi the daughter of the prince of Midian" (:18). The weeping at the tabernacle door was presumably in repentance "before Yahweh", the Angel of the presence within it. Moses was present there, and then the Israelite man and Moabitess leader appear and enter "into the chamber" (:8). I suggest the implication is that they entered the holy place or even the most holy, and there they were slain. They intended to perform a sexual ritual to Peor in the tabernacle of Yahweh. Hence the urgent need Phinehas felt to immediately stop this. But the awful nature of the sin was that Israel were repenting, but Zimri was urging them against repentance and seeking to demonstrate that sin was not sin and should be indulged in. It is causing others to sin which is so abhorrent to God.

Num 25:7 When Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest saw it, he rose up from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand-
We note from Ex. 6:25 that "Eleazar Aaron's son took one of the daughters of Putiel as his wife; and she bore him Phinehas". Putiel isn't mentioned elsewhere, but it appears to be a common Egyptian name. So the mother of Phinehas was an Egyptian, whom his father ought not to have married. Although we could argue the other way- that for an Egyptian to marry one of the slave Hebrews could be a reflection of this woman's acceptance of Yahweh as her God, even though most of His people were very far from Him. Perhaps this explains how incensed he was to see Israel returning to idolatry.

Again we wonder why Phinehas and not Moses did this. Moses of course had himself married a Midianite woman and lived many years in Midian. But all the same we are left with the impression that his zeal had somewhat abated.

Num 25:8 and he went after the man of Israel into the pavilion and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman through her body. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel-
It seems from 1 Chron. 9:19,20 ["the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the thresholds of the tent. Their fathers had been over the camp of Yahweh, keepers of the entry. Phinehas the son of Eleazar was ruler over them in time past, and Yahweh was with him"] that it was at the door of the tabernacle / tent of the congregation that Phinehas stopped the apostasy of Israel. LXX "into the chamber". I have suggested on :6 that they entered the holy place or even the most holy, and there

they were slain. They intended to perform a sexual ritual to Peor in the tabernacle of Yahweh. The vagueness of the word used for "pavilion" or "chamber" is perhaps to avoid the apparent blasphemy of having to admit that such acts had been performed in the holy place. We note that in this case, Phinehas would have charged in to sacred space with no regard for his ritual cleanliness, especially if he entered the most holy. But as ever, the spirit of the law triumphed over the letter.

It seems from Num. 25:6-8 that the Midianite woman and the Israelite were having sex within "the tent", the tabernacle. Phinehas was remembered for this by his descendants directing the guards at the door of the tent (1 Chron. 9:19,20). The actions of the couple were therefore intended to turn the holy place into a place where Yahweh was supposedly worshipped through sex with prostitutes, exactly the way of pagan religions, and which was a problem in the churches at Corinth and Ephesus. The woman was a cult prostitute, and the man of Israel was not only having sex with her from a carnal perspective, but was demonstrating the union of Israel with the Moabite Baal Peor. Ps. 106:28 adds the detail that the sacrifices eaten by the people at Baal-Peor were made ‘to the dead’ which suggests this was an attempt to terminate the plague through a pact with Baal Peor. The fact they were both from high ranking families in Israel and Midian would suggest this was an attempt to weld the two nations together, because intermarriage of princely families was how that was done at the time.

The spear connecting Jew and Gentile in death could be seen as pointing forward to the cross of Christ. The Moabite woman and the Israelite man were representative of the Moabite women and the Israelite men who sinned; they were slain as representatives, as it were on a stake. And just as the Lord died as representative of all sinners, male and female, tempted and tempter alike. "Cozbi" means "deceiver" and easily represents the great deceiver, the false accuser, the Biblical devil which was slain by the Lord in His death. Just as the original idea of hanging up the heads of the slain rebels was also an echo of the idea of crucifixion and "cursed is every one who is hung on a tree". What Phinehas did saved Israel and led to imputed righteousness forIsrael and the turning away of God's wrath from His people. Surely Paul has this incident in mind when he writes that "we are saved from wrath through Him".

Num 25:9 Those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand-
Some editions of the LXX, followed by Paul in 1 Cor. 10:8, gives 23,000. Dt. 4:3 implies that all who followed Baal Peor were destroyed, and only those who "were faithful" to Yahweh survived (Dt. 4:4). But Num. 25:9,11 suggests that virtually all Israel went after Baal Peor and would all have been destroyed, had not Phinehas and his men slain 24,000 of them. What Phinehas did therefore had real and absolute meaning for God-those who did follow Baal Peor were counted as if they hadn't done so. This was

imputed righteousness, and looks forward to the even greater effect of the intercession of the Lord Jesus for us.

Perhaps the key to understanding the difference is the phrase "in one day". Num. 25:9 says that 24,000 died as a result of a plague sent to punish them- but it is not recorded how quickly they died from the plague. We can assume that a "plague" took some time period to kill them. But Num. 25:4,5 records that immediately, that day, the judges of Israel were commanded to kill by the sword those who had committed the fornication, and Phinehas arose in response. Those deaths by the sword were different to those from the plague- perhaps 23,000 died that day from these executions, and then 24,000 died from the plague subsequently. Another option is to note that there were 23,000 Levites (Num. 26:62). If each Levite killed a man (which Num. 25:5 "Let every one kill his man" might imply, cp. Ex. 32:27), this would mean 23,000 died in that one day, and if 1,000 died subsequently from the plague, we then have the 24,000 of Num. 25:9. Or it may be that 1 Cor. 10:8 is actually continuing to refer to the golden calf incident mentioned in :7; for Ex. 32:28 LXX says that 23,000 died at that time. The Masoretic text says 3,000. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that Ex. 32:28 specifically states that this slaughter happened in one day.

The 24,000 slain here contrasts with 3000 slain at the time of the golden calf. Was this really because the sin here was so much greater? Or because the intercession of Moses was quicker and more powerful than that of Phinehas here?

Num 25:10 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Had Phinehas not killed the man who was teaching that marriage out of the Faith was quite acceptable, God would have punished *all the people of Israel* (Num. 25:11). God is a jealous God, and Phinehas is commended for his jealousy for God in terms of separating from that false teacher. We naturally turn away from the seriousness of these things. Within our humanity, we would rather God were not like this. But there is a harder side of God, a side which we come to know, to respect, understand and appreciate as we grow spiritually. We see here the power of intercession, and how the actions of one person can save others (as in Mk. 2:5 James 5:20). This came to full term in the work of the Lord Jesus.

Num 25:11 Phinehas the son of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest has turned My wrath away from the children of Israel-
He was perhaps inspired by how Moses had turned away Yahweh's wrath from Israel (s.w. Ps. 106:23). Others likewise tried to turn away God's wrath from Israel (s.w. Jer. 18:20; Dan. 9:16). The fact is, His emotions concerning a person or nation can change in accordance with the reasoning with Him of a third party. This is the whole basis of the Lord's intercession for us with the Father. With Phinehas, it was his actions more than

his words; whereas with Moses, Jeremiah and Daniel, it was more a matter of words. The actions of the Lord on the cross, along with His ongoing words of intercession, achieve the same end for us.

In that he was jealous with My jealousy among them, so that I didn't consume the children of Israel in My jealousy-
Phinehas "executed judgment and the plague was stayed" (Ps. 106:30). The Hebrew for "executed judgment" is the same word more usually translated to pray or entreat. His actions were understood by God as a prayer, just as our actions and situations can be understood as a prayer- see on Num. 24:13. God's feelings are to be ours; Phinehas "was jealous with My jealousy". His colossal love for His people means that He is also therefore jealous over their devotions to any other god.

Elijah's description of himself in his prayer as being very jealous / zealous for God (1 Kings 19:10,14) is an allusion of his to Phinehas, whose zeal in destroying the apostate in Israel saved the nation (Num. 25:11,13). But Elijah is praying against Israel, for their total destruction, and making only a surface level allusion back to Phinehas. And likewise, much of the unbrotherly behaviour that has divided our own community has been justified by half-baked allusions to Biblical examples of 'defending the faith'.

We can deduce the tension between human initiative and Divine commandment. God's original plan was for the sinners to have their heads displayed crucified on stakes to turn away His wrath, but Phinehas took the initiative and was blessed. He wasn't asked to do what he did. And he is held up as an example, indeed as a type of the Lord Jesus who likewise offered Himself on His own will more than as simple obedience to commandment.

Num 25:12 Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace-
The priests "corrupted the covenant of Levi" (Mal. 2:8), in that they married out of the Faith (Neh. 13:29), thus violating the Spirit of the Levitical covenant- which was given in recognition of zealous action against relationships with Gentile women (Num. 25:12,13). A number of prophets condemn the priests for sexual malpractices.

Ps. 106:31 slightly extends this reward: "That was credited to him for righteousness, for all generations to come". Psalm 106 is a list of examples of grace. The grace of this was in that righteousness was counted to Phinehas. For none are righteous in their own strength; as Paul explains in Romans, it is credited to us by grace through faith. But how was it eternally credited to him? For descendants aren't counted righteous just because of their ancestors. The implication would therefore be that this imputed righteousness meant that he would therefore not die eternally; but be resurrected to life eternal. And this again is nothing but pure grace. This however opens the issue of whether God will save a person for just one act of righteousness. Indeed it seems there are several

examples of men who will be saved because of faithfulness in their youth or middle age, even if the last stretch of their race wasn't that great spiritually (Samson, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, David...).

Num 25:13 and it shall be to him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel'-
It was God's intention that all Israel should be His servants, a nation of priests. But He changed and ammended His approach, and chose just the Levites for this. And then out of them He chose just the descendants of Phinehas to be the priests. We see here how open God is to change and recalculation, so that by all means He may have relationship with His people. Under the new covenant, all believers are part of a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5) as He initially intended even under the old covenant. And yet there is always the tendency to leave the priestly work to specialists rather than perceiving our personal call to do it.

The Sabbath is described as a perpetual, eternal ordinance between God and His people (Ex. 31:16). Yet in the New Testament we read that the Old Covenant has been done away; and the Old Covenant clearly included the ten commandments (Dt. 4:13), one of which was concerning the Sabbath. For this reason the New Testament is at pains to explain that Sabbath keeping is not now required of God's people (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-3). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting covenant" evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase "everlasting covenant" is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David's throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word olahm, which is translated "eternal", "perpetual", "everlasting" in the Old Testament? James Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning "the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity". It was God's purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn't grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of "practically eternity". For all of us, the specter of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God's eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But

when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Phinehas already was a priest by reason of his family ancestry. So perhaps the idea is that despite of that, he is being given a personal ministry. Again we see personal relationship with God trumping the inheritance of any kind of mere religion. The eternal nature of the covenant was conditional. The covenant with Levi had likewise been eternal (Ex. 29:9), but Mal. 2:8 says that this eternal covenant was "corrupted": "You have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says Yahweh". From God's side it was eternal. But man can break the covenant.

Num 25:14 Now the name of the man of Israel that was slain, who was slain with the Midianite woman, was Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a father's house among the Simeonites-
These two are named, showing they were more than just random examples of the many who had sinned that day. Their intention was to perform a sex ritual to Peor in Yahweh's tabernacle; and they were both in leadership positions.

Phinehas was brave in killing the son of a senior leader, especially as he risked vengeance for blood from the family.

Num 25:15 The name of the Midianite woman who was slain was Cozbi, the daughter of Zur: he was head of the people of a fathers' house in Midian-
Cozbi means "liar", the daughter of "the rock" (Zur)- a fake god. For Yahweh alone is a rock to His people. Her message was indeed a huge lie: that Yahweh and Baal worship could be fused through her as a leader of Midian openly performing a sex act with a similarly ranking leader of Israel. In the tabernacle of Yahweh. Zur was one of the five leading princes of Midian who was later slain along with Balaam (Num. 31:8). Balaam and Zur were clearly associated. And so it seems that Balaam suggested that Zur's daughter Cozbi be used to lead Israel into sin, so that their God would curse them- and Balaam would get his coveted reward which he so obsessed about.

Num 25:16 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Initially, God didn't want Israel to interfere with Moab but rather to leave them in peace (Dt. 2:9). But Moab had become obsessed with cursing Israel and leading them away from Yahweh so that He would curse Israel; and so God's purpose and plans again

changed, and He now commands Israel to fight them; for Moab and Midian were united at this time, and the "wiles" of the Midianites in :18 are clearly those used by the Moabites in :1. Balak was a Midianite but king of Moab at the time. God's purpose is so deeply responsive to human behaviour, and takes it all into account.

Num 25:17 Harass the Midianites, and strike them-
LXX "Plague the Madianites as enemies, and smite them, for they are enemies to you". This clear definition of Midian as enemies was necessary; for Moses had been married to a Midianite and had lived there for 40 years. His Midianite father in law had once been well respected within Israel. This all would have been hard for Moses because he had lived for 40 years in Midian and the Midianites had accepted him as an asylum seekers from Egypt.

Num 25:18 for they harassed you with their wiles, with which they have deceived you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi the daughter of the prince of Midian their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague in the matter of Peor-
"Harassed" is "vexed". Israel bowed down to the gods of Moab (Num. 25:1). But Israel were potentially *above* the Midianites (24:7,18); the Midianites vexed *them* (Num. 25:18) when Israel had been prophesied as vexing *them* (hence they were told to now *vex* the Midianites in :17). "The matter of Cozbi the daughter of the prince of Midian" shows the particular significance of this woman; see on :14,15.

We now have to apparently wait until Num. 31 to read of Israel actually going to war with Midian. But the intervening chapters cover events which happened perhaps only within days after the point in Num. 25:18 where Yahweh tells Israel to attack Midian. In Num. 26 they are to take a military census in preparation for the battle. Then chapter 27 records the issue of Zelophehad's daughters, who present as faithful to Yahweh and unlike their unbeliving father who died in the desert for his sin of not believing he could enter the land. Remember Israel are now 40 years after leaving Egypt, and about to enter Canaan despite their last minute apostacy and lack of faith. Those daughters are presented as examples of the faithful remnant within Israel. Numbers 28 commands that various daily sacrifices be offered once Israel are in the land. Numbers 29 then calls for a day of atonement to be held, followed by the feast of booths five days after the atonement feast finished. This would be an apparently needless repetition of previously given legislation- unless we understand that it was a specific call to keep the feast of atonement at that time. This would have been in our September / October. A few months later, Israel entered the land around Passover time, with Moses dying about 30 days before that [seeing they mourned 30 days for him]. We note Num. 25:1 says that the people "abode" or settled for some time at this location, Shittim. This would also explain why Num. 29 doesn't describe the other feasts but only the day of Atonement

and the related feast of booths [tabernacles]. The language of "a" rather than "the" holy gathering could suggest that a specific event is being commanded rather than simply repeating the legislation about the intended annual day of atonement ["In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy gathering", Num. 29:1]. This would also make sense of the word "this" in Num. 29:7: "On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy gathering". That sounds as if the audience were at that point in the seventh month. Numbers 30 then speaks about "father's houses" and yet the context of Num. 25 is that both Zimri and Cozbi were from "father's houses" and it seems Zimri had made a vow of loyalty to Baal Peor which is father had given silent consent to. And Num. 25:4 has in fact commanded the execution or beheading of all the chiefs of father's households. See on Num. 30:1.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 26

Num 26:1 It happened after the plague, that Yahweh spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying-
Atonement money had to be paid whenever a census was taken (Ex. 30:12). Perhaps God wanted the people to appreciate more how they had been saved by His grace after the awful apostacy of Num. 25. He wanted them to reflect upon the atonement they had received, and that was one function of ordering a census.

Num 26:2 Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, by their fathers' families, all who are able to go forth to war in Israel-
This numbering of the people just before they entered the promised land perhaps looks forward to the way that God will be aware of the exact number of those who will enter His Kingdom at the day of judgment when Christ returns. Ps. 87:6 appears to speak of a 'writing up of the people' in the last day. Perhaps too there is the idea that Moses as a shepherd had been given the sheep of God's flock when they left Egypt, and now He is handing them back at the end of his life, and counting them.

Num 26:3 Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke with them in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho saying-
The purpose of the census may have been not so much to know numbers, but to define the Israelites into clear family units; for it was God's intention that each unit should have a specific inheritance in the land they were now going to enter. We likewise will each have a specific, unique nature of inheritance in the future Kingdom of God.

Num 26:4 Take a census, from twenty years old and upward; as Yahweh commanded

Moses and the children of Israel. These are those that came out of the land of Egypt-
"Came out" is s.w. "brought forth". Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

Num 26:5 Reuben, the firstborn of Israel; the sons of Reuben: of Hanoch, the family of the Hanochites; of Pallu, the family of the Palluites-
Hanoch [s.w. Enoch] was named after the son of Cain (Gen. 4:17) and means "initiated", rather hinting at unspirituality and paganism.

Num 26:6 of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Carmi, the family of the Carmites-
"Carmi" means "vinedresser", but there had been no viticulture possible during the wilderness wanderings. He may have been named in faith that this is what he would do once in the promised land. Or perhaps this is an example of where names are given to people in later life, in accordance with their secular work experience- and these stick with their descendants. Names like Smith, Tanner etc. would be examples in English. Hence people in the Bible often have various names.

Num 26:7 These are the families of the Reubenites; and those who were numbered of them were forty-three thousand seven hundred and thirty-
Here is a comparison of the numbers given in the first census of Num. 1, and those given at the end of the wilderness journeys in Num. 26:
1. Judah 74,600 rose to 76,500
2. Dan 62,700 rose to 64,400
3. Simeon 59,300 fell to 22,200
4. Zebulun 57,400 rose to 60,500
5. Issachar 54,400 rose to 64,300
6. Naphtali 53,400 fell to 45,400
7. Reuben 46,500 fell to 43,730
8. Gad 45,650 fell to 40,500
9. Asher 41,500 rose to 53,400
10. Ephraim 40,500 fell to 32,500

11. Benjamin 35,400 rose to 45,600
12. Manasseh 32,200 rose to 52,700
Total 603,550 in the first census, but 601,730 by the end of the 38 years wanderings in Num. 26.

Num 26:8 The sons of Pallu: Eliab-
"Pallu", meaning severed / differentiated, is the word used to describe how Israel were separated from amongst the Egyptians at the Exodus (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 11:7). Probably he picked up this name (see on :6) in reference to this; perhaps he had been severed from the Egyptians in some spectacular way.

Num 26:9 The sons of Eliab: Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. These are that Dathan and Abiram, who were renowned in the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against Yahweh-
Israel's rejection of Moses was a rejection of the God who was working through Moses to redeem them. Thus Korah and his followers "strove against Moses... when they strove against Yahweh" (Num. 26:9 cp. 16:11). Moses understood that when Israel murmured against him, they murmured against Yahweh (Ex. 16:2,7; Num. 17:5; 21:5). They *thrust* Moses *away* from them (Acts 7:27,39) - yet the same word is used in Rom. 11:2 concerning how God still has not *cast away* Israel; He has not treated them as they treated Him through their rejection of Moses and Jesus, who manifested Him. Moses manifested Yahweh and in this sense whatever was done to him was done to Yahweh. This doesn't mean that Moses was Yahweh Himself in person. Likewise Jesus carried the Name of God (Jn. 5:43) but wasn't God in person. We who are baptized into the Name are in the same situation- whatever is done to us is done to God, and our attitudes to those in His Name are our attitudes to Him (Mt. 25:40,43).

Num 26:10 and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died-
It seems likely that Korah was not present with his family when they were swallowed up into the earth. He and the 250 rebels were at the sanctuary offering their unacceptable incense, which is why other scriptures speak of Dathan and Abiram being swallowed up- but not Koran (Dt. 11:6; Ps. 106:16-18). Num. 26:10 RSV seems to make this clear: "The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men".

A case could be made that the whole record of Israel's rejection from entering the land of Canaan is framed to adduce a reason for this as the fact they chose to believe that the land was inhabited by an evil dragon who would consume them there. This was a slander of the good land, and the whole point was that if they had believed in the power of God, then *whatever* 'adversary' was in the land, in whatever form, was ultimately of

no real power (Num. 13:32; 14:36; Dt. 1:25). And yet it was not God's way to specifically tell the people that there was no such dragon lurking in the land of Canaan – instead He worked with them according to their fears, by making the earth literally open and swallow up the apostate amongst them (Num. 16:30) – emphasizing that by doing this, *He* was doing "a new thing", something that had never been done before – for there was no dragon lurking in any land able to swallow up people. And throughout the prophets it is emphasized that *God* and not any dragon swallowed up people – "The Lord [and not any dragon] was as an enemy; *He* has swallowed up Israel" (Lam. 2:5 and frequently in the prophets). The people of Israel who left Egypt actually failed to inherit Canaan because they believed that it was a land who swallowed up the inhabitants of the land (Num. 13:32), relating this to the presence of giants in the land (Num. 13:33). As Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them, they needed to believe that whatever myths there were going around, God was greater than whatever mythical beast was there. And because they would not believe that, they failed to enter the land, which in type symbolized those who fail to attain that great salvation which God has prepared.

At which time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men-
Destruction by fire was an appropriate judgment for those who had offered strange fire. Judgment is related to the crime because men are self condemned more than being condemned by God. For saving, rather than destroying, *is* God's passion. Ps. 106:18 says that God kindled a fire to destroy them, but in reality, they kindled that fire themselves (Is. 9:18; Hos 7:6). Lev. 10:2 uses the same term for fire from Yahweh devouring Nadab and Abihu as in Num. 16:35 about the destruction of Korah's rebels. They were clearly aware of what had happened to those rebels, and were daring God to repeat it. It was truly the sin of presumption.

And they became a sign-
In that their censers became plates on the altar as warning against apostacy and rebellion. The example of sinners from previous generations ought to be a warning to us. Asaph in Psalm 73 explains how he struggled with the fact that sinners appear to have a blessed life and the righteous suffer; but when he entered the sanctuary, "then understood I their end" (Ps. 73:17), probably a reference to him beholding the plates on the altar made from the censers of these sinners.

Num 26:11 Notwithstanding, the sons of Korah didn't die-
The inspired titles of the Psalms sometimes mention that the Psalm was written by the sons of Korah. They therefore dedicated themselves to God's service, not following the bad example of their father. We in Christ are a new creation, and not inevitable victims of our upbringing or bad parental example. There are times when our loyalty to the Lord will result in us having to experience some kind of separation from family members who

choose not to go the Lord's way; Jesus foretold this would happen frequently (Mt. 10:34-37).

Their names were Assir, Elkanah and Abiasaph (Ex. 6:24)- 'Prisoner', 'God will obtain for me' and 'father of gatherers'. We could possibly see reflected here Korah's sense that his family were imprisoned by their inferior [as he saw it] position, but would obtain and gather more for themselves. And yet these sons of Korah separated from their bad background, they rose above the 'chip on a shoulder' mentality, and became the authors of many Psalms. Throughout the psalms of the sons of Korah, we can detect allusion to the events of Num. 16: "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. 84:10); "Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed" (Ps. 46:2). Many of these Psalms were clearly rewritten under inspiration and applied to crises such as the Assyrian invasion of Judah and the Babylonian exile; because the "sons of Korah" become programmatic for us all. They all have a theme of telling the Gentiles of Yahweh's grace, and this was how the historical sons of Korah would've felt after their deliverance from death.

The Psalms of the sons of Korah have 'deliverance from sheol' as a major theme, especially Ps. 49. Not only does this reference resurrection, but is a reflection of their own deliverance from the 'sheol' where their relatives died. They glory that God saved them from this- even though it was their own decision, they are glorifying the way in which even our own decisions for salvation are of Him and He is to be praised for them. And yet they perceive that the death of their families was in fact the death of all men. For all have sinned: "Like sheep dragged to Sheol, death shall graze on them; the upright shall rule them in the morning". And yet the sons of Korah realized that they were in essence no better than their rebellious ancestors who went to sheol; for they too would go to sheol, but be saved from it by the grace of resurrection: "But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol". The Korah Psalms often reflect that human wealth and ambition ends in sheol, along with man's wealth; therefore we can conclude that the desire for power and leadership was motivated by material ambition.

Psalm 88 is another psalm of the sons of Korah, whose father and relatives perished in sheol. But they recognize that this was their rightful end to, and they can only be saved from it by grace: "'My soul has come to Sheol... I am reckoned with those [Korah and his rebellious family] that descend to the Pit...like the pierced-through [the rebels in the family of Korah] who lie in the grave... You have laid me in the Pit below, in darkness, in the depths... separated from my companions [family members]". They felt their death was in essence that of their rebellious relatives. They were no better, but saved by grace. We see here their humility in recognizing that as the Lord put it in Lk. 14, the dramatic death of some doesn't mean that we ourselves are not also sinners who shall also die. Only grace can save us, and they came to that conclusion.

Psalm 46 is a Korah Psalm, so we note the references to rebels falling alive into the depths with a roaring underworld beneath them (Ps. 46:2-7). The allusion is to what happened to the father, brothers, sisters and relatives of the "sons of Korah". But the Psalm goes on to talk of how "we" will not fear because ultimate salvation for "us" is certain. We have an insight into the mind of Korah's sons.

There is a notable stress in Num. 16:32 and :33 on their households, and all the men who appertained to Korah". This surely includes the sons of Korah. But Num. 26:11 is clear that the sons didn't "periosh". Perhaps this means the sons of Korah were swallowed into sheol but were redeemed from it immediately so they didn't perish. Redemption from sheol by grace is a big theme of the psalms written by the sons of Korah. This fits the theme developed in the preceding Num. 13-15- that condemned men can be saved. Israel were condemned to destruction and replacement by Moses, but were saved out of that. Then they were condemned to die without entering Canaan, as was Moses. But they were pardonned, and I have argued that this meant that although they died in the desert they could have the hope of resurrection to eternal inheritance of the land.

Num 26:12 The sons of Simeon after their families: of Nemuel, the family of the Nemuelites; of Jamin, the family of the Jaminites; of Jachin, the family of the Jachinites- But according to 1 Chron. 4:24,25, it was not through these sons but rather through the line of Shaul, born from Simeon's relationship with a Gentile woman, that the line of Simeon continued. Again we see God's style of working through human weakness, and the fact that Israel were not at all ethnically pure.

Num 26:13 of Zerah, the family of the Zerahites; of Shaul, the family of the Shaulites- Gen. 46:10 shows that Shaul was Simeon's son by a wrong, casual relationship with a Gentile. But ethnic purity was never made a condition of belonging to Israel. It was later Judaism which became obsessed with this. Rather God's people were to be open to the Gentiles. And so the family of Shaul are counted as members of Israel.

Num 26:14 These are the families of the Simeonites, twenty-two thousand two hundred- All these figures may seem irrelevant, but analyzing them provides confirmation that the Bible we read is indeed God’s inspired word, because there is so much incidental confirmation of the truth of the record provided. The sum total of Israel at the end of their wilderness wanderings was 1,820 less than it had been at the beginning, nearly 40 years previously. But the tribe of Simeon had decreased by 37,100 (cp. Num. 1:23). The plague of chapter 25 had killed 24,000 people for committing fornication with the Moabites (Num. 25:9); but the ringleader of that had been Zimri, a Simeonite prince

(Num. 25:14). It's likely therefore that he led his tribe into the orgy with the Moabites, which resulted in so many of them being killed.

Num 26:15 The sons of Gad after their families: of Zephon, the family of the Zephonites; of Haggi, the family of the Haggites; of Shuni, the family of the Shunites-
We notice the complete absence of any prefix or suffix referring to God in many of these names. Israel were not spiritually strong when entered the Kingdom. And perhaps we can take courage from that.

Num 26:16 of Ozni, the family of the Oznites; of Eri, the family of the Erites-
The seven sons of Gad differ in just one name from the list in Gen. 46:16: "The sons of Gad: Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli". Ezbon ['quick to understand'] has been replaced by Ozni ['quick ears']. The similar meanings of the names suggest these were just different forms of the same word.

Num 26:17 of Arod, the family of the Arodites; of Areli, the family of the Arelites-
"Arodi" is "wild ass man", a similar idea to the description of Ishmael in Gen. 16:12, who chose to go away from covenant relationship with God. We simply do not get a great impression of the family; and that is the point. Israel were not morally better than the surrounding nations, many of whom were descended from Abraham too. They were saved by grace.

Num 26:18 These are the families of the sons of Gad according to those who were numbered of them, forty thousand five hundred-
The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only

about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night. This would then make better sense of Ex. 23:30 GNB: "I will drive them out little by little, until there are enough of you to take possession of the land". This indeed sounds as if Israel were the smallest of the nations, and not a huge nation comprising several million people.

Num 26:19 The sons of Judah: Er and Onan; and Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan-

In the context of taking a census at this point in Israel's history, we enquire why the deaths of these men "in the land of Canaan" over 400 years ago is now mentioned. I suggest it was a warning- that even when they entered the land, they would still be subject to Divine law and would be judged for their sin. Presence in the land of Canaan was not to be seen as a kind of covering for their sin.

Num 26:20 The sons of Judah after their families were: of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites; of Perez, the family of the Perezites; of Zerah, the family of the Zerahites-

Gen. 38:29 gives the background: "It happened, as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out, and she said, Why have you made a breach for yourself? Therefore his name was called Perez". The theme of the second born being the chosen one continues. It was accepted that Perez was the one in the line of the Messianic seed and that this pregnancy was of God (Ruth 4:12), even though he was not technically the firstborn. "Made a breach" is literally 'to spread abroad', and is the word used in the promises of how the Messianic seed was to break forth or spread abroad (Gen. 28:14).

Num 26:21 The sons of Perez were: of Hezron, the family of the Hezronites; of Hamul, the family of the Hamulites-

"Hamul" means 'The one who was spared', which rather suggests he too had sinned like Er and Onan (:19), but was spared by grace. Again, we hardly get a very positive spiritual impression of Jacob's family. They were saved by grace.

Num 26:22 These are the families of Judah according to those who were numbered of them, seventy-six thousand five hundred-
If we are to understand blessing under the old covenant as related to numbers of children, then there may be the hint that Judah were the most faithful. We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 26:23 The sons of Issachar after their families: of Tola, the family of the Tolaites; of Puvah, the family of the Punites-
What mother would call her child 'worm' ["Tola"]? Clearly people were given names, or became known by names, other than their birth names- and these names stuck with them. There are many other examples of this, like Mahlon and Chilion. This explains why people could have far more than one name, and that must be remembered when comparing the genealogies.

Num 26:24 of Jashub, the family of the Jashubites; of Shimron, the family of the Shimronites-
"Jashub" means 'he will return'. A faithful parent may have named him this in faith that Israel would one day return from Egypt to Canaan. Even when any ultimate change of circumstances may seem unlikely for us, we are to remember the final perspective- the fulfilment of the promises of the Kingdom in our lives.

Num 26:25 These are the families of Issachar according to those who were numbered of them, sixty-four thousand three hundred-
This tribe increased by about ten thousand during the wilderness journeys. Other tribes decreased. It was God's intention that the seed of Abraham should multiply. And yet some tribes multiplied by different amounts, and others decreased. We see that the promises to Abraham will have different levels of fulfillment for those who are faithful;

and no fulfillment for some who are technically the seed, but don't walk in the steps of faith of Abraham. And so it is today. Some will make more of God's truth than others; some multiply their talents more than others, in terms of the Lord's parable. And so some stars will shine brighter than others in God's Kingdom.

Num 26:26 The sons of Zebulun after their families: of Sered, the family of the Seredites; of Elon, the family of the Elonites; of Jahleel, the family of the Jahleelites-
Elon's name means 'grove of oaks', clearly with reference to pagan practices. The reference is maybe to the judge of this name (Jud. 12:12). The fact he is not recorded as having renamed himself could suggest that he remained an idolater, although was used by God to deliver Israel. Being used by God doesn't mean we are therefore faithful to Him and assured of His acceptance.

Num 26:27 These are the families of the Zebulunites according to those who were numbered of them, sixty thousand five hundred-
Zebulun increased by a minimal amount over the course of the wilderness journey (see on :22). As discussed on :25, this is rather like the person who receives the talent of God's truth and keeps it but doesn't develop it much. We get this same impression of Zebulun in 2 Chron. 30:18.

Num 26:28 The sons of Joseph after their families: Manasseh and Ephraim-
Ephraim was the younger son, whom Jacob had made the firstborn, much to Joseph's disagreement. But here the two sons are listed according to their birth order. For all angst endured by the patriarchs about the question of who was the firstborn, the subsequent Biblical records make clear that this was of no real meaning.

Num 26:29 The sons of Manasseh: of Machir, the family of the Machirites; and Machir became the father of Gilead; of Gilead, the family of the Gileadites-
Machir was Manasseh's son by a Gentile woman (1 Chron. 7:14). 1 Chron. 2:21 adds: "Afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, whom he took as wife when he was sixty years old; and she bore him Segub". We again have the theme of marital and sexual weakness in the family of Israel. Machir was Manasseh's oldest son by a Syrian, Gentile woman. It was the Divine intention that marriage should be within the tribes of Israel so as to keep the inheritance which God intended. But here we have Manasseh and Judah intermarrying.

Num 26:30 These are the sons of Gilead: of Iezer, the family of the Iezerites; of Helek, the family of the Helekites-
"Iezer" is the Abiezer of Josh. 17:2 and the Gideon story.

Num 26:31 and Asriel, the family of the Asrielites; and Shechem, the family of the Shechemites-
There are quite different numbers of families recorded within each tribe, and the genealogies in Chronicles are in places more detailed, mentioning other children and families. This may be because at this point not all chose to pay the atonement money required for the census (:1) and so were not numbered amongst Israel.

Num 26:32 and Shemida, the family of the Shemidaites; and Hepher, the family of the Hepherites-
"Hepher" means 'shame', and was surely not his birth name; see on :23.

Num 26:33 Zelophehad the son of Hepher had no sons, but daughters; and the names of the daughters of Zelophehad were Mahlah, and Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah-
The fact God allows His children to live His truth on different levels needs to be grasped firmly by us, lest we become discouraged that others live on an apparently lower level than we do in some aspects of life. Being surrounded by 'lower levels' ought to inspire us to the higher levels. Zelophehad had only daughters; usually, in his context, a man would have taken concubines in order to produce sons. The record of his only having daughters is presented in the context of genealogies which show that many Israelite men had more than one wife (1 Chron. 7:15). But Zelophehad wasn't dragged down by this; God inspired him to maintain the higher level which he had chosen to live by. He didn't use the principle of Jephthah's vow. And his daughters likewise refused to be limited by their status as females, but obtained an inheritance amongst their brethren (Num. 27:1-7)

Num 26:34 These are the families of Manasseh; and those who were numbered of them were fifty-two thousand seven hundred-
We note the huge growth of Manasseh during the wilderness journeys, 32,200 rose to 52,700; whilst Ephraim's 40,500 fell to 32,500. This would appear to contradict Joseph's desire to bless Ephraim more than Manasseh (Gen. 48:14). It shows that the utterances of a patriarch were not determinate. For under the old covenant, numbers of children were related to obedience to the covenant. Prophecy was and is not determinate, but always conditional upon human response. Hence not all the blessings of the tribes uttered by Jacob came true; because the potential wasn't realized by the descendants. And so it is sadly true of so many people who turn away from the Kingdom promises.

Num 26:35 These are the sons of Ephraim after their families: of Shuthelah, the family of the Shuthelahites; of Becher, the family of the Becherites; of Tahan, the family of the

Tahanites-
We notice the lack of any spiritual reference in the meaning of these names. "Becher", 'camel man', would be a strange name for someone who respected the law's pronouncement of the camel as an unclean animal.

Num 26:36 These are the sons of Shuthelah: of Eran, the family of the Eranites-
A total of 57 families are mentioned in this list, excluding Levi. But only three families of Ephraim, and then one family from a grandson. It would seem they had chosen not to pay the atonement money required at the census (see on :1), and those who didn't want to make this acceptance of atonement were not numbered amongst Israel.

Num 26:37 These are the families of the sons of Ephraim according to those who were numbered of them, thirty-two thousand five hundred. These are the sons of Joseph after their families-
We note the huge growth of Manasseh during the wilderness journeys, 32,200 rose to 52,700; whilst Ephraim's 40,500 fell to 32,500. This would appear to contradict Joseph's desire to bless Ephraim more than Manasseh (Gen. 48:14). It shows that the utterances of a patriarch were not determinate. For under the old covenant, numbers of children were related to obedience to the covenant. Prophecy was and is not determinate, but always conditional upon human response. Hence not all the blessings of the tribes uttered by Jacob came true; because the potential wasn't realized by the descendants. And so it is sadly true of so many people who turn away from the Kingdom promises.

Num 26:38 The sons of Benjamin after their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites; of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites; of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites-
The simple truth is that Benjamin, the "little one" (Gen. 44:20), has more descendants listed to his name in the Chronicles genealogies than any of the brothers. Is. 60:22 clearly alludes to this- "a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation". It is the theme of the patriarchal family; the firstborns are deposed, the elder serves the younger, the weak become strong, the little one becomes mighty.

Num 26:39 of Shephupham, the family of the Shuphamites; of Hupham, the family of the Huphamites-
"Shephupham" means 'serpent like' and was surely not his birth name; see on :23. This family got this name from a corrupt ancestor. But they paid their atonement money (see on :1) and were numbered amongst Israel. Bad background is no reason a person cannot be numbered amongst God's people.

Num 26:40 The sons of Bela were Ard and Naaman: the family of the Ardites; of

Naaman, the family of the Naamites-

Gen. 46:21 says that Benjamin had ten sons when the Jacob family moved into Egypt, but here seven of them are in fact his grandsons. Benjamin was hardly a child when the brothers came to buy corn. He was in his 20s, and according to the Hebrew text he had ten sons already, and presumably some daughters; perhaps suggesting that his father's favouritism and obsession with him had not been helpful morally, and had resulted in him having multiple relationships from a young age. However, the LXX lists only three sons, and makes the rest of the list the sons of Bela. And yet Benjamin would not have been old enough to have been a grandfather. So it could be that he had married a woman who had children of her own who became Benjamin's, or that he somehow adopted these children. There would have been a very large extended family around Jacob, and maybe these children were simply under the care of Benjamin. However, the genealogy in Num. 26:40 appears to support the LXX text here, with Ard and Naaman given as grandsons of Benjamin and not sons. We must remember that genealogies, numbers and dates are not used in Semitic languages in the strictly literalistic way in which they are in European languages. Heb. 7:10 can therefore argue that Melchizedek blessed Levi because he blessed Abraham, and Levi was a descendant of Abraham, "yet in the loins of his father". And this establishes Melchizedek as greater than Levi, and in turn, the priests descended from him. That argument may appear very stretched and even technically inaccurate to European ears. But it had absolute validity in Hebrew thought. And so the grandchildren of Benjamin, yet unborn, could be listed as being in existence when Benjamin went into Egypt, and even be numbered amongst the group at that time. This is why the grandchildren of the maids are counted as if they are the direct children of the maids; see on Gen. 46:9,18. We likewise read that Jacob brought his twelve sons out of Mesopotamia, including Benjamin (Gen. 35:24,26). But Benjamin was born later, in Canaan. But on this basis of being counted as "in the loins of" an ancestor, Benjamin could also be presented as having come out of Mesopotamia. If this kind of thing were better appreciated by Bible readers, it would be better understood that there was no personal pre-existence of the Lord Jesus in actuality, although He is spoken of as existing prior to His birth.

Num 26:41 These are the sons of Benjamin after their families; and those who were numbered of them were forty-five thousand six hundred-

Benjamin's 35,400 rose to 45,600 by the end of the wilderness journeyings. We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God,

some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 26:42 These are the sons of Dan after their families: of Shuham, the family of the Shuhamites. These are the families of Dan after their families-
Shuham is called "Hushim" in Gen. 46:23, which means "hasty", not a particularly spiritual characteristic. As noted earlier, Hebrew names are not necessarily birth names, but the names by which people came to be known, reflective of their personalities or experiences. However he is here called "Shusham", "humble". So maybe his over hasty actions humbled his descendants in due course.

Num 26:43 All the families of the Shuhamites, according to those who were numbered of them, were sixty-four thousand four hundred-
Dan had only one son and yet by this time had become the second largest tribe in Israel. Benjamin had ten sons (Gen. 46:21) but was one of the smallest tribes. Again we see how God doesn't work through human strength or advantage; the passage of time reveals over the generations that human blessing soon fades away.

We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 26:44 The sons of Asher after their families: of Imnah, the family of the Imnites; of Ishvi, the family of the Ishvites; of Beriah, the family of the Berites-
All the names here are absolutely secular in their meaning and have no hint of spirituality. The consistent impression is that Israel were a secular, unspiritual people who were saved by grace. Even other nations tended to have the names of their gods mixed in with their personal names; but the list we have here has very little of that.

Num 26:45 Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites; of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites-
We note how most of the names which reference God feature the 'El' suffix or prefix and

not 'Yah' or 'Iah'. This is understandable, for Moses declared the Name of Yahweh to the people after most of these men had been born. This kind of artless internal corroboration is to me one of the strongest arguments for the Divine inspiration of the Bible.

Num 26:46 The name of the daughter of Asher was Serah-
The mention of women in such lists is unusual, and I suggest that the names are of those who became heads of family clans within the tribes. So the mention of Serah would mean that she became a head of family; although rare or unknown in the world around them, this was not totally unheard of in the Jacob family and we see in this the respect of women amongst the people of God.

Num 26:47 These are the families of the sons of Asher according to those who were numbered of them, fifty-three thousand and four hundred-
We note that Judah increased by a ratio of 1.02, 74,600 rose to 76,500. Dan also increased by exactly the same ratio of 1.02, 62,700 rose to 64,400. Likewise Benjamin increased by a ratio of 1.28, 35,400 rose to 45,600; and Asher also increased by the same ratio of 1.28, 41,500 rose to 53,400. Quite what we are to make of that isn't clear, although the figures are so exact that clearly God was in it. If the idea is that number of children is associated with blessing under the old covenant, perhaps the point is that amongst the children of God, some will respond to exactly the same extent as others. Others just marginally more than others- thus Zebulun increased by a ration of 1.05, 57,400 rose to 60,500. Whereas others respond markedly more, or less.

Num 26:48 The sons of Naphtali after their families: of Jahzeel, the family of the Jahzeelites; of Guni, the family of the Gunites-
"Jezer" (:49) means "image", "Guni" means "painted with colours", both suggestive of idolatry. If the people were fully committed to Yahweh, we would expect them to have removed all associations with idolatry from their names. For I have noted repeatedly that people often changed their names or became known by other names.

Num 26:49 of Jezer, the family of the Jezerites; of Shillem, the family of the Shillemites-
Gen. 46:24 lists Jezer (see on :48) and Shillem as also sons of Naphtali.

Num 26:50 These are the families of Naphtali according to their families; and those who were numbered of them were forty-five thousand four hundred-
Naphtali's 53,400 fell to 45,400 by the end of the wilderness journeys, a decrease by a

ratio of 0.85; very similar to how Gad's 45,650 fell to 40,500, a decrease by a ratio of 0.88. See on :47.

Num 26:51 These are those who were numbered of the children of Israel, six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty-
We must remember that "thousand" can refer to a group rather than a literal number. Perhaps in commentary upon the temptation to trust in numbers now that the number had been taken, Moses says that the number of Israel was "as numerous as the stars in heaven" (Dt. 1:10). And yet they went into Canaan knowing they were not the most numerous of the tribes there (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). So Moses may have in view Angels as stars, the idea being that whatever number Israel were on earth, they had the hosts of Angels in Heaven fighting on their side, an Angel for each of them. For all trust in numbers is not the approach of faith.

Num 26:52 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The purpose of the census may have been not so much to know numbers, but to define the Israelites into clear family units; for it was God's intention that each unit should have a specific inheritance in the land they were now going to enter. We likewise will each have a specific, unique nature of inheritance in the future Kingdom of God. But those who refused to pay the atonement money were not numbered (see on :1). The inheritance of the Kingdom requires our acceptance of the atonement and response to it.

Num 26:53 To these the land shall be divided for an inheritance according to the number of names-
"The number of the names" is the phrase used in Acts 1:15 of the very early church. The idea was that the fledgling Christian church was now the new Israel of God, who were to go out and do spiritual warfare in conquering the world for Christ. The idea of inheriting our "lot" is often applied to our inheritance in the Kingdom (Eph. 1:14,18; Col. 1:12; Dan. 12:13).

Num 26:54 To the more you shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the less inheritance: to everyone according to those who were numbered of his family shall his inheritance be given-
We would expect the quality of the land to be factored in. But instead, land area was to be simply proportionate to the size of the family. God's ideal intention was that Israel would be obedient and experience the blessings of the covenant outlined in Lev. 26, which would include huge fecundity of the land- even on the top of the mountains there was to be corn. But they failed, and so these blessings didn't come about; and perhaps

the actual division of the land was therefore based on more secular and spiritually realistic assumptions.

Num 26:55 Notwithstanding, the land shall be divided by lot: according to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit it-
The living inherit from the dead, but this is phrased in the Hebrew to imply that the dead "fathers" were being given an inheritance by the living. This is flagging attention to something. The idea was perhaps that the promised inheritances were going to be eternally experienced by those dead "fathers", as they along with the patriarchs were to be resurrected to inherit the land.

Num 26:56 According to the lot shall their inheritance be divided between the more and the fewer-
As discussed on :54, there was initially the ideal assumption that Israel's obedience would lead to huge agricultural blessing in the land, of a supernatural degree. Therefore the quality of the land, in a secular, agricultural sense, was not taken into account.

Num 26:57 These are those who were numbered of the Levites after their families: of Gershon, the family of the Gershonites; of Kohath, the family of the Kohathites; of Merari, the family of the Merarites-
"Gershon" means 'expelled', maybe meaning that like Reuben he was expelled from the role of firstborn [he is mentioned first as if he was the firstborn]. This is a theme of the Genesis record. But perhaps because of these weaknesses, the line to the high priest ran through Kohath.

Num 26:58 These are the families of Levi: the family of the Libnites, the family of the Hebronites, the family of the Mahlites, the family of the Mushites, the family of the Korahites. Kohath became the father of Amram-
The Levites were not numbered in the first census, but they were at the end of the wilderness journey. The number of 23,000 given in :62 makes them one of the smallest tribes. If we are to understand blessing under the old covenant as related to numbers of children, then there may be the hint that Judah were the most faithful and Levi and Simeon the least, in line with Jacob's curse of those two sons for what they did at Shechem. But it was from this spiritually weak group of Levites that God wished to raise up a priesthood to spiritually guide His people. This is typical of His counter instinctive way of working with people.

Num 26:59 The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, who was

born to Levi in Egypt: and she bore to Amram Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister-
Amram lived to the same age as Levi (Ex. 6:16,20). Numbers and ages are used in Semitic literature often in a non literal sense, in order to make some point. Perhaps the idea here is that Amram was indeed a true son of Levi; despite Israel's general apostacy in Egypt, he married within his own tribe, as if seeking to keep the spirit of the later legislation to this effect. Moses' father Amram had married his father's sister (Ex. 6:20), thus disobeying the principle of Lev. 18:20. The founding fathers of Israel broke these very principles, showing how the whole nation was built upon Divine grace rather than obedience.

Num 26:60 To Aaron were born Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar-
We note the lack of emphasis upon the children of Moses and Miriam, the great wilderness leaders of Israel. There was to be no cult of personality nor nepotism, no riding on the name of a forefather in order to be a leader of God's people. Spiritual leadership in the Bible was intended to be based upon spiritual qualification. This also continues the major Biblical theme, that the firstborn is often not used by God and is replaced. This is His style, to exalt the underdogs.

Num 26:61 Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before Yahweh-
"*The* fire" refers to the fire of the altar which was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening. But they offered strange or Gentile fire, other than from that fire. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day.

Num 26:62 Those who were numbered of them were twenty-three thousand, every male from a month old and upward; for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel-
38,000 Levites were numbered by David in 1 Chron. 23:3, although "thousand" may mean a division rather than a literal 1000. At the time of Num. 4:47,48 there were only 8,580. And Levite males from a month old were 22,000 in Num. 3:39 and 23,000 at the time of Num. 26:62. This suggests a great increase in the number of Levites by David's time; or perhaps he more generously counted who was a Levite, because he wanted to have as many as possible involved in his grandiose plans for the temple services. There

was no need for such large numbers of Levites in order to serve God effectively, for there were far fewer Levites at the time of the figures given in the book of Numbers, and the sanctuary and Divine service still continued. See on :58.

Num 26:63 These are those who were numbered by Moses and Eleazar the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho-
Aaron was now dead, so the record is careful to say that Moses and Eleazar numbered the people at the end of their wanderings, whilst Moses and Aaron numbered them at the start of their wanderings. Having studied every verse of the Bible over the course of many years, the lack of contradiction in the text is such an impressive sign of Divine inspiration.

Num 26:64 But among these there was not a man of them who were numbered by Moses and Aaron the priest, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai-
The point may be that the Levites were not numbered then, and we have just read that they *were* numbered at the *end* of the wilderness journey. This would explain why Eleazar and Phinehas were not slain. The Rabbis like to suggest that "a man" refers to males and females were not included in the condemnation, but I cannot find reason to be certain about that.

Num 26:65 For Yahweh had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. There was not left a man of them, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun-
Num. 14:30 adds: "Surely you shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore that I would make you dwell therein, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun". This promise was solemnly made, with uplifted hand as it were, to that generation who left Egypt (Ex. 6:8). But they did not enter the land, as Num. 14:30 makes clear. This was because Israel broke their side of the covenant, and did not in fact want to enter the land; and continued serving the idols of Egypt, which they took with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:8; Acts 7:43). But that promise was guaranteed by the fact that "I will bring you into the land... I am Yahweh" (Ex. 6:8). The very essence of Yahweh, that 'I will' save, as surely as 'I will be who I will be', a saviour God, was fought against by Israel's idolatry and unfaithfulness to the covenant. And because 'Yahweh' involves His character, which includes His judgment of sin and not turning a blind eye to it (Ex. 34:4-6), human intransigence and faithlessness was allowed to as it were even counteract His most essential 'being' a saviour God for His beloved people.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 27

Num 27:1 Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hepher the son of Gilead the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and these are the names of his daughters: Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah-

The names of these women all feature the 'Yah' suffix. This is unusual as most of the names we read at this time at best have 'el' for God, or are just of secular meaning. All these women had accepted the revelation of the Name of Yahweh given by Moses. I say they accepted it because it is clear that many people didn't keep their birth names but acquired other names later in their lives, reflective of their life experience and developed beliefs.

Num 27:2 They stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation at the door of the Tent of Meeting, saying-

Examples of spiritual ambition are inspirational; just as soldiers inspire each other by their acts of bravery. Achsah followed her father Caleb's spiritual ambition in specifically asking for an inheritance in the Kingdom (Josh. 14:12; 15:18); and this in turn inspired the daughters of Zelophehad to ask for an inheritance soon afterwards (Josh. 17:4). And so it ought to be in any healthy congregation of believers. Ponder the parallel between Is. 51:1 and 7: "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord... hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness". To know God's righteousness is to seek / follow it; of itself, it inspires us to ambitiously seeking to attain it.

Num 27:3 Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not among the company of those who gathered themselves together against Yahweh in the company of Korah; but he died in his own sin, and he had no sons-

The repeated occurrence of the phrase "in the wilderness" in Num. 15:32; 27:3 leads the Rabbis to identify the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath as Zelophehad, who therefore "died in his own sin", an allusion to Num. 15:31 which uses this term in prefacing the incident of gathering sticks. Although it is then noteworthy that he had apparently faithful daughters.

Num 27:4 Why should the name of our father be taken away from among his family, because he had no son? Give to us a possession among the brothers of our father-

Considering the low status of women at that time, we see here a commendable spirit of initiative and spiritual ambition for these women to dare ask a male dominated society to change their rules to allow them to have an inheritance. We see too how God and Moses weren't at all anti-women, and responded positively. Note how the women were allowed to come directly to the decision makers, without needing to appoint a male

representative for their case, as was common in surrounding cultures. The value of the human person is consistently seen throughout the Pentateuch. They asked about this matter *before* the land had been possessed, reflecting their strength of faith that God would fulfil His promise of giving His people the Kingdom; they imagined what it would be like there, and acted accordingly even before they got there, as if the land was already theirs in possession- just as we should.

Num 27:5 Moses brought their cause before Yahweh-
This is not the only example of where the Mosaic law was structured so as to intentionally need further interpretation and clarification. It was designed to provoke relationship with God, rather than as a legalistic total statement of how to live in every part of life. See on :11.

Num 27:6 Yahweh spoke to Moses saying-
In most societies of the time, a woman didn't get her father's inheritance, but instead was intended to marry into another family. The inheritance of land passed through the male line. But these women were perceptive, and realize that the inheritance was going to be eternal, and so they wanted their father to have his name preserved in association with his inheritance- otherwise he would as it were lose his inheritance because he had no sons. And so they were granted their request. We see from Ezra 2:61 another case of how this worked out in practice. God cannot be accused of being against women; His legislation valued every human person to a degree unseen in any contemporary legislation.

Num 27:7 The daughters of Zelophehad speak right. You shall surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brothers; and you shall cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them-
The fact God allows His children to live His truth on different levels needs to be grasped firmly by us, lest we become discouraged that others live on an apparently lower level than we do in some aspects of life. Being surrounded by 'lower levels' ought to inspire us to the higher levels. Zelophehad had only daughters; usually, in his context, a man would have taken concubines in order to produce sons. The record of his only having daughters is presented in the context of genealogies which show that many Israelite men had more than one wife (1 Chron. 7:15). But Zelophehad wasn't dragged down by this; God inspired him to maintain the higher level which he had chosen to live by. He didn't use the principle of Jephthah's vow. And his daughters likewise refused to be limited by their status as females, but obtained an inheritance amongst their brethren (Num. 27:1-7).

Num 27:8 You shall speak to the children of Israel saying, 'If a man dies, and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter-
See on :6. For land inheritance to pass on through the female was unheard of in contemporary legal codes. We are all somewhat in Zelophehad's position. He sinned and died for it, but he has the hope still of eternal inheritance in the Kingdom at the resurrection- in his own name.

Num 27:9 If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers-
What was important was that the man's inheritance should pass on in his own name, or that of his family. As discussed on :6, the reasoning behind this was because it was God's intention that Israel should eternally inherit their allotments in the land, at the time of resurrection.

Num 27:10 If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers-
As discussed on :6,8,9, this was not a case of male preference. It was so that the land allotment which God had given to each family remained in the name of that family.

Num 27:11 If his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his kinsman who is next to him of his family, and he shall possess it; and it shall be to the children of Israel a statute and ordinance, as Yahweh commanded Moses'-
One wonders why this statute had not been included within the Law of Moses. Perhaps God had reserved it in potential, waiting the initiative of these women? See on :5.

Num 27:12 Yahweh said to Moses, Go up into this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel-
In Jn. 3:3,5, the Lord speaks of how a man must be born again in order to see and enter the Kingdom. He parallels seeing the Kingdom with entering it. Moses saw the land of the Kingdom of God, but couldn't enter it. This is surely behind the Lord's words here. Given the many allusions to Moses in John's Gospel, I submit that the Lord was surely saying something about Moses' seeing of the land before he died (Num. 27:12). It's as if He felt that Moses' seeing the land meant that he would ultimately enter it. To be enabled to see the land, with 'born again' special eyesight, was therefore a guarantee that Moses would enter the Kingdom. And Is. 33:17 speaks of beholding the King in his beauty and seeing "the land that is very far off" [an obvious allusion to Moses seeing the land] as a picture of ultimate salvation.

Moses seeing the Kingdom but being unable to enter it, nor himself lead God's people into it, points forward to how the law of Moses gave a vision of the Kingdom, but was

unable to bring us into it. That required the work of Joshua / Jesus. "Abarim" means 'the regions beyond'. Moses and his law gave an insight into the Kingdom, the region beyond him. For the culture of grace and kindness, centered around the sacrificed future Messiah, the Lord Jesus, was the outcome of the law. But it was unattainable by weak men.

Num 27:13 When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered-
Moses seeing the promised land but being unable to enter it himself points to how the Law of Moses gave a view of salvation, but couldn't bring people into it. He had specifically asked to be able to "see" and enter the land (Dt. 3:25-27), and God's response was to agree to let him "see" it, but He did not agree that Moses could enter it. So we have highlighted the difference between seeing and entering the Kingdom.

Num 27:14 because you rebelled against My word in the wilderness of Zin, in the strife of the congregation, to sanctify Me at the waters before their eyes. (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin)-
Israel had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh through disbelief, and therefore couldn't enter Canaan (Dt. 1:26; 9:7,23,24; 31:27; Num. 27:4); they were as the rebellious son who rebelled against his father's commandment (s.w. Dt. 21:18,20). For he himself had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and because of this was also barred from entering Canaan (Num. 20:24; 27:14). One reason for this was that he had called the Israelites "rebels" (Num. 20:10), and no sooner had he done so, than he himself rebelled against Yahweh's commandment just like them, but in a different way.

Num 27:15 Moses spoke to Yahweh, saying-
Moses did not get bitter at his rejection, nor disinterested in Israel's future because he would not be with them in the land. He asked God to provide a replacement for him. We see here Moses' selflessness, his concern was always for the wellbeing of God's people rather than his own status. He didn't ask for one of his own family members to take over the leadership; for he realized that spiritual leadership must be based upon spiritual qualification, not family connection.

Num 27:16 Let Yahweh, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation-
Biblically, a man or woman is identified with their spirit in the sense of their mind or way of life. Heb. 12:23 speaks of the spirits of just men, with whom the believer ought to associate. This means that we ought to identify ourselves with the way of life, the spirit of life, of "just men" of the past. God is "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Num. 16:22;

27:16) in the sense that He is the God of all humanity. So “spirits in prison” can refer to people who, in their spiritual lives, are imprisoned.

Num 27:17 who may go out before them, and who may come in before them, and who may lead them out, and who may bring them in-
This effectively meant 'to lead them in battle' (Josh. 14:11).

That the congregation of Yahweh be not as sheep which have no shepherd-
Quoted by Jesus about the crowds of Israelites in the first century (Mt. 9:36). He clearly saw those confused and misguided people, with all their wrong beliefs and attitudes, as still the congregation of God. We also learn from what Moses says and the Lord’s approval of it that God’s people need shepherds. There is an undoubted teaching regarding the need for leadership / shepherding throughout the Bible. When God’s people are leaderless, they go astray.

Moses sought for a prophet / successor like unto him, who would lead out and bring in the sheep of Israel (Num. 27:17,21). The descriptions of the good shepherd not losing any sheep (Jn. 10:28; 17:12) perhaps allude to the well known Jewish stories about Moses being such a good shepherd that he never lost a sheep. L. Ginzberg, *Legends Of The Jews* has a section on ‘Moses as faithful shepherd’ (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1910) Vol. 2 pp. 300-316).

Moses was a shepherd for 40 years, and then for 40 years he put this into practice by leading Israel as God's shepherd for 40 years in the same wilderness (Num. 27:17; Ps. 80:1; Is. 63:11). As Moses was willing to sacrifice his eternal life for the salvation of the sheep of Israel (Ex. 32:30-32), so Christ gave his life for us. John's Gospel normally shows the supremacy of Christ over Moses. In this connection of them both being shepherds willing to die for the flock, Moses is not framed as being inferior to Christ- in that in his desire to die for Israel, he truly reached the fullness of the spirit of Christ. "The good shepherd" was a Rabbinical title for Moses; Christ was saying "I am Moses, in his love for your salvation; not better than him, but exactly like him in this". In a sense, Moses' prayer was heard, in that he was excluded from the land for their sakes (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21; Ps. 106:33); they entered after his death. This was to symbolize how the spirit of his love for Israel was typical of Christ's for us.

Num 27:18 Yahweh said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him-
Because Joshua had the Spirit, Moses was told to lay his hand on him. Yet Dt. 34:9 says that Moses laid his hand on him so that Joshua might receive the Spirit. Here we see the upward spiral of spirituality at work- those who are of the Spirit are made more spiritual and confirmed in their spirituality.

Num 27:19 and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and commission him in their sight-
"Commission" carries the idea of practically commanding him. A similar public transference of authority from Moses had happened in Num. 11:17.

Num 27:20 You shall put of your honour on him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may obey-
Num. 27:20 LXX says that Moses put or gave of his glory upon Joshua- and this passage is alluded to by the Lord in Jn. 17:22: “The glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them”. Note that the Lord’s prayer of John 17 is full of allusion to Moses. So the disciples, indeed all those for whom the Lord prayed in His prayer, are to see themselves as Joshua. Further, in the same context, the Lord washed the disciples’ feet. This would’ve been understood by the disciples as an allusion to a well known Jewish legend that in Num. 27:15-23, Moses acted as a servant to Joshua by preparing a basin of water and washing Joshua’s feet. And the LXX of Moses’ final charge to Joshua in Dt. 31:7,8 [“fear not, neither be dismayed”] is quoted by the Lord to His disciples in Jn. 14:1,27.

Num 27:21 He shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before Yahweh. At his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation-
The contrast with Moses was that God communicated directly with him face to face with the Angel, whereas He would communicate with Joshua through the High Priest. The Urim and Thummim were apparently stones in the breastplate which flashed out binary yes / no responses to questions. "Breastplate" is LXX "oracle", as if the judgment flashed out from the Urim and Thummim associated with the breastplate was God's word or oracle to His people. After the time of David, we don't hear of them being used- perhaps because the ministry of the prophets became God's chosen way of communicating His word to His people.

Num 27:22 Moses did as Yahweh commanded him; and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation-
Perhaps the obedience of Moses is stressed because it would have been absolutely normal for a leader of his magnitude to assume that his sons, or at least the sons of his brother Aaron, should take over from him. But instead a man from another tribe is chosen. And Moses in characteristic humility and desire to see God's work done and His glory achieved... has therefore no objection to this and submits to it.

Num 27:23 and he laid his hands on him, and commissioned him, as Yahweh spoke by Moses-
The obedience of Moses to God is continually emphasized, and he thereby became a type of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 3:2-5).

NUMBERS CHAPTER 28

Num 28:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The commands about the continual burnt offering are repeated more frequently and in more detail in the Law of Moses than those about anything else or any other offering. It's as if God perceived the likely tendency of His people to forget the regular sacrifices and focus instead on the occasional ones; and to disregard the commands about the grain offering, which was so small and yet so valuable to God. It is likewise continually stressed in the legislation that these continual sacrifices were "a pleasant aroma to Me" (:2). Spirituality is about daily discipline, not occasional acts of devotion; hourly prayer, daily Bible reading, constant spiritual mindedness, rather than occasional attendance at a church meeting. When God later asked Israel "Did you offer unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" (Am. 5:25; Acts 7:42), the answer implied is that no, they did not. Hence this repetition here at the end of the wilderness journey. The whole purpose of their being given Canaan was so that they would have an environment in which to keep God's laws (Ps. 105:45). Likewise with us- if we're not interested in keeping God's principles in this life, there will be little point in our being given the Kingdom, which is likewise an arena in which we can live perfectly according to His principles.

Num 28:2 Command the children of Israel, and tell them, 'My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire of a pleasant aroma to Me, you shall observe to offer to Me in their due season'-
Paul saw the sacrifices of Israel as having some relevance to the Christian communion meal. He comments: "Are those who eat the victims not in communion with the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18); and the altar is clearly the Lord Jesus (Heb. 13:10). Eating of the communion meal was and is, therefore, fundamentally a statement of our fellowship with the altar, the Lord Jesus, rather than with others who are eating of Him. The bread and wine which we consume thus become antitypical of the Old Testament sacrifices; and they were repeatedly described as "Yahweh's food", laid upon the altar as "the table of Yahweh" (Lev. 21:6,8; 22:25; Num. 28:2; Ez. 44:7,16; Mal. 1:7,12). And it has been commented: "Current translations are inaccurate; *lehem panim* is the 'personal bread' of Yahweh, just as *sulhan panim* (Num. 4:7) is the 'personal table' of Yahweh". This deeply personal relationship between Yahweh and the offerer is continued in the

breaking of bread; and again, the focus is upon the worshipper's relationship with Yahweh rather than a warning against fellowshipping the errors of fellow worshippers through this action. What *is* criticized in later Israel is the tendency to worship Yahweh through these offerings at the same time as offering sacrifice to other gods.

Num 28:3 You shall tell them, 'This is the offering made by fire which you shall offer to Yahweh: male lambs a year old without blemish, two day by day, for a continual burnt offering-

No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Num 28:4 You shall offer the one lamb in the morning and you shall offer the other lamb at evening-

The continual sacrifice of lambs was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Num 28:5 with the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil-

The law of Moses was not an iron law which had to be obeyed in every context. Clearly this law (first given at Sinai at the start of their journeys) about oil and wine being offered with the daily sacrifices would have been practically impossible to keep during the forty years wandering. And likewise during the time of initial conquest of Canaan. Every day, half a hin (1.8 liters, 3.8 pints, around half a gallon) of olive oil and the same of wine would have been required. And this was just for the daily offerings; there were many days when more sacrifices were offered. It was by grace that God would have overlooked this. I suggest that it is to this which Am. 5:25 refers, challenging Israel to remember that God had accepted them in the wilderness by grace alone, as they were unable to keep His ideal requirements: "Did you bring Me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness?".

Num 28:6 It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in Mount Sinai for a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
“A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Num 28:7 Its drink offering shall be the fourth part of a hin for the one lamb. You shall pour out a drink offering of strong drink to Yahweh in the holy place-
Bread (:4) and wine were effectively offered with the lamb. The Lord's choice of symbols for the breaking of bread surely had this in mind. They are but the side offerings, as it were, compared to the lamb. To take bread and wine would beg the question: 'And where is the slain lamb?'. And the answer to that at the breaking of bread is 'Here in our midst'.

Num 28:8 The other lamb you shall offer at evening. As the grain offering of the morning, and as the drink offering of it, you shall offer it, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh-
Literally "between the two evenings", as at Passover night (Ex. 12:6). See on :4.

Num 28:9 On the Sabbath day two male lambs a year old without blemish, and two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, and the drink offering of it-
This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh.

24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Here for the only time in the Law it is pointed out that the Sabbath sacrifices must include a grain offering, although this principle had been given in Num. 15:3. The theme of this chapter is that the small offerings mustn't be forgotten nor minimized in importance.

Num 28:10 this is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, besides the continual burnt offering, and the drink offering of it-
There are great implications of the little word "besides". There was the warning not to let the offering of other sacrifices tempt the people to think that the "continual burnt offering" was therefore not to be taken seriously on those days. The regular, purposeful beginning and ending of each day with devotion to the Lord is something which nothing else should ever displace. I was recently working with a group of fine brothers and sisters trying to plaster and paint a house against a deadline. We worked day and night quite literally- and afterwards confessed to each other that in those days, our prayer and Bible reading had taken a major slip. Of course at the time, we all told ourselves that we were about the Lord's work... which we were. But my point is that the "continual burnt offering" of devotional 'quiet time' with the Lord, prayer and Bible reading, really must not slip. I challenge us to start each day with some "quiet time", to make Him our arm every morning, to strive the harder for a more disciplined life- with the dynamic in it all being the transfixing experience of knowing Jesus as our finest friend, inspiring brother, matchless Saviour, Son of God.

Num 28:11 In the beginnings of your months you shall offer a burnt offering to Yahweh: two young bulls, and one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish-
This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing; see on :4. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Num 28:12 and three tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for each bull; and two tenth parts of fine flour for a grain offering, mixed with oil, for the one ram-
The new moon festival was to effectively be a Sabbath of rest and worship (Is. 66:23; Ez. 46:1; Am. 8:5), a time for worship and teaching of the law (2 Kings 4:23). Most of the surrounding nations worshipped the moon whenever there was a new moon (Dt. 4:19; Job 31:26,27; Jer. 8:2). God saw that this was going to be part of the religious need of people at that time, and He makes a kind of concession to that weakness and need. Israel were to keep a new moon festival- but dedicate it to Him. We marvel at His awareness of human needs within the cultures they live in.

Num 28:13 and a tenth part of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering to every lamb; for a burnt offering of a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
Paul writes of the church in Corinth that God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mixed" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made.

Num 28:14 Their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bull, and the third part of a hin for the ram, and the fourth part of a hin for a lamb: this is the burnt offering of every month throughout the months of the year-
This had only previously been required in the specific case of Ex. 29:40 but in Num. 15:10 was then made applicable to every sacrifice. After the rejection of the people in Num. 14, God wanted them to have this extra feature in relationship with Him. I see it that way, rather than Him as it were punishing them with more legislation. For that was not at all the purpose of any of His Mosaic laws.

Num 28:15 One male goat for a sin offering to Yahweh; it shall be offered besides the continual burnt offering, and the drink offering of it-
The fact they were offering 'extra' offerings was not to take them away from realizing their sin and need for atonement. Such reminders are always necessary. The offering of other sacrifices was not to tempt the people to think that the "continual burnt offering" was therefore not to be taken seriously on those days. The regular, purposeful beginning and ending of each day with devotion to the Lord is something which nothing else should ever displace.

Num 28:16 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, is Yahweh's Passover-
The people of Israel as a body were going through the death and resurrection experience of the Lord Jesus, through recalling the process of the Passover and Exodus through the Red Sea. Israel ate Passover (Ex. 12:6) [14th Abib], as the Lord died on the cross as the Passover lambs were slain; Israel left Egypt the next day (Num. 33:3) [15th Abib] and journeyed three days (Ex. 8:27) [15th-17th Abib], and the Lord Jesus was three days in the tomb. Israel then came through the Red Sea [17th Abib], connecting with the Lord's being resurrected. As we come out of the baptismal water, we really are united with the resurrected Lord- a new creation. His newness of life, His deliverance and successful exodus from the world- all this becomes ours.

Num 28:17 On the fifteenth day of this month shall be a feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten-
These seven days were to recall the seven days of creation; for the exodus was a new creation of Israel, out of the water of the Red Sea.

Num 28:18 In the first day shall be a holy gathering: you shall do no servile work-
Work was obviously required in order to keep the Passover; the "work" in view is therefore secular work. The repeated emphasis upon this is to demonstrate that blessing and salvation was to be by grace and not works. They were to cease from their own works. And this repeated lesson taught to them is likewise taught to us in different ways.

Num 28:19 but you shall offer an offering made by fire, a burnt offering to Yahweh: two young bulls, and one ram, and seven male lambs a year old; they shall be to you without blemish-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Num 28:20 and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil: you shall offer three tenth parts for a bull, and two tenth parts for the ram-
For "mixed", see on :13. One of the most obvious similarities between these offerings and the breaking of bread is that they both feature bread and wine, associated with a slain animal in the midst (Num. 15:9,10; 2 Sam. 6:17- 19). And further, both require the eating of the sacrifice by the offerer. The peace offering and Passover (also typical of the memorial meeting) featured the offerer eating the sacrifice "before the Lord". This

phrase "before the Lord" is continually emphasized in the records of the peace offerings. I guess we would all admit that our sense of the presence of the Father and Son at our memorial meetings has much room for improvement. We really are "before the Lord" as we sit there. God came unto men when they offered acceptable peace offerings (Ex. 20:24), as He is made known to us through the breaking of bread.

Num 28:21 You shall offer a tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs-
The sacrifices on each of the seven days were two young bullocks, one ram and seven lambs for a burnt offering, with the accompanying meat offerings, and one goat for a sin offering (Num. 28:19-24). This explains why the Jews at the time of the Lord's death were careful about not being defiled so that they might eat the Passover (Jn. 18:28). The reference is not to the Passover lamb, but to these sacrifices which began the seven day feast of unleavened bread which followed the Passover feast, which only last one day.

Num 28:22 and one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you-
A goat being chosen for the sin offering tempts us to think of the Lord's usage of sheep and goats as representing the righteous and the sinners. The Lord Jesus, the ultimate sin offering, was in one sense the spotless Passover lamb of God; in another sense, He was totally identified with the goats- sinful, rejected humanity. Likewise He was represented by the serpent lifted up on the pole.

Num 28:23 You shall offer these besides the burnt offering of the morning, which is for a continual burnt offering-
The offering of other sacrifices was not to tempt the people to think that the "continual burnt offering" was therefore not to be taken seriously on those days. The regular, purposeful beginning and ending of each day with devotion to the Lord is something which nothing else should ever displace.

Num 28:24 In this way you shall offer daily, for seven days, the food of the offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh. It shall be offered besides the continual burnt offering, and the drink offering of it-
It is so often stressed, both in this chapter and elsewhere, that these continual offerings mustn’t be forgotten about at the time of the greater festivals. See on :1. But these "continual" offerings were designed to provoke the question in the heart of all thoughtful believers: 'Does God really want all these animals?'. David at the time of his sin with Bathsheba was taught that God didn't actually want them so much as He wanted a contrite heart which throws itself upon Him. He did not so much require the continual burnt offerings, but rather "Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, pay your vows to the Most High" (Ps. 50:8,15). Heartfelt praise was what God hungered for, not ritualistic

sacrifice. To this day, He is thrilled by from the heart thanksgiving, and actions of gratitude for what He has done ["pay your vows"].

Num 28:25 On the seventh day you shall have a holy gathering: you shall do no servile work-
"Gathering" is LXX *ekklesia*. This is the word rendered "church" in the New Testament. We could reason from this therefore that "church" specifically refers to a gathering of God's people. At that time and during those moments, they are a church. When the entire community of believers is referred to as "church", this is how God views them- as if they are all gathered together at a gathering or convocation before Him. The word in its Biblical usage therefore doesn't refer to what we might call a denomination or fellowship.

Num 28:26 Also in the day of the first fruits, when you offer a new grain offering to Yahweh in your feast of weeks, you shall have a holy gathering; you shall do no servile work-
The celebration of harvest was typically a celebration of the fruits of human labour. But God's people were to be careful to realize that any harvest blessings were ultimately of God and not of their labour. At the time when every hour of the day was used to bring in the harvest, the people were to have a break from their labours.

Num 28:27 but you shall offer a burnt offering for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh: two young bulls, one ram, seven male lambs a year old-
The usual pattern for the offerings was sin offering, burnt offering [dedication to God on the basis of being reconciled from sin] and then peace offerings, celebrating the resultant peace with God. But here the burnt offering comes first (:27), with the sin offering as a kind of afterthought (:29). The idea is that the harvest must be dedicated to God and accepted as His blessing and gift. But there was to be the awareness that they were all sinners and this gift had been by grace.

Num 28:28 and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three tenth parts for each bull, two tenth parts for the one ram-
The continual stress upon the usage of oil [*shehmen*] may look ahead to the *meshiach*, the Christ, the anointed one. All aspects of the offerings looked ahead to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Num 28:29 a tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs-
Frankincense was to be added to the flour (Lev. 2:1). This was a type of incense which would have given a pleasing smell to the burning flour. This represented how pleased

God was with the offering even of a handful of flour (Lev. 2:2). Small sacrifices please Him immensely. And they are what comprise daily life.

Num 28:30 one male goat, to make atonement for you-
See on :27. The total number of animals offered therefore comes to 13 (10 in :27, one in :30, two in :31). This perhaps refers to the 13 tribes, including Levi.

Num 28:31 Besides the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, you shall offer them (they shall be to you without blemish), and their drink offerings-
Every animal is blemished in some way, but they were to offer that which in their eyes ("to *you*") was without blemish. Whilst we are to offer our best, it's only the best in our eyes, and is only accepted by grace.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 29

Num 29:1 In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy gathering. You shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing of trumpets to you-
This was the first day of their civil year; the religious year began with Passover. Neh. 8:2 records that this feast was used in order to teach the law to the assembled people. It was a lead up to the affliction of souls on the tenth day of that month at the day of atonement. There is repeated emphasis upon not working whilst remembering God's saving work. Throughout the Mosaic law, there was the clear teaching that it was God's work and not that of man which was to be celebrated and was to be the basis of relationship with God.

Num. 25:18 commands Israel to attack the Midianites for what they did to them in seducing them to idolatry. But we have to apparently wait until Num. 31 to read of Israel actually going to war with Midian. But the intervening chapters cover events which happened perhaps only within days after the point in Num. 25:18 where Yahweh tells Israel to attack Midian. In Num. 26 they are to take a military census in preparation for the battle. Then chapter 27 records the issue of Zelophehad's daughters, who present as faithful to Yahweh and unlike their unbelieving father who died in the desert for his sin of not believing he could enter the land. Remember Israel are now 40 years after leaving Egypt, and about to enter Canaan despite their last minute apostacy and lack of faith. Those daughters are presented as examples of the faithful remnant within Israel. Numbers 28 commands that various daily sacrifices be offered once Israel are in the land. Numbers 29 then calls for a day of atonement to be held, followed by the feast of booths five days after the atonement feast finished. This would be an apparently needless repetition of previously given legislation- unless we understand that it was a specific call to keep the feast of atonement at that time. This would have been in our

September / October. A few months later, Israel entered the land around Passover time, with Moses dying about 30 days before that [seeing they mourned 30 days for him]. This would also explain why Num. 29 doesn't describe the other feasts but only the day of Atonement and the related feast of booths [tabernacles]. The language of "a" rather than "the" holy gathering could suggest that a specific event is being commanded rather than simply repeating the legislation about the intended annual day of atonement ["In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy gathering", Num. 29:1]. This would also make sense of the word "this" in Num. 29:7: "On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy gathering". That sounds as if the audience were at that point in the seventh month.

As discussed above, the material in Num. 26-30 is all relevant to the historical situation described in Num. 25. Moab took Balaam's advice and encouraged the men of Israel to sleep with Moabite prostitutes, and to make a religious covenant with Baal. This was at the end of the 40 year wandering, with Israel about to enter the Kingdom of God, the promised land. Num. 28 is not just a random repetition of the law about the day of Atonement. Rather was it a specific appeal for Israel to then keep it- hence the language in this chapter of keeping it "this month", and a calling of "a holy gathering" rather than "the holy gathering". It's why the other feasts aren't mentioned- only the Day of Atonement and the connected feast, of Tabernacles, which began a week later. And this explains some of the differences we will note between the commandments about the Yom Kippur rituals in Num. 28 and the more generic ones in Lev. 16.

The Yom Kippur ritual has its context in the death of Aaron's sons for desecrating the tabernacle (Lev. 16:1). The cleansing of not only the sins of the people, but also the tabernacle, was therefore in the context of Israel's desecration of the tabernacle- and not because physical bits of furniture somehow became unclean of themselves without human fault. This introductory verse, leading on as it does to the Day of Atonement ritual, raises the question of whether it was intended as an annual feast or rather an emergency ritual to be used when presumptuous sins had been committed and the tabernacle defiled. The only time in the Bible we read of the feast being called is in Num. 29, when the tabernacle had indeed just been defiled by Cozbi and Zimri and then by Phinehas bursting in to the most holy place to slay them. Lev. 16:29 says that the fasting aspect was to indeed be observed on the 10th day of the 7th month, but this is *after* the commands about the scapegoat- which I suggest were for emergency use.

Num 29:2 You shall offer a burnt offering for a pleasant aroma to Yahweh: one young bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish-
This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus. The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with

Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1).

The laws of Lev. 16:32,33 required that the atonement was made by a consecrated High Priest: "The priest who is anointed and who is consecrated to be priest in his father's place shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments, even the holy garments.
Then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary; and he shall make atonement for the Tent of Meeting and for the altar; and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly". There is no mention of Eleazar nor Phinehas being consecrated after the death of Aaron. We wonder whether this is why there is no repetition of those commands at this time. God wanted the people to do their best to keep their own day of Atonement; which is why we read that "you" are to make the offerings including the atonement sacrifice. This is the same "you" who are told in :1 to "do no servile work".

Num 29:3 and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three tenth parts for the bull, two tenth parts for the ram-
Paul writes of the church in Corinth that God has "tempered" the whole body together (1 Cor. 12:24). This is alluding to the way in which the unleavened cakes of flour were "mixed" or "tempered" with the oil (cp. the Spirit) in order to be an acceptable offering (Lev. 2:4,5; 7:10; 9:4 etc.). Paul has already likened his Corinthian ecclesia to a lump of unleavened flour (1 Cor. 5:7); he is now saying that they have been "tempered" together by the oil of God's Spirit. If we break apart from our brethren, we are breaking apart, or denying, that "tempering" of the body which God has made.

The continual stress upon the usage of oil [*shehmen*] may look ahead to the *meshiach*, the Christ, the anointed one. All aspects of the offerings looked ahead to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is fair to enquire whether the wheat / flour and oil were not in fact offered separately, but rather the idea is that a cake was to be baked. Because that is the idea of oil and flour being together. In this case we have the common idea of bread accompanying a meal. The sacrifice was a meal between the invisible God and His people. And thus they all looked forward in essence to the breaking of bread meeting, where the bread and wine [the side dishes to a meal] are present, and so is the meat / lamb / sacrifice- in the invisible but present Lord Jesus.

Num 29:4 and one tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs-
Frankincense was to be added to the flour (Lev. 2:1). This was a type of incense which would have given a pleasing smell to the burning flour. This represented how pleased

God was with the offering even of a handful of flour (Lev. 2:2). Small sacrifices please Him immensely. And they are what comprise daily life.

Num 29:5 and one male goat for a sin offering, to make atonement for you-
This was to prepare them for the upcoming day of atonement. We note from Zech. 8:19 that the fast of the seventh month, which clearly refers to this fasting at the day of atonement, was to be a time of joy and cheerful feasting once Israel were assured of their forgiveness. And this was fulfilled to a limited extent when the exiles [apparently on the day of atonement] mourned in conviction of their sins, and then with their eyes streaming with tears, were told to go and rejoice with a feast (Neh. 8:10). It was this spirit which was to be found in the subsequent feast of tabernacles, which was to commemorate and rejoice in sin forgiven. But there is reason to think that the exiles on that occasion were told to in fact celebrate on that very day of atonement; another indication that God never intended His law to be eternally fixed and literally unchanging. Although it is worth considering whether in fact the law was actually requiring fasting; rather was the emphasis upon affliction of souls after conviction of personal sin.

Num 29:6 besides the burnt offering of the new moon, and the grain offering of it, and the continual burnt offering and the grain offering of it, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, for a pleasant aroma, an offering made by fire to Yahweh-
“A pleasant aroma” is a very common phrase. This concept is important to God. It first occurs in Gen. 8:21 where it means that God accepted Noah's sacrifice and vowed that the pole of saving mercy in His character was going to triumph over that of necessary judgment. Under the new covenant, it is persons and not sacrifices or incense which are accepted as a "pleasant aroma" (Ez. 20:41). The word for "pleasant" means strong delight; this is how God's heart can be touched by genuine sacrifice. Those pleasing offerings represented us, the living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). And so it is applied to us in 2 Cor. 2:15- if we are in Christ, we are counted as a pleasant aroma to God. The offering of ourselves to Him is nothing of itself, but because we are in Christ and counted as Him, we are a delight to God. Hence the colossal importance of being “in Christ”. "Aroma" or "smell" is a form of the Hebrew word *ruach*, the word for spirit or breath. God discerns the spirit of sacrifices, that was what pleased Him rather than the burning flesh of animals. Our attitude of mind in sacrifice can touch Him. Sacrifice is therefore accepted, Paul says, according to what a person has to give, but the essence is the attitude of mind behind it. We think of the two coins sacrificed by the widow.

Lev. 16:31 calls the day of Atonement a "sabbath of solemn rest", a kind of super-sabbath. Although the other feasts also required "rest", this was to be a day of "solemn rest". This was to highlight the need for absolute focus upon the significance of having sin totally forgiven on the basis of grace and not works. This feast also featured the

requirement that every Gentile in the land also observe it "the native-born, or the stranger who lives as a foreigner among you" (Lev. 16:29). This would be relevant to an Israel who at this time kept the virgin females of Moab for themselves (Num. 31:18). They too were to accept the need for atonement.

The day of Atonement likewise cleansed the Most Holy place and the tabernacle. This was relevant to the fact that Zimri and Cozbi had defiled the tabernacle by their sex act there, and Phinehas had charged in there to murder them.

Num 29:7 On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy gathering; and you shall afflict your souls. You shall do no kind of work-
This was the day of atonement. "Afflict your souls" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing. And we are either beat up by the flesh, by Egypt; or we beat ourselves up for our sins.

All Israel's "transgressions" were forgiven by the day of Atonement, or we could instead say that the fact they had been forgiven them by grace already was celebrated then. The word "transgressions" in the Day of Atonement ritual in Lev. 16:21 etc. translates *pehshah*, a rather uncommon word in the Mosaic law. We read in Ex. 23:21 that Israel should not rebel against their guardian Angel because He would not pardon their *pehshah* (Ex. 23:21), even though God was capable of forgiving *pehshah* (Ex. 34:7 "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving... transgression"). That capability was due to His extreme grace, and this was celebrated by the forgiveness of transgression achieved and memorialized on the day of atonement. The word is often used by David about his sin with Bathsheba, which was the presumptuous sin for which there was no forgiveness under the Mosaic rituals. But such transgression was dealt with by the Day of Atonement just as it was by the grace shown to David (Ps. 25:7; 32:1,5; 39:8; 51:1,3). David defines "the sin of presumption" as "the great transgression" (Ps. 19:13), and yet from such "transgression" the blood of the day of Atonement could cleanse. The same word is used in Is. 53:5,8 of how the Lord's death was "for our transgressions... for the transgressions of My people was He stricken". Thus when the modified day of Atonement was kept in Num. 29 before Israel entered Canaan and after their shameless transgression with Midian, they were being reminded that all their transgressions / rebellions had been forgiven on account of the Atonement blood- which was looking forward to that of the Lord who died for the transgressions of His people.

Num 29:8 but you shall offer a burnt offering to Yahweh for a pleasant aroma: one young bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old (they shall be to you without blemish)-
No animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it ["to you without blemish"]; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

The slight differences with the Day of Atonement and Tabernacles ritual in Lev. 16 are because here in Num. 28 we have a one time special day of Atonement. Here they are told to offer a bullock, a ram and seven lambs as a burnt offering, whereas in Lev. 16:5 only one ram was to be offered as the burnt offering. Likewise :11 seems to speak of an additional sin offering when compared with Lev. 16. It's as if the weight of their sin is now being emphasized.

Num 29:9 and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three tenth parts for the bull, two tenth parts for the one ram-
Ez. 16:13,19 speak of how God fed Israel with fine flour and oil. These things are only mentioned together (43 times!) with reference to the sacrifices which Israel were to offer to God. But God says that He had given these things to Israel, and even fed them with them. The idea therefore was that they were giving back to God what He had first given them. And this must be remembered in all our sacrificing.

Num 29:10 a tenth part for every lamb of the seven lambs-
We note the lack of mention of the drink offering, of wine, which usually accompanied all sacrifices. Unless it is mentioned in :11. I suggest this omission may have been to signpost attention towards the huge significance of the blood of the day of atonement sacrifice.

Num 29:11 one male goat for a sin offering; besides the sin offering of atonement, and the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and their drink offerings-
This additional sin offering on the day of Atonement isn't mentioned in the previous legislation about the day of Atonement in Lev. 16. Because Israel had failed to keep the sacrifices during the wilderness journey as they should have done (so Am. 5:25 implies), God now at the end of the wilderness journey added more sacrifices to be kept. Perhaps the Israelite was to see in this male goat a symbol of himself, worthy only of rejection- the goat being a symbol of the rejected in Mt. 25:33; and the "sin offering of atonement" as representative of the whole community's unforgiven sins. This is the great paradox- that those who consider themselves rejected will be accepted, and those who think of themselves as accepted in their own strength will be rejected. The Lord's right hand is

our left hand, and vice versa, if we imagine ourselves standing before Him. Those who put themselves to *their* right hand , i.e. justify themselves, are putting themselves at His left hand; and vice versa (Mt. 25:34).

We note that the term *azazel,* scapegoat, is not mentioned here in Num. 29. Nor is there any repetition of the material in Lev. 16 about the significant rituals connected with it. We wonder whether in this version of the day of atonement, there was no scapegoat released. Possibly because they were to understand that Moses had fulfilled that role in not being allowed to enter the land.

Num 29:12 On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy gathering. You shall do no servile work, and you shall keep a feast to Yahweh seven days- "Gathering" is LXX *ekklesia*. This is the word rendered "church" in the New Testament. We could reason from this therefore that "church" specifically refers to a gathering of God's people. At that time and during those moments, they are a church. When the entire community of believers is referred to as "church", this is how God views them- as if they are all gathered together at a gathering or convocation before Him. The word in its Biblical usage therefore doesn't refer to what we might call a denomination or fellowship.

The feast of Tabernacles or booths now described only mentions the offerings to be made. Yet elsewhere it is described as a feast of joy, rejoicing in the ingathered harvest and dwelling in tents looking back to the wilderness years, reminding them that even in a settled prosperous life, they were still pilgrims. Dt. 16:14 Heb. says that they were to be made glad, and this was the result of the Yom Kippur experience. We enquire why the sense of joy, and the command to dwell in tents, is not here recorded. It could be that this was a specific command for the feast of Tabernacles to now be kept after the day of Atonement- to Israel at that point in the desert. They had no harvest to gather, and they were still living in tents anyway. But the idea was that after the sober facing up to sin of the Day of Atonement, the people were now to rejoice in God's grace.

But in the immediate context of Israel at the point of Num. 29, they were to remember that their joy still involved sacrifice, their joy in God's grace couldn't be real without some sense of sacrifice- and a sin offering was still required, to ever remind them of the price paid for human redemption. In fact there were more offerings made in the feast of Booths than in any other feast. They had to give something in response to His grace, not 'appear empty handed', and this should be our sense too. In all this we see taught our response to the Lord's achievement of atonement for us.

Elsewhere we read the command to rejoice, or [Heb.] to be made to rejoice. This meant that they were not to fast nor hold funerals during this feast. The achievement of the day of Atonement was to be understood in terms of not only forgiveness, but the ultimate

conquest of death. They were also to present the fruits of the harvest before God and to make booths to live in. The feast of Tabernacles is called the feast of ingathering in Exodus- it celebrated the gathering in of the harvest. This is all alluded to in the visions of Rev. 7:9-17; 14:1-5: "A great crowd, which no one could number, out of every nation, comprised of all tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes and with palms in their hands". The palm fronds suggest the feast of tabernacles; and we see the connection with the 70 bullocks offered during the feast, representing the 70 Gentile nations of Gen. 10. The feast spoke of the climax of God's harvest of people- and His joy in us. Revelation often uses Feast of Tabernacles language, especially playing on the word *skene*, which the LXX uses for the booths of the feast of booths / Tabernacles. Thus Rev. 21:3,4: "The home [*skene*] of God is among mortals. He will dwell [*skenoo*] with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away". All this alludes to the joy which was to characterize the feast.

"Servile work" specifically means 'work as a slave'; the term is used multiple times in describing Israel's servitude in Egypt, and for the "service" of the tabernacle and of Yahweh generally. They changed masters but their servitude remained. So slaves were given a holiday at this feast. The people together were to remember that they had all been freed from Egypt by grace, and freed from the servitude to sin by the Day of Atonement which preceded this feast. We live in a world where people rich and poor are alike in slavery to the flesh. We are freed from this "servile" life and are to rejoice in it. The Truth has made us free- the truth of sin forgiven and dealt with, and calm assurance of eternal salvation.

Num 29:13 You shall offer a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh: thirteen young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old; they shall be without blemish-
In total, the feast of Tabernacles required 70 oxen to be sacrificed. Far more animals were sacrificed in this feast than for any other. Yet this was the feast of joy- teaching that true happiness is related to sacrifice to God, rather than keeping for ourselves.

It has been observed: "The number of the burnt-sacrifices, each kind by itself or all of them together, is always divisible by the sacred number seven. We have for the week 70 bullocks, 14 rams, and 98 (14 x 7) lambs, or altogether 182 animals (26 x 7). To these must be added 336 (48 x 7) tenths of ephahs of flour for the cereal-offering. The sacred number seven appeared at the Feast of Unleavened Bread only in the number of its days, and at Pentecost in the timing of its observance (7 x 7 days after Passover). But by contrast the Feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days, took place in the seventh month, and as we have seen had the number seven impressed in a remarkable manner on its characteristic sacrifices". It is also the seventh feast: Shabbat, Passover, Firstfruits, the

Feasts of Weeks (Pentecost), the Feast of Trumpets, Yom Kippur and then Tabernacles. This could be because the feast looked forward to the time of completion or perfection of all things in the Kingdom, when the full harvest of the Gospel has been brought in. The rituals in Ezekiel's temple seem to require seven bullocks to be offered every day, as if the time of completion has come. The 70 bullocks clearly suggest the 70 nations listed in Gen. 10.

"Without blemish" doesn't mean perfect or spotless- no animal nor human body is literally without blemish. The Hebrew word is also translated 'sincere'. Israel are asked to be "perfect [s.w.] with your God". Moral perfection isn't in view- rather the idea is of wholeness or completeness. It could even be argued that "whole burnt offerings" are what are in view- perhaps this is how we are to understand the animals being without blemish (Mk. 12:33; Heb. 10:6). The idea is that every part of our lives is to be offered to God, and not just the religious external appearance, or some dimensions of our lives but not others.

Num 29:14 and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil, three tenth parts for every bull of the thirteen bulls, two tenth parts for each ram of the two rams-
13 bullocks were to be sacrificed on the first day, and the number of bullocks decreased by one every day until seven bullocks on the last day. Additionally there were to be two rams and fourteen lambs. The sin offering on each day was one kid of the goats. On the eighth day the burnt offering consisted of one bullock, one ram, seven lambs, and the sin offering of one kid of the goats. Over the eight days, this made a total of seventy-one bullocks, fifteen rams, one hundred and five lambs and eight kids plus meat and drink offerings. This was to celebrate the joy of forgiveness received at the day of Atonement. The communal nature of it was in order to provide an opportunity for the generosity to others which was intended to arise from personal experience of God's gift of salvation and forgiveness.

Num 29:15 and a tenth part for every lamb of the fourteen lambs-
The handful of flour was to be given for every individual lamb, and not as some blanket amount to cover all 14 lambs. God wanted them to realize that their joy and celebration was to always have embedded within it an awareness of their forgiveness and Passover deliverance. And to this day, this is to be the basis for our joy.

Num 29:16 and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it-
The offering of other sacrifices was not to tempt the people to think that the "continual burnt offering" was therefore not to be taken seriously on those days. The regular,

purposeful beginning and ending of each day with devotion to the Lord is something which nothing else should ever displace.

We note that the commands about the feast of Tabernacles in Lev. 23 omit this reference to a sin offering. Again we conclude that the situation in Num. 29 was unique to that occasion. The people had seriously sinned and they were to be reminded of this. Even in their joy in atonement.

Num 29:17 On the second day you shall offer twelve young bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish-
This was to remind them that the Passover deliverance through the lamb was effectively ongoing. The Passover lamb was likewise to be a year old (Ex. 12:5). We too are to live constantly under the impression of the Lord's sacrifice and redemption of us. Israel were asked to use a lamb of the first year to record various times when they should be thankful for God's redemption of them in the events which comprise life (Lev. 9:3; 12:6; 23:12,18,19; Num. 6:12,14; 7:15,17,21; 28:3,9,11,19; 29:2,8,13). This was to continually recall to them the events of their great redemption through the Red Sea. And the essence of our redemption, our baptism and salvation through the blood of the lamb, must likewise be brought ever before us.

Num 29:18 and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance-
The continual offering of bread [flour] and wine with each animal looked ahead to the breaking of bread meeting. The sacrificed animal is present in the form of the now living Lord Jesus.

All up, 98 lambs were to be sacrificed, possibly alluding to the 98 curses for breaking the covenant listed in Dt. 28. Those curses were removed by the lambs who looked ahead to the Lord's work on the cross. This was relevant to Israel at this point as they had broken the covenant.

Num 29:19 and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and their drink offerings-
Each day of their rejoicing in God’s grace toward them, Israel were to offer a sin offering as a reminder of the fact they were sinners, and all God’s blessings toward them were given to a sinful people. We must never let slip our recognition of our sinfulness before God, and unworthiness in ourselves of His blessings.

Num 29:20 On the third day eleven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish-

The decreasing number of bullocks may have been in order to highlight the final offering, of the significant number of seven bullocks.

Num 29:21 and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance-
All the sacrifices were to be made upon the basis that the offerer was giving back to God what God had given him. That included the grain ["meal"] and drink offerings. Thus the same words are found in Joel 2:14: "Who knows? He may turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal offering and a drink offering to Yahweh, your God". The sense may therefore be: "The one who experiences this, will experience a God who turns and relents, and goes even further- He will restore you grain and wine. But you are to use that blessing of grace by offering it to Yahweh, your God".

Num 29:22 and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it-
A goat being chosen for the sin offering tempts us to think of the Lord's usage of sheep and goats as representing the righteous and the sinners. The Lord Jesus, the ultimate sin offering, was in one sense the spotless Passover lamb of God; in another sense, He was totally identified with the goats- sinful, rejected humanity. Likewise He was represented by the serpent lifted up on the pole.

Num 29:23 On the fourth day ten bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish-
The decreasing number of bullocks was perhaps related to the symbolism of the bullock for strong, powerful labour. This was to decrease, until the final sacrifice of seven bullocks was understood as the power of the work of the future Messiah, the Lord Jesus.

Num 29:24 their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of

"rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Num 29:25 and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it-
Female animals were also accepted for sacrifice. The male animals however were worth more than female ones on the secular market, and so the insistence upon male offerings was not because God favours males over females; but simply because He was asking for the most valuable to be given to Him.

Num 29:26 On the fifth day nine bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish-
Perhaps just as the glory of the Mosaic system was always fading on Moses' face, the lesson is that the entire Mosaic system was decreasing rather than increasing- for it was to come to an end in the Lord Jesus.

Num 29:27 and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance-
Grain and wine offerings were used in pagan worship (s.w. Is. 57:6), just as feasts were kept to celebrate the new moon. The nature of the law of Moses was designed by God to accept the people's religious need to make such offerings and celebrate such regular events- but it was turned towards the worship of Yahweh rather than idols and gods. We marvel at God's sensitivity to the psychological needs of His people, according to the time and culture in which they live.

Num 29:28 and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it-
The feast of trumpets featured both conviction of sin and also joy in God's salvation and forgiveness; the same strange mixture of emotions we see in the record of its observance in Neh. 8:1-10, and which we experience in our own lives. And this was all to prepare for the same mixture of emotions at the day of Atonement which followed straight on.

Num 29:29 On the sixth day eight bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish-
And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they

could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Num 29:30 and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams, and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance-
Part of the grain / flour / cake was typically burnt upon the altar and the wine poured out upon it (Gen. 35:14; Ex. 30:9; 2 Kings 16:13,15); and part of it was eaten by the priests, representing God's acceptance of it, and how He was dining with the offerers at His table, represented by the altar.

Num 29:31 and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, the grain offering of it, and the drink offerings of it-
This laboured, repeated reminder is required in essence today- we are never to think that our daily, morning and evening personal devotions to God are overridden by some special project or obviated by the fact we are e.g. going to church or a church function that day.

Num 29:32 On the seventh day seven bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs a year old without blemish-
A total of 70 bulls were offered at the feast of ingathering. Rev. 5:9 presents us with the picture of men and women redeemed from *every* kindred [tribe / clan], tongue [*glossa*- language], people [a group of people not necessarily of the same ethnicity] and nation [*ethnos*- ethnic group, lit. 'those of the same customs']. This means that, e.g., not only redeemed 'Yugoslavs' will stand before the throne in the end; but Macedonians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrans, Bosnians... every ethnic group, with every custom, will have representatives who will have believed the Truth and been saved. This idea is confirmed by considering how 70 bullocks had to be sacrificed at the feast of ingathering (Num. 29), prophetic as it was of the final ingathering of the redeemed. But 70 is the number of all Gentile nations found in Gen. 10. And it is written: "When he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Dt. 32:8). A total of 70 went down with Jacob into Egypt; and thus 70 seems an appropriate number to connect with the entire Gentile world. My point is, representatives of *all* of them will be finally ingathered. It could be that this conversion of all men occurs during the final tribulation (Rev. 14:6); but it seems to me that the context demands that people from every nation etc. are already redeemed in Christ and await His return.

Num 29:33 and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bulls, for the rams,

and for the lambs, according to their number, after the ordinance-
The idea may be that each animal was to be individually accompanied by the flour and wine. Each animal was to be seen as an individual meal offered to God and shared with Him. There was to be no blanket offering of flour and wine in one go, lest this wonderful reality be somehow obscured.

Num 29:34 and one male goat for a sin offering; besides the continual burnt offering, the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it-
All these "continual" offerings were designed to provoke the question in the heart of all thoughtful believers: 'Does God really want all these animals?'. David at the time of his sin with Bathsheba was taught that God didn't actually want them so much as He wanted a contrite heart which throws itself upon Him. He did not so much require the continual burnt offerings, but rather "Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, pay your vows to the Most High" (Ps. 50:8,15). Heartfelt praise was what God hungered for, not ritualistic sacrifice. To this day, He is thrilled by from the heart thanksgiving, and actions of gratitude for what He has done ["pay your vows"].

Num 29:35 On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly: you shall do no servile work-
Work was obviously required in order to keep the Passover; the "work" in view is therefore secular work. But the Hebrew phrase "regular work" is that repeatedly used for "the work of the service" of the tabernacle, performed by the Levites (Ex. 35:21,24; 36:1,3,5; 1 Chron. 9:13,19; 23:24; 25:1 etc.). Perhaps this command in Leviticus was specifically addressed to the Levites, and the idea was that at the times of the festivals, the Levites were to focus upon keeping them in their own families and not be unduly taken up with the work of the sanctuary beyond what was required by the Mosaic law. The principle is that we must not be so taken up with religious duty that we neglect our own personal worship, especially in our own families.

Num 29:36 but you shall offer a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, of a pleasant aroma to Yahweh: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish-
Perhaps the whole purpose of the decreasing number of bullocks over the previous days was to teach that there was only one bull ultimately required by God- pointing forward to the future perfect sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

Num 29:37 their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, shall be according to their number, after the ordinance-
As the numbers of bullocks decreased, so did the number of the grain and drink offerings. A human religious system would likely have increased the numbers of sacrifices each day, leading up to a crescendo of mass offerings. But Israel were taught

by the decreasing number of sacrifices that God didn't actually require sacrifices, but rather one specific sacrifice- which was to be the Lord Jesus.

Num 29:38 and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering, and the grain offering of it, and the drink offering of it-
There are connections between the various sections of Revelation and the Jewish feasts. Here's a summary:

Revelation 5 Passover Rev. 5:x6,9 = Ex. 12:13

Revelation 7 Tabernacles Rev. 7:9,15,16 RV = Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Zech. 14:16-20

Revelation 8,9 Day Of Atonement Lev. 16:31; more detailed links in Harry Whittaker, Revelation: A Biblical Approach pp. 104,105.

Revelation 11 Dedication & Purim The Torah readings for these feasts were Num. 7 and Zech. 2- 4 about the dedication of the temple; Rev. 11:10 = Esther 9:19,22. The period from Tabernacles to Purim is exactly 5 months- as mentioned in Rev. 9:5

Revelation 12 Pentecost & Passover The Jews traditionally ask: "On this Sabbath, shall I reap?"

Revelation 14 Tabernacles

Revelation 15 + 16 Atonement & Passover Lev. 16; Ps. 118 the Hallel Psalm

Revelation 19 Passover Ps. 113,114 Passover Psalms

Revelation 21,22 Tabernacles

Laying out the material chronologically, we have:
Chapter 5: Passover
6 months

Chapter 7: Tabernacles
Chapters 8 & 9: Atonement and Tabernacles
1 year
Chapter 11: Dedication 5 months (Rev 9:5)
Chapter 11: Purim
Chapter 12: Passover and Pentecost
Chapter 14: Tabernacles

1 year
Chapter 15: Atonement
Chapter 16 & 19: Passover
Chapter 21 & 22: Tabernacles
1 year
The conclusion would therefore be that we have in the book of Revelation a literal account of the three and a half years tribulation, with the Jewish feasts being the key marker points. And it would appear there will be an especial period of five months tribulation as described between Revelation chapters 9 and 11.

Num 29:39 You shall offer these to Yahweh in your set feasts, besides your vows, and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your grain offerings, and for your drink offerings, and for your peace offerings'-
God envisaged that at the time the whole community were engaged in extra special devotion to Him, the individual might still wish to make a private sacrifice. We can't ride into God's Kingdom on the back of others, e.g. our family members or our church. Our collective devotions shouldn't lead us to think that God doesn't seek our private freewill dedication to Him.

The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Num 29:40 Moses told the children of Israel according to all that Yahweh commanded Moses-
The obedience of Moses to God is continually emphasized, and he thereby became a type of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 3:2-5).

NUMBERS CHAPTER 30

Num 30:1 Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which Yahweh has commanded-
The address to the tribal elders was perhaps because these issues of dedicating things

were largely about dedicating property. The difficult area was when a person who was not the head of a family tried to dedicate property to the Lord. God had given each family a specific inheritance and wanted that to remain within the family name. So in practice, it was the elders of the tribes who were going to deal with these issues.

I have shown throughout Numbers that we have historical incidents followed by laws which were given in relation to those incidents. Num. 25:18 commands Israel to attack the Midianites for what they did to them in seducing them to idolatry. But we have to apparently wait until Num. 31 to read of Israel actually going to war with Midian. But the intervening chapters cover events which happened perhaps only within days after the point in Num. 25:18 where Yahweh tells Israel to attack Midian. In Num. 26 they are to take a military census in preparation for the battle. Then chapter 27 records the issue of Zelophehad's daughters, who present as faithful to Yahweh and unlike their unbeliving father who died in the desert for his sin of not believing he could enter the land. Remember Israel are now 40 years after leaving Egypt, and about to enter Canaan despite their last minute apostacy and lack of faith. Those daughters are presented as examples of the faithful remnant within Israel. Numbers 28 commands that various daily sacrifices be offered once Israel are in the land. Numbers 29 then calls for a day of atonement to be held, followed by the feast of booths five days after the atonement feast finished. This would be an apparently needless repetition of previously given legislation- unless we understand that it was a specific call to keep the feast of atonement at that time.

Now in Numbers 30 we have some laws given specifically to "the heads of the tribes" explaining how young women's vows were to be treated, and the responsibility of their fathers for them if they were still in their father's household. This is relevant to the situation in Numbers 25- where Phinehas had saved Israel by spearing to death Zimri, the apostate son of one of "the heads of the tribes" as he had sex with Cosbi, the daughter of one of the "heads of the tribes" of Midian. Num. 25:14 speaks of "Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a father’s house among the Simeonites". Num. 30 has several references to the father's house. The idea seems to be that the father's house was responsible for vows made by those within it. Although it is women who are specifically mentioned, it seems the same principle would be true for male minors still in their father's house. The principle was that if the father "altogether hold his peace at her from day to day, then he establishes all her vows, or all her bonds which are on her. He has established them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them". Silence from the head of the household meant consent. And this is all in the context of Numbers 25 speaking of the sins of the young people within their "father's house". This legislation may have been to protect Phinehas from blood vengeance from Zimri's family. It would therefore appear likely that he and Zimri had made some kind of vow loyalty to Baal Peor, and Zimri's family had from day to day ignored that. And so they were responsible for it.

Num 30:2 When a man vows a vow to Yahweh, or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth-

This was to guard against the temptation to make a vow which was publically impressive before men, but then not to pay it. Any attempt to garner kudos for our spiritual devotion is absolutely wrong; such spiritual pride is the worst. God would therefore "require it" and severely judge those who did this (Dt. 23:21). Not being slack to pay a vow (Dt. 23:21) fits in with a wider Biblical theme of being quick in responding to God. It comes to full term in the New Testament accounts of immediate baptisms straight after people had grasped the basic message of the Gospel. "Yes straight away" is what God really seeks from His children. Israel were not to delay in offering their firstfruits to God (Ex. 22:29), lest their intentions weren't translated into practice. The disciples immediately left the ship, simply put their nets down and followed (Mt. 4:20,22); Matthew left his opened books and queue of clients in the tax office and walked out never to return (Lk. 5:17,18 implies).

Num 30:3 Also when a woman vows a vow to Yahweh and binds herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth-

Girls married young in Semitic cultures of the time, usually in their teens. God here foresaw the possibility of a young girl wanting to do something extra special for Him. In contemporary religions, active participation in religion was typically something for older males. But such is God's value of the human person that He eagerly anticipated young people, even children, making a special act of devotion to Him on their own initiative. Mary's teenage ambition to become the mother of Messiah is the supreme example to today's youngsters, growing up as they do in a world where selfish ambition is the order of the day as never before.

Num 30:4 and her father hears her vow and her bond with which she has bound her soul, and her father holds his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond with which she has bound her soul shall stand-

The insistence that the male head of the family had to agree was because the vow was likely to give part of the family property to Yahweh. The land had specifically been given to families as inheritances, and it usually passed on through the male line, to keep the name of the family identified with the inheritance. So the woman had no right to promise to give it away, without first having the agreement of her husband or male head of family.

Num 30:5 But if her father disallow her in the day that he hears, none of her vows or of her bonds with which she has bound her soul shall stand; and Yahweh will forgive her,

because her father disallowed her-
Women got married young. But here is envisaged a situation where a girl promises something to Yahweh, before she gets married. The idea is that children too were in relationship with God, and could make a voluntary dedication to Him. The idealism and ambition of youth were to be channeled towards God's service. And these regulations show that the law of Moses expected this kind of commitment from youth.

Num 30:6 If she has a husband while her vows are on her, or the rash utterance of her lips with which she has bound her soul-
The spirit of this legislation seems to assume that vows would be made rashly, and therefore these laws were required. The Lord Jesus therefore commanded that we should not swear at all, but rather just live integrity before God (Mt. 5:34-36). This was an indication of how well the Lord understood human nature, since He also had it. He knew that vows and oaths were likely to be broken; and so we should accept our humanity and simply not make such vows.

Num 30:7 and her husband hears it, and hold his peace at her in the day that he hears it; then her vows shall stand, and her bonds with which she has bound her soul shall stand-
The simple principle established here is that there are times when silence means consent. The Proverbs wisely advise us not to meddle in others' business and to hold our tongue in some cases. But there are other times when not to speak up can have damaging consequences upon others, especially those less mature than ourselves.

Num 30:8 But if her husband forbids her in the day that he hears it, then he shall make void her vow which is on her, and the rash utterance of her lips with which she has bound her soul; and Yahweh will forgive her-
"Rash utterance" is the same word as used to describe how Moses "spoke rashly with his lips" (Ps. 106:33). He was denied entrance to the kingdom of God on earth because of that. That seems a rather heavy judgment for rash speaking. But here again, rash speaking in promising to give something and then not giving it- is presented as an unforgivable sin. People of the time were apparently used to making various exaggerated promises to God. And these were abhorrent to Him. He wishes those in relationship with Him to be serious and committed to Him, and to realize the extraordinary value He places upon human usage of words and language. This is reflected in the New Testament teaching about the power and eternal consequences of human words. See on :12.

Num 30:9 But the vow of a widow, or of her who is divorced, everything with which she

has bound her soul, shall stand against her-
A divorced woman was counted as genuinely single; the sin of marriage breakup is in the factors leading to the breakup of the marriage, but afterwards the person is seen by God as single. Divorce under the Law of Moses was possible only for adultery, and adultery was punishable by death. Yet God foresaw that there would be women who had done this and yet remained alive by grace, or who had been falsely accused; and correctly imagined that such women would love to make a freewill dedication of themselves to Him.

Num 30:10 If she vowed in her husband's house or bound her soul by a bond with an oath-
A vow appears to refer to a promise to give or dedicate something to God, whereas an oath tends to refer to an undertaking not to do something.

Num 30:11 and her husband heard it, and held his peace at her, and didn't disallow her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond with which she bound her soul shall stand-
Silence means consent (Num. 30:12,15). This is a huge principle which challenges us in so many areas.

Num 30:12 But if her husband made them null and void in the day that he heard them, then whatever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand. Her husband has made them void; and Yahweh will forgive her-
To make a vow and not perform it was a sin. The implication is that it was only forgivable if a woman had vowed property over which her husband had a say, and he had disallowed it. We note that it is a vow and not an oath which is in view; a vow was associated with giving property to Yahweh, whereas an oath was a promise not to do something. Given the very serious nature of vowing and not performing it, apparently an unforgivable sin, we wonder why people would vow when it was not obligatory? The reasons appear here to be in the area of "rash utterance", getting carried away with words; or possibly pride. Contrary to what is the habit in some parts of Christianity, giving is never to be done under duress of whatever kind, nor 'rashly'. God wants us to give to Him on the basis of sober, reasoned commitment rather than the emotion of a moment. See on :8.

Num 30:13 Every vow and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it or her husband may make it void-
"Afflict your souls" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). The woman might vow to go through a period recalling how Israel had been in

Egypt; but as this had huge domestic implications in an agrarian society, she could only do so if her husband agreed. Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing.

Num 30:14 But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day, then he establishes all her vows, or all her bonds which are on her. He has established them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them-
To vow and then not give to God was a major sin, and as her vow involved dedication of property under his control, he shared in that sin, or, in the blessing of dedication.

Num 30:15 But if he shall make them null and void after that he has heard them, then he shall bear her iniquity-
Here to bear iniquity seems to specifically mean to have responsibility for sin (as in Num. 18:1). "Bear iniquity" is therefore an idiom for being personally guilty. Yet the idiom is used about the Lord Jesus Christ in His bearing of our iniquity on the cross (Is. 53:11). The Lord Jesus was our sin bearer and yet personally guiltless. This is the paradox which even He struggled with, leading to His feeling of having been forsaken by God (Mt. 27:46). This means that although Christ never sinned, He knows the feelings of sinners, because His identity with us was so deep and complete.

Num 30:16 These are the statutes, which Yahweh commanded Moses, between a man and his wife and between a father and his daughter, being in her youth, in her father's house-
This legislation may well have arisen in response to some specific cases which were not covered in the law given at Sinai. The Mosaic law was not designed as a deterministic legislation over every imaginable area of life. It was intended as a springboard towards personal relationship with God. And therefore it required interpretation and reverent engagement with God for help in understanding, and receipt of progressive revelation.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 31

Num 31:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
Yahweh was to be avenged upon Midian (:3), and so was Israel (:2). Yahweh is His people and what is done to His people is done to Him. Just as the Lord Jesus asked Saul to stop persecuting *Him*. The Father and Son feel all done to their people as done to them. For the nature of true love is that identifies with others.

Num 31:2 Avenge the children of Israel for the Midianites. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people-
But in :3 we read of avenging Yahweh. The insults against God's people are against Him. Many of His children struggle today with a sense of justice not having been done to them, and a desire to see some level of justice or vengeance against their abusers. This day will come, if indeed the injustice has been done to us because of our devotion to God; because whatever is done to God's people is done to Him.

Num 31:3 Moses spoke to the people, saying, Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian, to execute Yahweh's vengeance on Midian-
See on :2,3. This conflict was apparently just before the people entered the land of promise and approached Jericho. So this was to provide them with battle experience, and more especially with experience of God's saving grace; for not one of them was to perish in the conflict. The victory was to so clearly be from God.

Moses personally was commanded to destroy the Midianites and then die. But he sends Phinehas to do this job, possibly reflecting his continued struggle with God's command to die without entering Canaan. Perhaps Moses ordered only 12000 men to go war against a much larger enemy because he hoped they would be defeated and thus delay his death. They took 32000 virgin women prisoner, so the combined force of the enemy would have been huge. Israel had 600000 soldiers available according to the census. We likewise might probe why in :2 God tells Moses to avenge Israel against Midian, whereas here in :3 Moses tell Israel that they are going to war only because Yahweh wants His vengeance against Midian- possibly making Yahweh out to be a vengeful God. In all this we see how Moses was weak at the very end, and yet still saved. Like Gideon, Samson, Jacob, David etc.

Num 31:4 Of every tribe one thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, you shall send to the war-
A "thousand" is not necessarily 1,000, but can refer to a group, family or military regiment. See on :5.

Num 31:5 So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war-
12,000 was a small army compared to what could have been raised- for there were over 600,000 fighting men numbered amongst Israel at this time. But throughout His military history, God has taken special pleasure in using small numbers to defeat far larger ones, and that principle continues in how He works today. However, 12,000 fighting men

may be a way of describing a particular kind of military division, as it occurs later in Jud. 8:25; 21:10; 2 Sam. 10:6; 17:1 and Ps. 60:1.

Num 31:6 Moses sent them one thousand of every tribe to the war, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand-
God chose Phinehas the priest to be the army commander, whereas Joshua was the more obvious human choice for that job at this time. But God wished to demonstrate that it is spiritual principle which must lead His people rather than human strength and appropriacy. It was Phinehas who had so well perceived the spiritual danger of the Moabites earlier (Num. 25:7).

Num 31:7 They warred against Midian, as Yahweh commanded Moses; and they killed every male-
The idea is every adult male, for the children were initially taken captive (:9). There is no record given of the strategy for the battle. The fact there was not a single Israelite casualty all contributes towards the impression that this was an unusual and Divine deliverance. It was given to them to encourage them that the whole of Canaan could be conquered in this way. For from this point they were based opposite Jericho, poised to enter Canaan.

Num 31:8 They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain: Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they killed with the sword-
Zur's daughter Cozbi means "liar", the daughter of "the rock" (Zur)- a fake god. For Yahweh alone is a rock to His people. Her message was indeed a huge lie: that Yahweh and Baal worship could be fused through her as a leader of Midian openly performing a sex act with a similarly ranking leader of Israel. In the tabernacle of Yahweh (see on Num. 25:6,8). Zur was one of the five leading princes of Midian who was later slain along with Balaam. Balaam and Zur were clearly associated. And so it seems that Balaam suggested that Zur's daughter Cozbi be used to lead Israel into sin, so that their God would curse them- and Balaam would get his coveted reward which he so obsessed about.

Num 31:9 The children of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones; and all their livestock, and all their flocks, and all their goods, they took for a prey-
They were criticized for taking the women alive (:14,15). Although the more specific commandments about engagement with enemies are given in Deuteronomy, just a short time later, they were expected to use sanctified common sense. They ought to

have realized that the women who had led them into sin in Num. 25 needed to be destroyed and not taken as trophies. Whilst there was no specific command about this, they were expected to have perceived it. We see again that the law of Moses was not presented as a legal code to be obeyed in a literalistic way, but rather as a source of principle intended to guide behaviour in matters not specifically covered by the law.

Num 31:10 All their cities in the places in which they lived, and all their encampments, they burnt with fire-
The phrase "burnt with fire" is used many times in the Pentateuch and nearly always about sacrifices. These were to be offered to God rather than lived in by the Israelites; for it was God's intention that all Israel should go over Jordan, although He later made concessions to those who wanted to inherit east of Jordan. But the destruction of the cities east of Jordan reflects His desire that the people should not inherit there at that time; the promise of Canaan was that they would live in the houses which they had not built (Josh. 24:13).

Num 31:11 They took all the spoil and all the prey, both of man and of animal-
"The prey" is literally "the jaws", and refers to the animals; "the spoil" refers to the men. As the male adults were all killed, this must refer to the underage males who would have been seen as good potential slaves and were therefore "spoil". But they were later rebuked for this (:17). They were intended to have worked out how to behave in this matter, despite the lack of specific commandment. But the people failed to use the law of Moses as it was intended to be- a springboard towards personal engagement and relationship with God. Instead at best they used it as a mere legal code. The areas where the law was silent were intended to be those areas where the Israelites worked out the implications of God's revealed will, and saw for themselves how to behave.

Num 31:12 They brought the captives and the prey and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp at the plains of Moab which are by the Jordan at Jericho-
Eleazar had now effectively replaced the aged Phinehas. We note that Israel were encamped opposite Jericho when they won this amazing victory. It was clearly intended to encourage them that this is how all their conflicts could go in Canaan. We too are given encouragement for later trials and situations we will experience. Life is not at all a random path. All is designed to confirm us in an upward spiral of faith and spiritual achievement.

Num 31:13 Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the princes of the congregation went forth to meet them outside of the camp-

The Lord Jesus suffered and died, shedding the blood of atonement, "outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13). We are bidden go forth to the Lord Jesus "outside the camp", just as those who "sought Yahweh" did when there was no tabernacle (Ex. 33:7). The people watching Moses as he walked out to it, without the camp, therefore looks ahead to a faithless Israel lining the via Dolorossa and watching the Lord walk out to His place of crucifixion. And we are to get behind Him and follow Him there, stepping out from the mass of Israel. As the Lord Jesus suffered "outside the camp", so various parts of the Mosaic sacrifices were to be burnt there (Lev. 4:12,21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27); and yet it was the blood of those sacrifices which achieved atonement (Heb. 13:11; Num. 19:3,9). "Outside the camp" was the place of excluded, condemned sinners (Lev. 13:46; 24:14; Num. 5:3,4; 15:35,36; 31:13,19), and it was here that the Lord Jesus died, in identification with us.

Num 31:14 Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the captains of thousands and the captains of hundreds who came from the service of the war-
As discussed on :9, they were intended to have worked out for themselves, despite the lack of specific commandment, that taking these women was wrong and a way of entering into temptation; see on :16. Moses' anger was with the captains because this was a conscious policy decision they had made, and it would lead the people into sin (:16).

Num 31:15 Moses said to them, Have you saved all the women alive?-
Moses was distressed that the Israelite army had failed to perceive the spiritual reason for the battle- it was to stop the Midianites posing a temptation to Israel with their women as they had in chapter 25. Sometimes God's people can fight His battles and even be given victory, whilst failing to perceive the spiritual intent behind the war.

Num 31:16 Behold, these caused the children of Israel through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against Yahweh in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of Yahweh-
"These..." could suggest that these were the very women who had offered their bodies to the Israelites in return for worship of Baal Peor. They were cult prostitutes and should have been destroyed.

Num 31:17 Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him-
There is a harder side of God, the side we'd rather not see. God almost seems to underline the hardness of it in the way He records His word; thus He emphasizes that the "little ones" of the Canaanite cities were to be killed by the sword (Dt. 2:34), the

male babies of the Midianites were to be killed by God's command (Num. 31:17; which was exactly what Herod ordered). The unfulfilled believer will accept the gracious side of God (which is undoubtedly the aspect more emphasized in the Bible), but refuse to really accept this other side, while passively admitting that this harder aspect of God is revealed in His word. But it's all or nothing. We either accept the self-revelation of God in the Bible, or we reject it- that's how *He* sees it. Our temptation is to think that God sees things as we see them, to think that God is merely an ideal human being. But the day of judgment will reveal otherwise (Ps. 50:21). He is God, not man. It is not for us to set the terms.

Num 31:18 But all the girls, who have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves-
God makes concessions to human weakness. Having reminded Israel of how they sinned with the Midianites, He allows them to keep unmarried Midianites as wives (Num. 31:16,18).

Num 31:19 Encamp outside of the camp seven days: whoever has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves on the third day and on the seventh day, you and your captives-
This all rather sounds like the laws for purification from 'leprosy', which I elsewhere suggested was not Hansen's disease but a specific stroke from God. This legislation was also geared against the men immediately sleeping with the young women whom they had captured. They were to enter into serious relationship with them, and not use them as sexual trophies in hot blood. See on :46.

Num 31:20 As to every garment, and all that is made of skin, and all work of goats' hair, and all things made of wood, you shall purify yourselves-
As noted on :19, this recalls the legislation about 'leprosy', which I have suggested was a specific stroke of Divine judgment. Their taking of the Midianite women was seen by God as a serious sin, and they had as it were been stricken with judgment for this and had to be cleansed from it.

Num 31:21 Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who went to the battle, This is the statute of the law which Yahweh has commanded Moses-
They had been expected to follow the principles inculcated by the law, although they hadn't been given specific legislation about spoil at this point. But they had failed to grasp this and so now they were given laws to precisely govern their behaviour. But these laws could have been given before the event. They were given after it. Because it was God's intention that Israel ought to have perceived the right course of action on the

basis of the principles so far revealed, rather than needing endless sets of laws to define behaviour in every life situation. But they failed in this, and so further law was given. See on :28.

Num 31:22 whatever gold, silver, brass, iron, tin and lead-
There appears to be an allusion to this passage in 1 Cor. 3:11-15: "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is already laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if anyone builds on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble, each man's work shall be revealed. For the day of judgment shall declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire itself shall test each man's work of what sort it is. If anyone's work shall endure which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If anyone's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as having passed through fire". Paul doesn't really quote in direct context, but uses words and phrases apparently out of context, which was typical of Jewish midrash. 1 Cor. 3:12-15 likens all the faithful to material which can pass through the fire of judgment- and this surely is a reference to the way that Jericho was burnt with fire, and only the metals along with Rahab and her family came through that fire to salvation (Josh. 6:24). And it's the same idea here with the spoils from the Midianites. They represent our converts in the war of preaching the gospel. Their worth will be revealed at the last day. The fire of condemnation will as it were burn at them and remove all their surface spirituality. And as through death comes life, so through condemnation of the flesh comes salvation of the spirit.

Num 31:23 everything that may withstand the fire you shall make to go through the fire, and it shall be clean; nevertheless it shall be purified with the water for impurity; and all that doesn't withstand the fire you shall make to go through the water-
"*The* fire" refers to the fire of the altar which was ideally intended to be that kindled at the time of Lev. 9:24 when the tabernacle was consecrated. It was to be kept perpetually burning by the sacrifices being continually placed upon it, a lamb every morning and every evening. The fire which never went out or was 'quenched' (Lev. 6:13). is a double symbol. The phrase is used multiple times with reference to the wrath of God in condemning sinners; it is the basis of the idea of eternal fire which will not be quenched. Rather like the cup of wine from the Lord being a symbol of either condemnation or blessing. So we have a choice- be consumed by the eternal fire now as living sacrifices, or be consumed by it anyway at the last day. *"The* water" may refer specifically to the water of separation made from the ashes of the red heifer.

Num 31:24 You shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and you shall be clean; and afterward you shall come into the camp-

Lev. 14:9, 15:13 uses this as the ritual for the cleansing of the leper. The people had been smitten with a stroke of punishment, which is what 'leprosy' was rather than what we now know as leprosy. And they were to repent and go through the cleansing process.

Num 31:25 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The principle is that the fighters / achievers must not keep their achievements for themselves but share them. This has never been popular, and so at David's time it was as if this law was instituted for the first time (1 Sam. 30:21-25).

Num 31:26 Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and of animal, you, and Eleazar the priest, and the heads of the fathers' households of the congregation-
We note that the booty was not to be numbered (:32). The idea was that people and animals could be used in the service of God in the tabernacle. Whereas the general booty couldn't be.

Num 31:27 and divide the prey into two parts between the men skilled in war who went out to battle, and all the congregation-
This kind of policy of sharing the spoils of war with the congregation was repeated in Israelite history (1 Sam. 30:24,25; Ps. 68:12). It ensured that the minority called upon to do highly visible and humanly heroic work didn't do it for themselves nor to settle their own scores, but always with an eye to benefitting the community of God's people.

Num 31:28 Levy a tribute to Yahweh of the men of war who went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys, and of the flocks-
The idea of giving a portion of the spoils of war to Yahweh was taught by Abraham's example (Gen. 14:20). I suggested on :21 that they had been expected to follow the principles they already knew, without being given specific laws for every situation. Perhaps they likewise should have worked this out from Abraham's pattern of tithing the spoils of war. But they didn't make the connection, and so had to be given this specific legal command. See on :48.

Num 31:29 Take it of their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest, for Yahweh's wave offering-
The portion of meat to be waved was placed on the priests hands (Ex. 29:25), and then 'waved' or 'swung' towards the altar and then back- not from right to left. The idea was that the offerings were first given to God, recognizing they should be consumed on the altar to God; but then given back to the priest by God. So they ate them having first recognized that their food was really God's, all was of Him, and He had given it back to them to eat. This should be our spirit in partaking of any food, as we are the new

priesthood. Our prayers of thanks for daily food should include this feature. All things are God's and anything we 'offer' to Him is only giving Him what He has given to us (1 Chron. 29:14,16). As people and live animals were involved, this waving or swinging before God must have been done in spirit.

Num 31:30 Of the children of Israel's half, you shall take one drawn out of every fifty, of the persons, of the cattle, of the donkeys, and of the flocks, of all the livestock, and give them to the Levites, who perform the duty of the tabernacle of Yahweh-
"Duty" is a military term, implying warfare. They were therefore to be given the spoils of war, as their regimented, disciplined devotion to serving God was to be seen as a kind of military service. Just as we too fight the good fight of faith (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 1:18; Heb. 13:17).

Num 31:31 Moses and Eleazar the priest did as Yahweh commanded Moses-
The obedience of Moses to God is continually emphasized, and he thereby became a type of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 3:2-5).

Num 31:32 Now the prey over and above the booty which the men of war took, was six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep-
The numbers given here are huge. We must remember that the term "thousand" doesn't have to mean 1,000 as a number, but can refer to a group or subdivision of some sort.

Num 31:33 seventy-two thousand head of cattle-
LXX "Oxen".

Num 31:34 sixty-one thousand donkeys-
We can summarize the distribution:
675000 Sheep: 337500 to the soldiers, 337500 to the congregation; 675 to God, 6750 to the Levites
72000 Oxen; 36000 to the soldiers, 36000 to the congregation; 72 to God, 720 to the Levites
61000 Donkeys; 30500 to the soldiers, 30500 to the congregation; 61 to God, 610 to the Levites
32000 People [virgin women and young girls]; 16000 to the soldiers, 16000 to the congregation; 32 to God, 320 to the Levites.

Num 31:35 and thirty-two thousand persons in all, of the women who had not known man by lying with him-
This would indicate a huge number of the Midianites in total. To have slain say 100,000

men without a single casualty (:49) was the kind of miracle possible only in God's strength. But I have noted that "thousand" and "hundred" may be technical terms for groups or subdivisions rather than literal numbers.

Num 31:36 The half, which was the portion of those who went out to war, was in number three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep-
The apparently pointless repetition of the figures was perhaps to show that indeed, not one person nor animal went missing, but the division of the prey was made precisely as commanded. For at times like these, things do tend to 'go missing'. But there was absolute integrity at this point.

Num 31:37 and Yahweh's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and seventy-five-
We wonder whether this tribute given "to Yahweh" was the number of animals sacrificed to Him, or whether they too were given to the Levites.

Num 31:38 The cattle were thirty-six thousand, of which Yahweh's tribute was seventy-two-
We wonder if the Lord had this in mind when sending out the otherwise strange number of 72 apostles. They were "Yahweh's", dedicated to Him, to serve as oxen in His service.

Num 31:39 The donkeys were thirty thousand five hundred, of which Yahweh's tribute was sixty-one-
The donkey was an unclean animal, and yet God was still able to find a use for 61 unclean donkeys. We all have some way of being useful for Him whatever our status.

Num 31:40 The persons were sixteen thousand, of whom Yahweh's tribute was thirty-two persons-
32 to God, 320 to the Levites makes 352 Midianite females devoted to God. This is the numerical value of the word "Hebrew". These women were to become true Hebrews, again indicating that racial purity was never significant to God in defining His people.

Num 31:41 Moses gave the tribute which was Yahweh's wave offering to Eleazar the priest, as Yahweh commanded Moses-
Again the obedience of Moses to God is continually emphasized, and he thereby became a type of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 3:2-5).

Num 31:42 Of the children of Israel's half, which Moses divided off from the men who warred-

Sharing the results of our own labour has never been popular, it's why people don't like paying taxes. The ideal principle was as in 1 Sam. 30:21-25, that those who fought should have the same part as those who didn't. But in this case there was a large concession to human weakness; for the division was not proportionate per head of population. There were far more people in Israel than the 12,000 soldiers who fought, and per head, they each received far more than the other Israelites.

Num 31:43 (now the congregation's half was three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep-
We enquire how exactly such a huge number of animals was divided amongst them. If proportionately, then each family would likely have received a few sheep. So they each individually felt and saw the blessing of the victory God had given.

Num 31:44 and thirty-six thousand head of cattle-
Or, oxen. The only time we read the figure 36,000 again is in the number of soldiers in Issachar in 1 Chron. 7:4. But Issachar was a strong ox (Gen. 49:14 LXX). I see no great semantic moment in this connection. But as with many such connections which appear to have no great interpretive significance, we sense here the same Divine mind throughout all Scriptural revelation.

Num 31:45 and thirty thousand five hundred donkeys-
This huge number of donkeys implied they would be doing a lot of travelling and transporting. And indeed this was the intention- for they were about to enter Canaan and go to their specific inheritances. Although many of the people didn't do so, and were satisfied just with a bit of fertile land wherever they found it, this was the Divine intention which He empowered potentially to be fulfilled.

Num 31:46 and sixteen thousand persons)-
We wonder why the term "persons", literally *nephesh adam*, is used rather than "virgin females" or something similar. I suggest it is in order to remind the Israelites that these females were persons and should be valued as such; see on :19.

Num 31:47 even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one drawn out of every fifty, both of man and of animal, and gave them to the Levites, who performed the duty of the tabernacle of Yahweh; as Yahweh commanded Moses-
"The duty" is "the warfare". They were therefore to be given the spoils of war, as their regimented, disciplined devotion to serving God was to be seen as a kind of military service. Just as we too fight the good fight of faith (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 1:18; Heb. 13:17).

Num 31:48 The officers who were over the thousands of the army, the captains of thousands, and the captains of hundreds, came near to Moses-
They had been commanded by God to give part of the spoils of war in terms of the women and animals captured. The idea of giving a portion of the spoils of war to Yahweh was taught by Abraham's example (Gen. 14:20). I suggested on :21 that they had been expected to follow the principles they already knew, without being given specific laws for every situation. Perhaps they likewise should have worked this out from Abraham's pattern of tithing the spoils of war. But they didn't make the connection, and so had to be given this specific legal command to share out the people and animals. But now they get the point, and of their own initiative come to Moses and offer the rest of the spoils of war, apart from the people and animals. The law of God is not a chain, a leash, for man is not a dog ever seeking freedom from the Divinely imposed ties that bind. Rather is His law a springboard to the freedom of serving God upon our own initiative. And here we have a rare example of where men 'got it' and did just that. See on :53.

Num 31:49 and they said to Moses, Your servants have taken the sum of the men of war who are under our command, and there lacks not one man of us-
It's usual for military men to consider themselves as an elite in their own right. But these leading military leaders considered themselves as nothing but servants to their spiritual leader. Humility in leadership is vital amongst God's people. That such vast numbers had been slain without a single Israelite casualty was clear evidence that this very large scale victory was of God. The victory was to encourage them that they could likewise conquer Canaan in God's strength.

Num 31:50 We have brought Yahweh's offering, what every man has gotten, of jewels of gold, armlets, and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and necklaces-
Even in times of spiritual victory, we are to never lose sight of our basic sinfulness and need for atonement with God. The situation is similar to that at the exodus, when the wealth of Egypt was taken by the Israelites and then given back to God for the construction of the tabernacle.

To make atonement for our souls before Yahweh-
They are clearly aware of their serious failure in taking the Midianite women, which had resulted in their being stricken down in some way (see on :19,24). But we wonder whether they had made the mistake which many make- thinking that material wealth and donating it can somehow atone fore sins. When it was the shedding of blood, and faith in the Lord's future sacrifice foreshadowed in it, which alone is the basis for atonement (Lev. 17:11).

Num 31:51 Moses and Eleazar the priest took their gold, even all the worked jewels-
I suggested on :50 that this donation of wealth was given under the misunderstanding that gold could atone for sin; when it was faith in God's grace and His purification which was required. But despite that misunderstanding, God still accepted their offering. As He accepts all those who truly love Him, despite their misunderstandings.

Num 31:52 All the gold of the wave offering that they offered up to Yahweh, of the captains of thousands and of the captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels-
This was a significant amount, likely around 200 kg. of gold and jewels (:51). They were so deeply moved by the principle of giving to Yahweh they had just been taught, that they now of their freewill offered this to Him. See on :48.

Num 31:53 (The men of war had taken booty, every man for himself)-
I suggested on :48 that the way they now offer that booty to God was an act of repentance, realizing that indeed all they had taken "every man for himself" should not have been taken "for himself". Rather it was to be shared back to God as the giver of all. And they came to this position on their own initiative.

Num 31:54 Moses and Eleazar the priest took the gold of the captains of thousands and of hundreds and brought it into the Tent of Meeting, for a memorial for the children of Israel before Yahweh-
Likewise the bronze from the censers of the rebels were made a memorial for Israel "before Yahweh" by being made into plates around the altar. So we can assume that something was made from this gold and it remained in the tabernacle.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 32

Num 32:1 Now the children of Reuben and the children of Gad had a very great multitude of livestock. When they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead that behold, the place was a place for livestock-
The record sounds as if it were only these tribes; it is Reuben and Gad who make the agreement to not return to the land East of Jordan until the other tribes are settled (:25). But the bad attitude spread to Manasseh, according to Josh. 22; at this time, only three individuals from Manasseh were given an inheritance East of Jordan (32:40-42). But this spread to half the tribe wanting such an inheritance there. A theme of this chapter is how bad attitudes spread so easily.

The frequent command "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17 etc.) uses the same Hebrew word translated "desire" when we read of how Eve "desired" the fruit (Gen. 3:6); yet Israel "desired" the wrong fruit (Is. 1:29). As Eve saw the fruit and fell for it, so the people of Reuben and Gad saw the land East of Jordan and imagined how good it would be to have it, despite having been given 'all the land' West of Jordan to enjoy [cp. Adam and Eve's dominion in Eden] (Num. 32:1,2,7). In all these allusions [and they exist in almost every chapter of the Bible] we are being shown how human sin is a repetition in essence of that of our first parents. The insistent emphasis is that we should rise above and *not* be like them. And yet this call for personal effort and struggle with ourselves in order to overcome sin is muted and misplaced by all the stress upon a supposed Devil tempting Eve, pushing the blame onto him, and thereby de-emphasizing our role in overcoming sin within ourselves. And so we see so many loud-mouthed condemners of the Devil totally not 'getting it' about the need for personal self-control and spiritual mindedness in daily life and private character.

A very great multitude of livestock- Remember that wealth in those days was not measured by bank accounts but by animals. They had worked hard for this because many animals would have died at some points in the wilderness journey- see on Num. 21:4. Their temptation to seek the Kingdom now arose from being wealthy; they saw a good place for their animals and they wanted the Kingdom right away. The Lord in the wilderness faced the same essential temptation- to take the Kingdom now. This was what first century Israel wanted, and it led them to reject their Messiah. And it's what we all would like. To have our nice homes and villas now, rather than bear the cross before the eternal crown.

Num 32:2 The children of Gad and the children of Reuben came and spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the princes of the congregation, saying-
Gad are repeatedly mentioned as leading this request. And it seems Dt. 33:21 LXX comments upon this in Moses' blessing of Gad: "And he saw his first-fruits, that there the land of the princes gathered with the chiefs of the people was divided; the Lord wrought righteousness, and his judgment with Israel". The reference may be to how Gad was apparently the leader of the "heads of the people" of Gad, Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh who wanted to take their inheritance east of Jordan (Num. 32:2,6,25). The idea therefore was that they were told by Moses to see the inheritance they were allowed east of Jordan as merely a firstfruit of greater inheritance. Just as we are invited to receive firstfruit of inheritance of the Kingdom through the gift and experience of the Holy Spirit. But as with so many today, the first fruit was treated as the full experience, with no spiritual ambition to inherit more. "He executed the righteousness of Yahweh, His ordinances with Israel" would then be a very positive take on how the men of Gad

apparently obeyed the agreement to go over Jordan and help their brethren inherit the Kingdom.

Num 32:3 Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Sebam, and Nebo, and Beon-
These place names occur in the later Old Testament, but always with reference to the fact that Gentiles lived there. So Reuben and Gad's short term desire for inheritance didn't last for long; subsequent generations lost those lands. Although they changed the names of these cities (:38), their original names evidently stayed with them because the Gentiles re-took them from Reuben and Gad.

Num 32:4 the land which Yahweh struck before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock-
We have just read in Num. 31 of the huge amount of livestock they had received after the amazing victory over the Midianites. The records corroborate so perfectly, as we would expect from their having one ultimate Divine author.

Num 32:5 They said, If we have found favour in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession. Don't bring us over the Jordan-
They said this to Moses, who so dearly wished to enter the land but wasn't able to. The paradox is obvious and intentional; Moses could easily have answered their request with reference to it, but he omits all personal reference, in his selfless way; and focuses instead on the impact their choice would have on God's people as a whole. For their salvation and not his own was uppermost in his mind.

They were intended to themselves go over Jordan into the promised land of Canaan. But they speak as if they are being brought over by Moses, as if against their will, or at best, as a result of their submission to a will more powerful than their own. This is not how we should see our journey to the Kingdom. We ourselves should want to enter the land. This could be read as meaning that they despised the land promised. Although comparing the various definitions of that land, it is so that the territory was open to re-definition according to Israel's strengths and weaknesses. The final crossing over Jordan as recorded in Joshua 4 is however clearly typical of our final entry into the Kingdom, and to opt out of it can be therefore read quite negatively. 'Crossing over Jordan to enter Canaan' is seen in the Bible as the point of entering the land of Canaan, which had effectively become the promised land for Israel (e.g. Num 33:51; 35:10; Dt. 2:29 "I shall pass over Jordan into the land the Lord gives us"). Not going over Jordan was the punishment given to Moses in excluding him from the land (Dt. 3:27; 4:21,22). To not wish to do so was therefore voting themselves out of the land of Canaan. But the Eastern bank of Jordan was within the land promised to Abraham. So I would conclude

that they were using a Biblical argument to justify their desire for an immediate Kingdom, and this is just how the flesh justifies our weaknesses.

Num 32:6 Moses said to the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brothers go to the war, and shall you sit here?- You sit here- The contrast is between 'sitting', being passive and sedentary, and 'possessing' Canaan (:5)- the Hebrew meaning to seize. We are to seize the Kingdom, not passively; we are to by all means lay hold upon it (Phil. 3:12), taking the Kingdom as storm troopers (Mt. 11:12). They wanted the easier way- dwelling in an area which was apparently offering less opposition than the land West of Jordan. We likewise can take the easy way to the Kingdom [or so it seems], taking the path there which appears the way of least resistance, convenience and passivity.

Num 32:7 Why do you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which Yahweh has given them?-
Our attitude to the Kingdom has far greater influence on others' hearts / thinking than we realize. The Hebrew is usually translated "disallow" or once "break" (Ps. 141:5); attitude is hereby described in proactive terms. We can break others' hearts without saying a word to them- by our attitude. And the final equilibrium of God's judgment will take this into account. It's not so much what laws we broke, but the effect we had upon others which is to be so significant in that day. Our attitudes to possessing the Kingdom affect others; if we don't want to go over ourselves, we will discourage others. The power of example is far greater than we realize. Jesus may have referred to this incident when He condemned the Pharisees for not entering the Kingdom of God themselves and not sending forth others on their way there either (Mt. 23:13 Gk.).

Num 32:8 Your fathers did so when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to see the land-
The Gaddites and Reubenites didn't say a word to the others, didn't at all in so many words discourage them from entering the land. But in essence, their attitude was as bad as what their fathers did in stating that the land was too hard to possess. It could be that Moses' perceived that really, they were fearful of the opposition in the land, just as their fathers had been. And again we can infer that the land East of Jordan was perceived as not giving any insurmountable opposition to them.

Num 32:9 For when they went up to the valley of Eshcol, and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, that they should not go into the land which Yahweh had given them-
Time and again in the Biblical record, Abraham is held up as a very real example, in whose steps all God's people are to tread. For example, as Abraham was bidden leave

Ur and go and "see" the "land" of promise which God would "give" him (Gen. 13:15), so the spies were told to go and "see" the "land" which God had "given" them (Num. 13:18; 32:8,9- the same three words as in the promises to Abraham)- yet they lacked the faith of Abraham to believe that really, they could possess that land. They did "see" the land, yet they were punished by being told that they would not now "see the land" (Num. 14:23; Dt. 1:35). They saw it, but they didn't "see" it with the eyes of Abraham. And so it can be with our vision of God's Kingdom. Remember that Moses was the author of both Genesis and Numbers- such connections aren't incidental. Moses wished the people to see themselves as going forward in the spirit of Abraham- and hence he wrote up the Genesis record for Israel's benefit an inspiration.

Num 32:10 Yahweh's anger was kindled in that day, and He swore, saying-
If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He likewise averted it to some extent in that God's intention was to destroy all Israel immediately, but instead Moses' intercession changed the outworking of God's kindled wrath- for Israel continued, the unbelievers over 20 died in the desert, but the younger ones survived to enter Canaan. We see here how open God is to the mediation of third parties, and how open ended therefore is His purpose.

Num 32:11 'Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me -
'Caleb' can mean 'dog', and so this is appropriate. Joshua and Caleb were characterized by the comment that they "wholly followed the Lord" when they went to spy out Canaan (Num. 14:24; 32:11,12; Dt. 1:36; Josh. 14:8,9,14), and urged Israel to go up and inherit it. This refers to the way that the Angel had gone ahead of them, and they faithfully followed where the Angel had gone, and believed that Israel could follow that Angel wherever it led. When Israel finally did go into the land, they were told that Joshua would 'go before' them, and they were to follow him and thereby inherit the land (Dt. 31:3). From this we see that circumstances repeat in our lives. As Joshua had been told to be strong good courage in order to take the land, so he had to tell others (Josh. 10:25). As God charged him to be courageous and obedient to the book of the Law, so Joshua on his deathbed charged his people (Josh. 1:7,8 cp. 23:6).

Num 32:12 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, and Joshua the son of Nun, because they have followed Yahweh completely'-
Caleb was a Gentile (Josh. 15:17; Jud. 1:13; Gen. 36:11); and yet in Num. 13:6; 34:19 his descendants are incorporated into the tribe of Judah. Likewise Samuel, an Ephraimite (1

Sam. 1:1), was counted as a Levite (1 Chron. 6:16-28). Indeed it would appear that 'genealogies' in the Bible very often reflect themes of associations rather than being literal accounts of blood descent.

Caleb was head of a household within the tribe of Judah. It could be argued that he was directly related to Judah through Hezron and Pharez (1 Chron. 2:5,18,25). But "Kenizzite" (also Num. 32:12) could refer to the Gentile tribe of Gen. 15:19; or to a man called Kenaz, memorialized by Caleb naming his son with that same name (1 Chron. 4:15). And Jud. 1:13 could mean that Caleb's father was called Kenaz. Caleb means "dog", and this is apparently alluded to when he is commended for faithfully following Yahweh, as a dog would follow its master (Num. 14:24). The genealogies are constructed in such a way that they don't preclude Caleb having been a Gentile who was fully accepted into the tribe of Judah.

Num 32:13 Yahweh's anger was kindled against Israel, and He made them wander back and forth in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, who had done evil in the sight of Yahweh, was consumed-
That generation disbelieved that they could enter the land. They didn't 'do' any evil but their mental attitudes, their heart, was counted as doing evil. This continues the theme noted on :7 and :8; mental attitudes are counted as actions.

Num 32:14 Behold, you have risen up in your fathers' place, an increase of sinful men-
As noted on :7,8,13,15 and elsewhere, a theme of this incident is that mental attitudes are counted as proactively sinful behaviour. They were an "increase" or descendants of the sinful men mentioned in :8, their 'fathers' who had likewise not wanted to enter the land. Again their motives are being revealed as identical to that of their fathers- fear of opposition, and preferring to sacrifice the Kingdom for the sake of non-action. The particular "fathers" (:8) and "sinful men" in view would have been the princes of Reuben and Gad who had reported that the land was unable to be possessed: Shammua son of Zaccur [of Reuben] and Geuel son of Machi [of Gad] (Num. 13:4,15). The sin of those two men appears the worse when we see it twice mentioned here that their attitude had influenced a whole generation of their tribal descendants.

To augment yet the fierce anger of Yahweh-
God's anger had been kindled 38 years ago over this matter of not having faith to enter the Kingdom He had prepared. By not learning the lesson of our fathers' failures, and repeating in essence their sin, we provoke that anger yet more. Failure to learn from history is therefore highly significant before God; and this is where the historical record which is the Bible becomes of such supreme importance. There are degrees of sin. Paul seems to reason that sexual sin involving the body of God's creation is especially

culpable. And here Num. 32:14 speaks of 'augmenting yet the fierce anger of the Lord' by premeditated sin, as if there is a scale of offence to God.

Num 32:15 For if you turn away from after Him-
They would have argued that all they were doing was asking for what seemed a logical, practical concession. But because of the attitudes underlying it, they are spoken of as having actually done the most awful things in practice. See on :14. Turning away from behind God is the language of :11- not wholly following God into the promised land. He is leading us into His Kingdom- it is wilful pulling out of that program which will provoke His anger. And if we remain within the path lead by Him, we shall surely get there. He is not passive. He has not merely enabled a future Kingdom and remained willing to give it to whoever makes the journey. He is leading us there, going before us, dragging us there...

He will yet again leave them in the wilderness-
Yet God had earlier implied that after that previous generation had died, then the next generation, their children, would enter the land. He had apparently limited the time that Israel would remain in the wilderness- to 40 years (Num. 14:33,34). But here we see that once again, God's purpose is conditional and can change; even if there are no hints of the conditions at earlier points. The forty year time period had the possibility of becoming longer. This reflects God's sensitivity to human behaviour. We who pray so half-heartedly for victory against temptation, who so easily assume that God will understand that we can't fully change... need to realize that extreme sensitivity which He has to our choices and thoughts. Let's get it clear: the whole people of Israel would have been left in the wilderness and not allowed to enter the land, if Gad and Reuben refused to cross the Jordan river (Num. 32:15). But this would have broken the Divine promise of Num. 14:31 that all those under 20 would enter the land. Even that promise, therefore, had unstated conditions attached to it. And yet God had yet another option- if they refused to go over Jordan, then they would forfeit their land and receive a different inheritance (Num. 32:30). The complexities of these conditions are of course beyond us, because we are seeing only a part of the working of God's infinite mind. The point is, there are conditions attached to God's promises which aren't always made apparent to us.

"Yet again" may refer to God's temporary desire to leave Israel in the wilderness and make of Moses a new nation, at the time of the golden calf apostacy.

And you will destroy all this people-
This may sound extreme language, but this is the theme of the chapter: internal attitudes have huge affect upon others. We must again remember that the area they wished to possess was still part of the land promised to Abraham, although not strictly part of the land of Canaan which God wished to take His people to. They had a quasi-

Biblical justification for their attitude. At first sight this may appear unreasonable- that the whole community would be punished for the sake of the sin and short-termist thinking of two tribes. But the eternal wellbeing of others is in our hands in that our example can discourage others from entering the Kingdom, and God may not compensate for our causing them to stumble.

Num 32:16 They came near to him, and said, We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones-
We shouldn't seek isolation from our brothers and sisters; we should seek to be with them and interact with them. Gad, Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh didn't want to go over Jordan and be with their brethren; they chose the good pasturelands East of Jordan to live in because it was good cattle country. But in later Scripture, every reference to the towns they settled in records those towns (Dibon, Ataroth, Heshbon etc.) as being in Gentile hands (Num. 32:33-38); and it would seem from the 1 Chron. 5 genealogies that they went off into Assyria and assimilated into the tribes there. By choosing separation from God's people, they drifted off with the world. See on :24.

Num 32:17 but we ourselves will be ready armed to go before the children of Israel, until we have brought them to their place, and our little ones shall dwell in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land-
This contrasts favourably with their attitude that *they* were being *brought* to Canaan (:5). It could be argued from the positive attitude of the Gaddites and Reubenites (and the way in which things were resolved in Joshua 22) that actually they were brought around to a more spiritual attitude by Moses' challenge. Such spiritual success and response to challenge is rare, but perhaps at least that generation did positively respond. But their misjudgment still had a terrible effect upon future generations, because it's clear that the Israelite population soon effectively died out of the areas they were so keen to inherit.

They thought that their human strength would give Israel their inheritance, whereas God had promised that *He* and not they ("*we*") would give the inheritance. Moses therefore corrects them by saying that *God* will drive out "His enemies from before Him" (:21). It was exactly because they failed to believe that *God* would do this that they preferred to stay the other side of Jordan and not enter Canaan; and they wished to share that attitude with others.

Num 32:18 We will not return to our houses, until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance-
The "houses" probably refer to their families. We too cannot enjoy our own "house" if we have paid no attention to the inheritance of others in God's Kingdom. Yet all too often,

family is elevated to a status which means that the needs and inheritance of others is ignored.

Num 32:19 For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan, and forward, because our inheritance is fallen to us on this side of the Jordan eastward-
This was how they wanted it, but God confirmed it. We to some extent can choose out our eternal inheritance, and yet in another sense God chooses it for us. This is the playful yet constructive tension which there is between freewill and predestination.

Num 32:20 Moses said to them, If you will do this thing, if you will arm yourselves to go before Yahweh to the war,-
Moses had told the Reubenites and Gadites that they could return to their possessions when “the Lord have given rest unto your brethren, and they also possess the land” (Dt. 3:20). But Joshua tells them to go to their possessions simply because their brethren were now at “rest” (Josh. 22:4). He significantly omits the proviso that their brethren must also possess the land- because much of the land wasn’t possessed. Was this Joshua getting slack, thinking that the main thing was that people were living in peace, even though they weren’t possessing the Kingdom? Or is it a loving concession to human weakness? Indeed, the conditions of Dt. 3:20 were in their turn an easier form, a concession to, the terms of the initial agreement in Num. 32:20-32.

Moses stresses four times (:20,21,27,29) that they should go over armed "before the Lord". The Hebrew translated "before" doesn't have to mean 'in front of', because :11 and :15 [see notes there] have spoken of the need to *follow* Yahweh into Canaan. The idea is rather of 'before the face of', i.e. 'in the presence of' (this is how it is used in :22 "a possession before Yahweh"). God was going to drive out His enemies from before Him, i.e. from His presence (:21), and if Israel were in God's presence, this meant that the tribes would be driven out from before them.

Num 32:21 and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before Yahweh, until He has driven out His enemies from before Him,-
The Hebrew means 'prepared' rather than referring to men literally carrying military equipment. The tension is between them being armed / prepared, and then the later part of the verse which states that *God* would do the driving out of the Canaanite tribes. But what was required was a preparedness and willingness to be used in whatever capacity.

But not "every armed man of you" passed over. The offer they made was fulfilled but far from all their men went with the rest of Israel. The census of Num. 26 shows that the

tribe of Reuben had 43,730 men of military age; Gad, 40,500; Manasseh, 52,700; the half of which is 26,350, making 110,580. But only 40,000 went with the Israelites (Josh. 4:13), and the land was never fully subjugated, so they were released to return by grace alone.

Num 32:22 and the land is subdued before Yahweh; then afterward you shall return, and be guiltless towards Yahweh, and towards Israel; and this land shall be to you for a possession before Yahweh-
The same Hebrew words are found in Gen. 1:28, where the land / earth was to be "subdued" before man. It's as if it was God's intention to re-establish Eden in Israel; indeed, a case can be made that Eden *was* the geographical land promised to Abraham, or Canaan, although the flood changed the location of the rivers mentioned in early Genesis. The later casting of sinful Israel out of the land is likewise replete with reference to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden. Joshua 22 says that the deal was kept, and the men from these tribes were allowed to return. And yet the land was hardly subdued; "I will give you rest", the Angel had said (Ex. 33:11,14). But they did not enter that rest- Heb. 4:8,10. "Rest" was defined as the land being subdued before God with all the tribes driven out (Josh. 1:13,15; 1 Chron. 22:18). This being conditional on Israel's faithfulness, we conclude that when the Angel said "I will give thee rest" He was speaking of what was possible in prospect; or perhaps He over-estimated Israel's obedience, or was unaware of the degree to which their entering the rest was conditional on their obedience. Or perhaps simply by grace, the land was counted as being subdued and at rest when it was not.

As Adam and Eve failed to "subdue" the garden of Eden (Gen. 1:28), so Israel failed to fully "subdue" [s.w.] the tribes of the land (Num. 32:22). They subdued a few local to them; but they never really rose up to the reality of being able to have the whole land area promised to Abraham subjected to them. And so Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 promised a curse to come upon the land [of Eden / Israel] for their failure within it, just as happened to Adam and Eve; and of course ultimately they were driven out of the land just as Israel's very first parents had been. As the *eretz* / earth / land was initially "without form and void", so the same term is used of the land of Israel after the people had been driven out of it (Jer. 4:23). As thorns and thistles came up in the land [and those plants are unknown in some parts of the planet], so they did again when Israel were driven from their land (Gen. 3:18; Hos. 10:8). As Adam was punished by returning to dust, so Israel would be destroyed by dust (Dt. 28:24).

Num 32:23 But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against Yahweh; and be sure your sin will find you out-
The sense is more that you will know / find your sin. The LXX has "ye shall know your sin,

when afflictions shall come upon you". We can willfully make ourselves ignorant of sin; but in suffering for it, we come to realize it. Therefore, Moses is saying, there's no point in pretending we don't see a problem with our behaviour. We will know it, when we suffer for it. We shall not be left ignorant of our sin, and so we shouldn't allow our own deceitful flesh to kid us that we are ignorant of it. Adam likewise confessed his sin as a result of God's questioning (Gen. 3:10). Realization of sin will finally be elicited (Ez. 6:9; Jude 15).

When they are appointed their portion with the hypocrites and there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, *then* shall the Kingdom be likened unto the five wise and five foolish virgins. *Then* the rejected will understand the principles of that parable, crystal clearly. Members of the ecclesia of Israel will say "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"- but be rejected (how else to understand Mt. 23:39?). Likewise the Egyptians, fleeing in the mud from Yahweh as they vainly hoped against hope that the returning waters wouldn't somehow reach them...they came to know Yahweh (Ex. 14:18). It could well be that this knowing of Yahweh involves a desperate recounting of their sins, seeing that one of the purposes of condemnation is to make men aware of their sinfulness and the depth of God's grace. Num. 32:23 prophesied of Israel in their time of condemnation: "You will be sensible of your sin when evil overtakes you" (LXX).

Num 32:24 Build cities for your little ones, and folds for your sheep; and do that which has proceeded out of your mouth-

And notice how Gad asked for permission to build dwellings East of Jordan "for our cattle and for our children / little ones", but God gave them permission to build such dwellings "for your little ones and for your cattle" (Num. 32:16,24). Gad and co. put cattle before kids; God put kids before cattle. And how many times have we seen this come true- those who move away from fellowship with their brethren drift off to the world, they put cattle before kids, materialism before raising a Godly seed... And of course we can go far from our brethren in many ways other than geographically moving away from them; there can be a distance within us from them which is just the same. And time and again one sees the same nexus of thought playing itself out- people put their cattle, their materialism, before their children. And God wants it the other way around. Working mothers, late working fathers, kids in day care from babyhood- all so the family can live here and not there, have this car rather than that one, holiday here rather than stay at home, have the latest toys and gadgets... all, of course, in the name of 'for the sake of the kids'; when it's actually cattle before kids. Interestingly, the names of the towns which Reuben and Gad built, the territory they so desired, only occur in later Scripture in the context of their being part of Gentile territories (Is. 15:4; 16:8-9; Jer. 48:2, 45; 1 Chron. 19:7). So they never ultimately kept hold of that for which they sacrificed the promised inheritance of Canaan. God in His total love and grace was willing to go along with their weakness- He compromised, as it were, by saying they

could have that coveted territory if they helped their brethren totally inherit their possessions West of Jordan. Ultimately this never happened, as not all the Canaanite territory was possessed; yet still God allowed Reuben and Gad to have their part of the deal which they never fully kept. And there's great grace in the way that Dt. 3:19 records God saying to them at this time: "I know that you have much cattle". God knew their weakness. He knew they'd never even seen the wonders of the promised land, which was far more fertile than the land East of Jordan. But He went along with them, so much did He thirst for relationship with them. And so it is with our cattle-before-kids materialism. God may not cast us off because of it in itself. His grace and love is too strong for that. But by permitting us the compromise, we find ourselves in a far harder situation and a path which long term won't lead to permanent inheritance of the promised land, just as it didn't for Reuben and Gad. See on :16.

Num 32:25 The children of Gad and the children of Reuben spoke to Moses, saying, Your servants will do as my lord commands-
But as explained on :27, they didn't. And yet God kept His side of the agreement, and didn't punish them directly for their disobedience.

Num 32:26 Our little ones, our wives, our flocks, and all our livestock, shall be there in the cities of Gilead-
Num. 31:9 uses this same phrase "flocks and livestock" for the vast numbers of such animals captured from the Midianites. This material blessing of God was not responded to wisely by the two and a half tribes. They became obsessed with planning how they could keep and maintain for themselves all that huge blessing. Rather than perceiving that this was God's unexpected gift of grace, and they had received it despite the majority of them not having laboured for it. And so it often happens with God's material blessing; the recipient becomes obsessed with madly preserving it, even if as with the two and a half tribes, they make decisions to effect this which are spiritually damaging to them in the long term. One wonders why God ever grants material blessing to His children when He clearly knows that it usually leads to their spiritual declension. We can only conclude that He does so because He simply loves us as a doting Father.

Num 32:27 but your servants will pass over, every man who is armed for war, before Yahweh to battle, as my lord says-
But not "every armed man of you" passed over. The offer they made was fulfilled but far from all their men went with the rest of Israel. The census of Num. 26 shows that the tribe of Reuben had 43,730 men of military age; Gad, 40,500; Manasseh, 52,700; the half of which is 26,350, making 110,580. But only 40,000 went with the Israelites (Josh.

4:13), and the land was never fully subjugated, so they were released to return by grace alone.

Num 32:28 So Moses commanded concerning them to Eleazar the priest, and to Joshua the son of Nun, and to the heads of the fathers' households of the tribes of the children of Israel-

Moses was aware that he would not be alive once Israel were in Canaan. Instead of getting bitter about this, in characteristic humility he accepts it. He asks them to ensure that indeed "every man who is armed" from these tribes would pass over Jordan (:29), but in reality this never happened; see on :27. The record breathes God's grace at every point.

Num 32:29 Moses said to them, If the children of Gad and the children of Reuben will pass with you over the Jordan, every man who is armed to battle, before Yahweh, and the land shall be subdued before you; then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession-

The command to subject the animals in Eden [the land promised to Abraham?] corresponds to later commands to subject the tribes living in the land (Gen. 1:28 = Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). The "fear and dread" of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the "fear and dread" which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21; 3:8; 11:25).

Num 32:30 but if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of Canaan-

The location and nature of their possession in the Kingdom depended upon them and their choices. And the same is true with us. This is an insight into the tremendous significance of life, our attitudes and decision making. We are affecting how we shall eternally be, the nature of our eternity and inheritance.

The whole people of Israel would have been left in the wilderness and now allowed to enter the land, if Gad and Reuben refused to cross the Jordan river (Num. 32:15). But this would have broken the Divine promise of Num. 14:31 that all those under 20 would enter the land. Even that promise, therefore, had unstated conditions attached to it. And yet God had yet another option- if they refused to go over Jordan, then they would forfeit their land and receive a different inheritance (Num. 32:30). The complexities of these conditions are of course beyond us, because we are seeing only a part of the working of God's infinite mind. The point is, there are conditions attached to God's promises which aren't always made apparent to us.

Num 32:31 The children of Gad and the children of Reuben answered saying, As Yahweh has said to your servants, so will we do-

Moses had told the Reubenites and Gadites that they could return to their possessions when “the Lord has given rest unto your brethren, and they also possess the land” (Dt. 3:20). But Joshua tells them to go to their possessions simply because their brethren were now at “rest” (Josh. 22:4). He significantly omits the proviso that their brethren must also possess the land- because much of the land wasn’t possessed. Was this Joshua getting slack, thinking that the main thing was that people were living in peace, even though they weren’t possessing the Kingdom? Or is it a loving concession to human weakness? Indeed, the conditions of Dt. 3:20 were in their turn an easier form, a concession to, the terms of the initial agreement in Num. 32:20-32.

Num 32:32 We will pass over armed before Yahweh into the land of Canaan, and the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us beyond the Jordan-
The idea is [see AV] 'so that the possession...'. Our receipt of the inheritance is related to others receiving their inheritance; just as in Paul's shipwreck, all had to remain in the ship if all were to be saved. This apparently strange condition of salvation is surely to emphasize that whilst salvation is in one sense individual, it is in another sense collective. And that collective dimension to it cannot be simply ignored.

Num 32:33 Moses gave to them, even to the children of Gad, and to the children of Reuben, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land according to its cities and borders, even the cities of the surrounding land-
In later Scripture, every reference to the towns they settled in records those towns (Dibon, Ataroth, Heshbon etc.) as being in Gentile hands (Is. 15:4; 16:8-9; Jer. 48:2, 45; 1 Chron. 19:7); and it would seem from the 1 Chron. 5 genealogies that they went off into Assyria and assimilated into the tribes there. By choosing separation from God's people, they drifted off with the world.

Num 32:34 The children of Gad built Dibon, and Ataroth, and Aroer-
They didn't want to go over Jordan and be with their brethren; they chose the good pasturelands East of Jordan to live in because it was good cattle country. But in later Scripture, every reference to the towns they settled in records those towns (Dibon, Ataroth, Heshbon etc.) as being in Gentile hands (Num. 32:33-38); and it would seem from the 1 Chron. 5 genealogies that they went off into Assyria and assimilated into the tribes there. By choosing separation from God's people, they drifted off with the world.

Num 32:35 and Atrothshophan, and Jazer, and Jogbehah-
It is often not appreciated that the extent of the area given to the two and a half tribes on the east of Jordan, as defined in Josh. 13:10-12, was roughly the same as the entire

territory given to the nine and a half tribes on the west of Jordan. The two and a half tribes saw good pasture land and wanted it there and then, as a king of short cut to the Kingdom of God. But there are no short cuts to the Kingdom. The conditions they were given demanded even more faith from them. Their men had to leave their flocks and families unprotected on the east of Jordan whilst they fought in the front line vanguard of Joshua's army to secure the territory on the west of Jordan. And the territory they were asked to possess was huge, far larger than the pasture lands they initially coveted, and inhabited by giants (see on Josh. 13:30)- which they probably didn't realize at the time.

Num 32:36 and Beth Nimrah, and Beth Haran: fortified cities, and folds for sheep-
Beth Haran means 'house of the high places' and clearly has reference to idolatrous high places. Beth Nimrah, house of the leopard, likely has similar reference; for "house" probably referred to an idol shrine. But although the Israelites changed some names, e.g. in :42, they often left the names connected with idolatry. They at best allowed the subliminal associations with idolatry to remain, and likely in practice they used these idol shrines. See on :38.

Num 32:37 The children of Reuben built Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Kiriathaim-
Elealeh means literally the 'going up' of God, 'El'. The same word for 'going up' is used of Israel's 'going up' to inherit Canaan (Dt. 1:21,26,28 and very often). So it seems that some faithful ones did rename the towns with spiritual, Godly names. But see on :36,38.

Num 32:38 and Nebo, and Baal Meon, (their names being changed), and Sibmah; and they gave other names to the cities which they built-
There is no record at all of Israel's obedience to the commands to destroy the local idols of the land. Instead the historical record is full of evidence that they worshipped these gods. Although the name of Baal Meon had been changed in Num. 32:38, by the time of Josh. 13:17 the old name was still being used. Clearly Israel did not detest idolatry as they ought to have done. Just as the names of idols should not have passed the lips of Israel, so for us, the things of sexual impurity are not to be named amongst us (Eph. 5:3). The allusion shows how Paul understood such things to be the equivalent of idolatry in his day, and that remains a fair interpretation even in our age.

Nebo and Baal were the names of Canaanite gods, and Yahweh forbad His people to even mention their names (Ex. 23:13; Hos. 2:17). The principle for us is that we shouldn’t surround ourselves with things which even suggest or stimulate the idea of being anything other than totally dedicated to the one true God, or which may trigger the idea of idolatry.

Num 32:39 The children of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and took it, and

dispossessed the Amorites who were therein-
See on :40. Machir's family wanted to inherit the Kingdom, whereas many others were just initially happy to farm whatever land they could and weren't bothered about the inheritance God had given them. The daughters were keen to maintain their father's name (Num. 27:1; 36:1). There was even a child named "Gilead" in the family (Num. 26:29). And so God confirmed their desire for Gilead by giving it to them (Dt. 3:15), even though inheritance east of Jordan was not God's ideal intention for them. But He encouraged them in the way they wished to go. And so He will with us.

Num 32:40 Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he lived therein-
Num. 32:39 describes how the tribes of Gilead were displaced by Machir; but Num. 32:40; Dt. 3:15 says that God through Moses "gave Gilead to Machir". The land they took was not therefore taken so much by their human effort, swords and bows, even though they played a role- but by the gracious gift of God. And it's the same with our inheritance of the Kingdom. We note that it was God's intention that Israel lived permanently in the promised land. Yet their specific inheritances were related to their behaviour during the time when they took the kingdom; thus Machir received the territory which he had ethnically cleansed. And so our eternal inheritances, the nature of our eternity, will be a direct reflection of our work in this life. It's not that works can save us. Salvation itself is the gift of grace, represented by how Gilead was given to Machir by God. But it is so that the nature of our eternity will is being forged by our experiences and spiritual intentions now. We are right now shaping the nature of our eternal future.

Num 32:41 Jair the son of Manasseh went and took his towns, and called them Havvoth Jair-
Some claim that the Bible doesn't recognize genealogy through women, and find some problem in the Lord Jesus being descended from Abraham and David through a woman. But there are Biblical examples of genealogy being reckoned through a woman. We have one here. Jair's father was of the tribe of Judah (1 Chron. 2:22); yet in Num. 32:41 he is described as "the son of Manasseh", showing that his mother must have been of the tribe of Manasseh. His descent was reckoned for some reason through his mother rather than his father.

Num 32:42 Nobah went and took Kenath, and its villages, and called it Nobah, after his own name-
We note that Nobah changed the name of this town- although "Kenath" simply means "possession". This thereby throws into a worse light the way that the Israelites often didn't change the names of areas which had associations with idols, even though changing the names was within their power. See on :36,38. We ought to do all within our

power to remove even subliminal reminders of sin and temptation. And that principle has huge practical moment in our lives in this world.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 33

Num 33:1 These are the journeys of the children of Israel, when they went forth out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron-
Israel moved only 33 times in the first 39 years of wandering, meaning that they stayed on average for over a year in each of their resting places. Yet in the fortieth, final year, Israel moved nine times- and at least eight of those moves were in the last seven months of the fortieth year (:38). The tempo of God's activity increases towards the end of our lives and in the final entry period into God's Kingdom during the tribulation. The temp is also strong at the start of our journey- the first nine stops on the journey were relatively soon after leaving Egypt, within the first year.

Num 33:2 Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of Yahweh, and these are their journeys according to their goings out-
Heb.: "Moses recorded the starting points of their various marches as directed by the Lord; their marches, by starting point, were as follows". Each stage of the journey [Heb. 'departure'] was a starting point- each day is the first day of the rest of our lives. Israel perhaps wanted to move on from a sense of boredom, a desire for something new- just as many do today, kidding themselves that this is a spiritual 'journey'. For those truly on a journey to the Kingdom, our moving on is "at the commandment of the Lord" (Ex. 17:1).

Moses kept this record of their journeys in the spirit of how God commanded His people to each one remember the way by which God had brought them out from Egypt to Canaan (Dt. 8:2). We need to keep at least a mental diary of how God has led us in our lives, to look back with feelings of gratitude and grace as we see how He has led us, how life for us is no mere succession of chance events, but has a definite direction and end point in entering the Kingdom.

"Goings out"[AV] suggests that each stage of our journey, even if it at times seems two steps back and three forward, is in fact a 'going out' from Egypt. And yet we know from Acts 7 and Ez. 20 that Israel took the idols of Egypt with them and in their hearts turned *back* to Egypt (Acts 7:39), even though the external journey was a going out, away from Egypt. And so our church life can have the same semblance, whilst in our hearts we have turned back.

The Hebrew word is used about the entire ‘going out’ of Israel from Egypt to the promised land. Our total journey from the world through the Red Sea of baptism to the

Kingdom of God involves much wandering, backwards and forwards (32:13). But it's all under God's control and part of our total exodus from Egypt to the Kingdom. Although humanly the journey was a zigzag and circular route, it is described in Ps. 107:7 as a "right" or 'straight' way- from God's perspective.

God wanted Moses to record the journey so that Israel could recount it when they entered the land: "You shall remember [Heb. 'to recount', to mark] all the way which Yahweh your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you, to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not" (Dt. 8:2). The command to recount the way was perhaps a command to recite Numbers 33. In the type, it may well be that in the Kingdom age we look back on this brief life so that we never forget 'how we got here'. What may seem now an endless chasing of our tails in a desert we will then perceive to have been purposeful strides towards the Kingdom. There *is* meaning attached to event in our lives, even if we will only perceive that meaning when the record is written up.

Num 33:3 They travelled from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the next day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians-
Israel crossing the Red Sea is one of the most well-known types of baptism / the new creation (1 Cor. 10:1). They were being chased by the Egyptians, and were trapped against the sea. The only way of escape was for that water to open and allow them to go through it. If any Israelite had refused to go through, there would have been no salvation.

The people of Israel as a body were going through the death and resurrection experience of the Lord Jesus, through the process of the Passover and Exodus through the Red Sea. Israel ate Passover (Ex. 12:6) [14th Abib], as the Lord died on the cross as the Passover lambs were slain; Israel left Egypt the next day (Num. 33:3) [15th Abib] and journeyed three days (Ex. 8:27) [15th-17th Abib], and the Lord Jesus was three days in the tomb. Israel then came through the Red Sea [17th Abib], connecting with the Lord's being resurrected. As we come out of the baptismal water, we really are united with the resurrected Lord- a new creation. His newness of life, His deliverance and successful exodus from the world- all this becomes ours.

Num 33:4 while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom Yahweh had struck among them. On their gods also Yahweh executed judgments-
Each of the plagues targeted a specific Egyptian god, and it seems that on Passover night something dramatic happened to all the gods- maybe the idols to them fell over or were destroyed. Yet Israel still took the gods of Egypt with them through the Red Sea and worshipped them on the wilderness journey (Ez. 20:7; Acts 7:43). The pull of idolatry is against all reason, and yet there is such a strong tendency within us not to devote ourselves to only one God.

"Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Yahweh" (Ex. 12:12; 15:11; Num. 33:4). The "gods" are spoken of for a moment as real and existing, in order to show Yahweh's total superiority over them to the point that they didn't exist. Note how it was the Egyptian people who were judged (Gen. 15:14); their idols ("gods") are used by metonymy to stand for those who believed in them. Likewise "demons" is sometimes put by metonymy for those who believed in them (e.g. Mk. 2:32,34). The judgment upon Egypt's gods is brought out by an otherwise obscure reference in Ex. 7:19 to how "there shall be blood in all the land of Egypt on wood and in stone". "Wood and stone" is a term usually used in the Bible for idols; and "the Egyptian priests used

The plagues specifically targeted Egyptian gods: Nile water turned to blood = HAPI – the god of the spirit of the Nile; Frogs = HEKOT – the goddess of magic who had a frog's head; "The dust of the land" turned to lice or gnats (Ex. 8:16) = SEB – god of the dust of the earth; "Swarms of beetles" (Ex. 8:21 Hebrew) = RA and the forerunner of BEELZEBUB were likened to beetles; much pagan Egyptian jewelry features beetles; Murrain of cattle = APIS – the sacred bull god; Boils (Ex. 9:8–9) = NEIT – the queen of the heavens; Thunder and hail = SHU – god of the atmosphere; Darkness = RA – the sun god; Locusts = SERAIJA – protector of Egypt from locusts.

Num 33:5 The children of Israel travelled from Rameses, and encamped in Succoth-
The distance was about 120 miles. It would appear there was no stopping place. The longest segment of their journey was immediately after they left Egypt and had started upon the salvation journey. It's tempting to imagine that Rameses was the city which they were employed building by slave labour, and it was named after the Pharaoh called Rameses. But Egyptology and Egyptian chronology is hopelessly confused. But we note the similarity between "Rameses" and "Meses", the Egyptian name for Moses. And thus we perceive how the two men were set up in antithesis to each other- Moses / Meses, the one drawn out by Yahweh, and Ra-Meses, the man drawn out to Ra, the Egyptian sun god.

Num 33:6 They travelled from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, which is in the edge of the wilderness-
It could be that Etham is a form of Khetam, fortress, which was part of the great wall of Egypt. In this case, there was another deliverance or miracle involved in that the people were allowed through it.

Num 33:7 They travelled from Etham, and turned back to Pihahiroth, which is before Baal Zephon: and they encamped before Migdol-
The "turning back" is typical of how our path towards the Kingdom makes no sense in secular terms. There are points at which we turn back upon ourselves, and wonder why we weren't led more directly to the destination. We shall never be able to fully attach meaning to event in this life, and only in the Kingdom will we realize how there could have been no other way.

Num 33:8 They travelled from before Hahiroth, and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness; and they went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham, and encamped in Marah-
Their dramatic passage through the Red Sea is described in the same way as any other stage on their journey; our baptism into Christ is our Red Sea crossing (1 Cor. 10:1,2),

but the other stages of our journey are no less led by God and part of our final deliverance into His Kingdom.

Num 33:9 They travelled from Marah, and came to Elim. In Elim were twelve springs of water, and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there-
There were twelve wells- one for each of the tribes. The lesson was that God had foreseen Israel's need for water long ago, and arranged those wells for them. As for us in our wilderness journeys. Yet 70 is the number of the Gentile nations in Gen. 10. They were being shown that God's intention was to combine Israelites and Gentiles within a new multiethnic people of God. Perhaps this arrangement of 12 springs and 70 palms was to help Israel to better incorporate the "mixed multitude" amongst them, as being equally God's people. Hence "Elim" implies "holy trees", or "trees of God", as if to remind Israel that He accepted the mixed multitude of Gentiles as equally His redeemed people.

Num 33:10 They travelled from Elim, and encamped by the Red Sea-
This stop next to the Red Sea was perhaps to help them reflect further upon the wonder of their deliverance through that sea. And God arranges our wanderings likewise.

Num 33:11 They travelled from the Red Sea, and encamped in the wilderness of Sin-
This was the point at which they murmured against Moses and were given manna (Ex. 16:1,2). But there's no mention of that, nor of other events on the journey which we might consider significant. And so it is with our own journeys to the Kingdom. There are things we might consider highly significant towns along the way; but in God's spiritual mapping of our lives they weren't that significant. And what we considered insignificant was to His mind highly significant.

Ex. 15:22 adds: "Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water". "Shur" means 'the wall', and may refer to the wall built to define the boundary of Egypt by an earlier dynasty. Num. 33:8 defines the part of the wilderness as being near Etham, where there was a garrison of Egyptians (see on Ex. 13:20). It had been God's intention that they would go three days journey from Egypt into the wilderness and then worship Him (Ex. 8:27). But they didn't. It seems God purposefully didn't provide water for them- because this great trial was intended to lead them to worship and faith. But instead they rebelled, and His intention they would worship Him then didn't come to fruition. How many billions of such plans are made and frustrated each day by human short-sightedness... We note that very soon after their baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), they ran into testing. Just as the Lord did, and as we do.

Num 33:12 They travelled from the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in Dophkah-
Dophkah means to knock, beat or hit hard. Clearly enough a message that the school of hard knocks is required to lead us to the Kingdom. Through much tribulation we shall enter the kingdom (Acts 14:22).

Num 33:13 They travelled from Dophkah, and encamped in Alush-
The exodus through the Red Sea represented our baptism into Christ, and so the wilderness journey to the Kingdom represents our journey there (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We can therefore legitimately look for meaning in the names of the places they camped in. But the 42 stopping places may connect as well with the 42 generations to the birth of Jesus recorded in Matthew's genealogy. This means that the wilderness journey looks ahead somehow to Israel's intended journey to the Lord Jesus.

Num 33:14 They travelled from Alush, and encamped in Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink-
The events of Ex. 17 are the basis for Ps. 95. This is largely a Psalm of praise for what God did for Israel in the wilderness, whilst also commenting on the way they tragically put God to the test, and complained about His care for them. Now the words of Ps. 95:7- 11 are directly quoted in Heb. 3:7- 11 concerning the experience of the new Israel. The simple conclusion from this is that we are really intended to see the events of Ex. 17 as directly relevant for us.

Num 33:15 They travelled from Rephidim, and encamped in the wilderness of Sinai-
Ex. 19:2 adds: "When they had departed from Rephidim, and had come to the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mountain". We are intended to connect this with how they had arrived in Rephidim and rebelled (Ex. 17:1). They moved on from there apparently repentant, and now encamp before Yahweh in the mountain. The impression is of a repentant people, now suitably humble to receive God's law. At least that is the idealized picture given. For God fell in love with Israel in the wilderness and spread His skirt over them at Sinai, accepting them as His wife, despite all their idolatry and weakness.

Num 33:16 They travelled from the wilderness of Sinai, and encamped in Kibroth Hattaavah-
No mention is made of the giving of the law and entry into covenant with Yahweh. We could conclude that this itinerary actually focuses upon their weaknesses, building up the impression that this is an account of God's patience and grace which had led them all the way to the Kingdom.

Num 33:17 They travelled from Kibroth Hattaavah, and encamped in Hazeroth-
"The graves of lust". It is a theme of the Bible that in essence, God gives men their own desires, just as the prodigal son was given what he wrongfully demanded. Here, Israel lusted (s.w. Ps. 78:29) and God gave them what they lusted after. Those who lusted for meat were given it; yet “they were not estranged from their lust” (Ps. 78:30 AV). Sin never satisfies. Giving in to temptation will not lead to the craving being permanently resolved. This is to point up the huge importance of our innermost desires, our heart, our dominant passions- being upon the things of God and His Kingdom. David could say that all his desire was for the things of God (s.w. Ps. 38:9; Is. 26:8). More than anything else we should desire to please Him and be in His Kingdom. And all who thus love the Lord's appearing will be eternally with Him (2 Tim. 4:8).

Num 33:18 They travelled from Hazeroth, and encamped in Rithmah-
Num. 33:18 says that "They departed from Hazeroth, and pitched in Rithmah", whilst Num. 12:16 has "the people travelled from Hazeroth, and encamped in the wilderness of Paran". Rithmah was in the wilderness of Paran, which covered a large area. The intellectual desperation of Bible critics in raising this kind of supposed "contradiction" speaks more about them than anything else. Such intellectual desperation is symptomatic of a struggling, uneasy conscience.

Num 33:19 They travelled from Rithmah, and encamped in Rimmon Perez-
Rithmah is identified by some with Kadesh Barnea, to where the spies returned with their evil report of the land. "Rithmah" means "juniper", a symbol of bitterness and hard words (Job 30:4; Ps. 120:4). Perhaps because this itinerary focuses upon their sins, it is given this name rather than Kadesh Barnea, which means 'the sanctuary of the wandering son'. See on :20.

Num 33:20 They travelled from Rimmon Perez, and encamped in Libnah-
Libnah is perhaps that of Josh. 10:29, between Kadesh-Barnea and Gaza. This confirms the idea that Rithmah is Kadesh Barnea (:19).

Num 33:21 They travelled from Libnah, and encamped in Rissah-
The continued stress upon the word "encamped" is perhaps alluded to in the later comment that believers are like the patriarchs and always on the move, having "no continuing city" in this life (Heb. 13:14)- even if we lived all our days in the same house in which we were born.

Num 33:22 They travelled from Rissah, and encamped in Kehelathah-
Kehelathah is 'place of gathering / assembly', and is the word commonly used for how the congregation gathered themselves together before the tent of meeting. Perhaps there was some significant gathering held at this place. See on :25.

Num 33:23 They travelled from Kehelathah, and encamped in Mount Shepher-
The 42 stopping places were not necessarily the only places they stopped at. In Revelation, the faithful are to be 42 months or three and a half years in the wilderness (Rev. 11-13), and 42 is 12 [the number of tribes, God's people] times three and a half. And 42 months are three and a half years. This is clearly a period associated with testing and tribulation. And so Israel's 42 stopping places in the wilderness are likely selected in order to develop the number 42.

Num 33:24 They travelled from Mount Shepher, and encamped in Haradah-
"Haradah" is 'place of fear / trembling'. As the theme seems to be the failures of Israel, this may refer to some place where they greatly feared / trembled before God. Perhaps this is one of the many scenes of failure the details of which aren't recorded in the other records.

Num 33:25 They travelled from Haradah, and encamped in Makheloth-
'Makheloth' is a form of 'Kehelathah' (:22). It could mean that that they returned to this point, having travelled in a circle. Just as our wilderness journeys feature an element of going in circles. Although the word means 'assembly / gathering', so perhaps these place names were both memorializing some significant gathering of the people.

Num 33:26 They travelled from Makheloth, and encamped in Tahath-
Looking back on all these various moves and places, Moses in his final maturity concluded that Yahweh "went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night to show you by what way you should go, and in the cloud by day" (Dt. 1:33). "Pitch your tents" is s.w. "encamped". The wanderings even of the condemned generation were not random. All was part of God's progressive intention to bring the body of His people to His Kingdom.

Num 33:27 They travelled from Tahath, and encamped in Terah-
"Terah" could mean 'wild goat', and goats are associated with rejection. Again we have the impression that this itinerary reflects the guidance of God of His people, even through the history of their failures and rejection.

Num 33:28 They travelled from Terah, and encamped in Mithkah-
"Mithkah" is 'place of sweetness', as if God was giving them some respite in the otherwise harsh environment. In wrath with His people [for their wanderings were a result of His judgment], He still remembered mercy. We see here His essentially kind and gracious nature.

Num 33:29 They travelled from Mithkah, and encamped in Hashmonah-
'Hashmonah' can mean pleasant or fertile place; see on :28. It was a sign of God's grace to them even in their experience of condemnation.

Num 33:30 They travelled from Hashmonah, and encamped in Moseroth-
'Moseroth' is 'place of correction'. As if it was God's intention that the condemned generation would still be corrected, so that ultimately they could be resurrected to eternal inheritance of the Kingdom.

Num 33:31 They travelled from Moseroth, and encamped in Bene Jaakan-
Dt. 10:6 comments about Moseroth that "There Aaron died and there he was buried". "Moserah" means 'place of chastisement / correction'. Aaron and Moses will be in the Kingdom despite their sin, but it needed Aaron's death for them to be corrected. The punishment was therefore their correction, and was not the angry lashing out of an offended Deity. Moses only mentions this place name at the end of his life, indicating how he looked back and perceived that indeed he had been corrected and learned his lesson, even if it cost him his life.

Num 33:32 They travelled from Bene Jaakan, and encamped in Hor Haggidgad-
'Haggidgad' is literally 'water holes', and is called "Gudgodah" in Dt. 10:7. "A land of brooks of water" is precisely the phrase used of Canaan (Dt. 8:7). They were constantly given foretastes of the Kingdom before entering it, just as we are on our wilderness journey

Num 33:33 They travelled from Hor Haggidgad, and encamped in Jotbathah-
Dt. 10:8 comments about Jotbathah that "At that time Yahweh set apart the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, to stand before Yahweh to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day". Although the Levites had been set apart for Divine service immediately after God's meeting with Israel at Sinai, as outlined in Leviticus and Numbers, it seems that not until Aaron died at the end of the 40 years wandering did they actually in practice begin to serve as intended. This might imply that Jotbathah was

visited near to the end of the wanderings. Another option is that Jotbathah was visited twice, because their condemnation involved wandering in circles. It could be that the reason was that the Levites were ever slow to accept their responsibilities. And they generally failed in their calling over Israel's history, climaxing in the priests arranging the murder of God's own Son.

Num 33:34 They travelled from Jotbathah, and encamped in Abronah-
They went from "Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water (Dt. 10:7) to "Abronah", which is from the root for word for 'Hebrew', 'the place of crossing over'. So perhaps there was here some incident of crossing over water, to prepare them for the later miraculous crossing of Jordan. God continually works to prepare us for future stages in our wilderness walk.

Num 33:35 They travelled from Abronah, and encamped in Ezion Geber-
This was on the Red Sea. This was to remind them of the great work God had done in bringing them across the Red Sea. Constantly God sought to remind them of their spiritual history and beginnings, which were all of His grace. He does the same with us.

Num 33:36 They travelled from Ezion Geber, and encamped in the wilderness of Zin (the same is Kadesh)-
They appear to have visited Kadesh several times; just as we tend to revisit the same places during our wilderness wanderings.

Num 33:37 They travelled from Kadesh, and encamped in Mount Hor, in the edge of the land of Edom-
"Hor" and "mount" are the same word in Hebrew. Num. 20:20,21 comment: "He said, You shall not pass through. Edom came out against him with many people, and with a strong hand. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border, so Israel turned away from him". We must put this together with Ex. 15:15: "Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed the way". So when Edom "refused to give Israel passage through his border" (Num. 20:21), their refusal was because they were "dismayed" and terrified, not because they had some nonchalant confidence against Israel. This is an example of where we must place scripture together to get an accurate picture. Soon after this incident, Israel were commanded not to despise an Edomite (Dt. 23:7)- although this is just what Edom had done to them. We aren't to treat others as they treat us, but leave their judgment with God. These incidents took place in the 40th year of their wanderings (Num. 33:38), and the commands of Deuteronomy were given at the same time. Moses could have reasoned that "the elder (Esau) shall serve the younger (Jacob)" (Gen. 25:23)

and engaged him in battle. But the way of wisdom is to always walk away from conflict with our brethren, even if they are unreasonable.

Num 33:38 Aaron the priest went up into Mount Hor at the commandment of Yahweh and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fifth month, on the first day of the month-
"Come out" is s.w. "brought forth". Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

Num 33:39 Aaron was one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died in Mount Hor-
The death of Aaron was typical of the end of the Mosaic system and priesthood, able to only bring Israel to see the Kingdom, but unable to enable them to enter it. That was the work of Joshua / Jesus. Eleazar could be seen then as the priest who replaced Aaron, and also a type of the Lord Jesus. Aaron, an apparently Egyptian name with no clear meaning and not used about any other Biblical character, was replaced by Eleazar, 'helped by God' or 'helper of God', seeing that God was ultimately Israel's saviour. The numerical value [gematria] of "Eleazar the priest" is the same as "Joshua", the Greek form of which is "Jesus".

Num 33:40 The Canaanite, the king of Arad, who lived in the South in the land of Canaan, heard of the coming of the children of Israel-
Num. 21:1 adds that "he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive". Again we have the impression that this itinerary focuses upon their failures, and God's grace. The promise that an obedient Israel would make their enemies flee before them was not operational here. The conclusion is surely that Israel had sinned and therefore were defeated. These words are frequently used about Israel's judgment at the hand of their enemies because of their sinfulness. All this lends weight to the conclusion that this was another attempt by Israel to enter Canaan as happened immediately after the news of their rejection (Dt. 1:44). Those rejected from the Kingdom at judgment day will

likewise desperately want to be there, nobody will be passive in that day, nor shrugging their shoulders as people do today when encountering the possibility that they may not be there. The wilderness journey speaks of our lives after baptism. It's not a story of glorious victory after glorious victory. There are defeats and failures, partly from our failures, and partly because God in His wisdom knows that this too is part of our path towards the Kingdom. The initial defeat was required in order to make the people trust in Yahweh for victory (Num. 21:2); and we have multiple such experiences in life.

Num 33:41 They travelled from Mount Hor and encamped in Zalmonah-
Num. 21:4 again makes it clear that this was a time of spiritual weakness for the people: "They travelled from Mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom; and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way". "Much discouraged" is Heb. 'reaped down', the same word used about how they felt in Egypt (Ex. 6:9). They adopted the same attitude they had in Egypt, ever searching for something better, and now not wanting to accept what God had planned for them, not looking at the end of their journey but just caught up in the immediacy of their daily feelings. Yet they had just had the exhilaration of having made a vow to God about the cities of Canaan, obeying it, and seeing God answer them. Before that, they had sinned (see on :1). And now, they were again discouraged and low. This is the yo-yo path through the wilderness we all experience. It's not going to be entirely positive. They likely reasoned that God should have spared them this awful part of the journey because they had just been obedient to Him. But that's not how the path to the Kingdom is.

Their route took them back on themselves at this point, heading back towards Egypt. This may have been the psychological trigger for their desire to be back in Egypt (Num. 21:5). We must try to avoid things and situations which may stimulate a desire to leave the way to the Kingdom and return to the world. "Because of the way" reflects how this was indeed geographically one of the worst parts of Israel's journey, through shifting sands blown by the strong sirocco winds. Only camels can survive here, so it's likely that the sheep and oxen Israel had brought from Egypt would've died at this point. And this was just immediately prior to their entry of Canaan (Num. 33:41, so this may look forward to the final tribulation for His people before the Lord's return.

Num 33:42 They travelled from Zalmonah, and encamped in Punon-
*"*Punon" means 'perplexity'; there should have been no such perplexity as they were now approaching Canaan. Again, we are left with the impression that this list of places in Num. 33 focuses upon incidents of their spiritual weakness.

Num 33:43 They travelled from Punon, and encamped in Oboth-
"Oboth" is 'water skins'. Perhaps here too we have a hint at their problems with water,

which would have been provided by God. But they used water skins perhaps to preserve what they saw as more tasty water at this place.

Num 33:44 They travelled from Oboth, and encamped in Iye Abarim, in the border of Moab-
Iyeabarim means heaps or ruins. Perhaps now as they approached the promised land, they were being encouraged that once mighty civilizations all rise and fall, so nothing is invincible- even if at one stage it may appear that way. We too are constantly given encouragement, even if apparently obliquely, along the route of our journey towards the Kingdom.

Num 33:45 They travelled from Iyim, and encamped in Dibon Gad-
Dibon was settled by Gad but this territory was lost to them in the long term (Is. 15:2; Jer. 48:18,22). Their short termist desire for land other than that God planned to give them in His Kingdom didn't have long term blessing. And it will be the same for us.

Num 33:46 They travelled from Dibon Gad, and encamped in Almon Diblathaim-
Diblathaim, 'place of the holy cakes', clearly has idolatrous associations. The word is used for the cakes of raisins used in idol rituals (Hos. 3:1). And it is from this word for "cakes", *dibla*, the raisin cakes used in the Baal cult, from which the word Diblaim comes, the father of Gomer. Again we have the3 sense of weakness at every point of their journey to the Kingdom.

Num 33:47 They travelled from Almon Diblathaim, and encamped in the mountains of Abarim, before Nebo-
Moses seeing the Kingdom but being unable to enter it, nor himself lead God's people into it, points forward to how the law of Moses gave a vision of the Kingdom, but was unable to bring us into it. That required the work of Joshua / Jesus. "Abarim" means 'the regions beyond'. Moses and his law gave an insight into the Kingdom, the region beyond him. For the culture of grace and kindness, centered around the sacrificed future Messiah, the Lord Jesus, was the outcome of the law. But it was unattainable by weak men.

Num 33:48 They travelled from the mountains of Abarim, and encamped in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho-
"By" is "beyond" (Num. 22:1). To describe the Israelite encampment as beyond Jordan implies the author is west of Jordan. Moses' writing here may well have been edited under inspiration later. It was at this point that the apostacy connected with Balaam happened; and again we see how their faith was deeply weak and compromised at

every point of their journey, right up to entrance to the Kingdom. They only entered the land by grace alone.

Num 33:49 They encamped by the Jordan, from Beth Jeshimoth even to Abel Shittim in the plains of Moab-
Beth Jeshimoth is an example of how some of the places they had known in their wilderness journeys (cp. our life now after baptism, which is like crossing the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:1,2) were revisited and taken by Joshua (Josh. 12:3), and incorporated into God's Kingdom. Perhaps situations and places we know in this life will then become eternally ours when we possess them in God's Kingdom.

Num 33:50 Yahweh spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying-
We wonder why the command to destroy idols etc. is here defined as specifically concerning the territory on the west of Jordan. We wonder why the same commandment wasn't given regarding the territory on the east of Jordan which the two and a half tribes had claimed. It was of course implicit in earlier statements that they were to do so there too. But the lack of specific commandment and reminder was perhaps another example of where inheritance east of Jordan wasn't God's ideal intention for Israel, and so they were making their path to eternal inheritance of the land that much harder. Any short cut to the Kingdom ends up actually making the journey far more difficult.

Num 33:51 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan-
Despite the very long list of places where they had failed and sinned, God urges them to inherit the Kingdom and always speaks as if they are going to make it ultimately. He is similarly positive with us.

Num 33:52 then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their stone idols, destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places-
We must compare this command to drive out all the inhabitants of the land with the fact God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and apparently offered the local inhabitants the chance of covenant relationship with Him. Perhaps the people in view were those who had rejected that; or had refused to become tributary in the terms of Dt. 20:10,11. Or perhaps they are peoples other than the seven nations of Canaan specifically mentioned elsewhere. Or again, maybe there were some they should slay, and others they should "drive out" beyond the borders of Canaan. Or maybe Israel and

the local inhabitants were given this range of outcomes- because it was God's desire they accept covenant relationship with Him. If they refused, they were to be forced to leave the land, and if they refused that, then they were to be totally destroyed as in Dt. 20:16. The Mosaic law continually assumes the presence of Gentiles within Israel on a permanent basis. So we have to really conclude that this driving out was of those who refused to repent and accept covenant with Yahweh. For it is mentioned along with the need to destroy idolatry.

Num 33:53 You shall take possession of the land and dwell therein; for I have given the land to you to possess it-
They were to possess the land because God had given them the land- we are to inherit the Kingdom because God has given it to us to inherit. Believing that God has really given us the Kingdom and accepting this is so hard to do.

Num 33:54 You shall inherit the land by lot according to your families; to the more you shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer you shall give the less inheritance. Wherever the lot falls to any man, that shall be his. You shall inherit according to the tribes of your fathers-
They were not to seek to exchange or ammend the lot given them. There is an element to which our lives, our talents, our portion of intended service and inheritance is from God- and yet we so often seek to change this.

Num 33:55 But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those you let remain of them will be as pricks in your eyes and as thorns in your sides, and they will harass you in the land in which you dwell-
What can appear mere harmless associations with the world can in the end destroy us. Whilst we are to be in this world in the same sense as the Lord Jesus was, mixing and identifying with them to bring them too to God, the basic principle of separation from unbelievers must never be forgotten.

Num 33:56 It shall happen that as I thought to do to them, so will I do to you-
That is, drive them out of the land. And this is what happened to Israel. There is a theme in the Bible that the judgments of this world will come upon the unfaithful amongst the children of God; there's a need to be radically different from this world or else we will share this world's condemnation (1 Cor. 11:32; Rev. 18:4).

God has had various intentions which He 'thought' to do, but because of human weakness they don't actually become reality. He told Israel about His plan / intention / *logos* of driving out the Canaanites: "If ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land... I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them" (Num. 33:55,56). He 'thought' to do

things to them through the agency of His people; but those ‘thoughts’ never became flesh. The extent to which Jesus made the word flesh needs some reflection.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 34

Num 34:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying-
The definition of Canaan stresses that "this is the land" which was their intended inheritance (:2), and it excludes the area east of Jordan which the two and a half tribes chose. Clearly this was not God's ideal intention, and yet He went along with it and worked through it. For as the Father with the prodigal son, He gives us ultimately what we truly want. And then helps us through the consequences, as far as we permit Him to. Such is His grace.

Num 34:2 Command the children of Israel, and tell them, ‘When you come into the land of Canaan (this is the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, even the land of Canaan according to its borders)-
The land promised to Abraham was from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea, but here God redefines it as much smaller. He perhaps perceived that they simply didn’t have the spiritual vision to possess that vast area. There is so much made possible for us in prospect; maybe we will ultimately receive less than we could have had because of our limited vision in this life. Yet He encouraged the people to go exploring beyond the bounds which He here gave them, right up to the Euphrates, promising to give them whatever land they walked upon (Dt. 11:24). It seems none rose up to that challenge. God invites His people to assume that they would receive this land and make preparations as if they had- for at this time they had not yet crossed Jordan into it. We are likewise asked to believe that we have been moved into the sphere of the Kingdom of God’s Son, and have received an inheritance by reason of our being in Him (Col. 1:13; Eph. 1:11).

Num 34:3 then your south side shall be from the wilderness of Zin along by the side of Edom, and your south border shall be from the end of the Salt Sea eastward-
The borders of the land were rewritten by God in accordance with the spiritual vision and response of Israel. Initially the land was to be as in Ex. 23:31 "I will set your border from the Red Sea even to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River [Euphrates]". But now that is redrawn by God, especially the southern border. And when they actually inherit the land in Joshua's time, there are further redefinitions. And we note the inheritance of the two and a half tribes east of Jordan was not God's ideal intention for them, even though that territory was within that promised to Abraham. God's intentions for His people are therefore open. He desperately wants to save us,

even if we turn away from the maximum extent of the great salvation He has potentially prepared.

Num 34:4 and your border shall turn about southward of the ascent of Akrabbim, and pass along to Zin; and the goings out of it shall be southward of Kadesh Barnea; and it shall go forth to Hazar Addar, and pass along to Azmon-
This implies a birds eye perspective, looking at lines on a map. The perspective is clearly God's heavenly one. See on :11.

Num 34:5 and the border shall turn about from Azmon to the brook of Egypt, and the goings out of it shall be at the sea-
The reference is not to the Nile, but to the Wady el Arish. "Egypt" is 'Mizraim' and at that time may not have referred to Egypt as we now know it, but specifically to an area to the east of Egypt.

Num 34:6 For the western border, you shall have the great sea and its border: this shall be your west border-
This simple statement was so hard for Israel to accept; because the coast line of the Mediterranean included Gaza and Ashdod, Philistine strongholds which they never really conquered until David's time.

Num 34:7 This shall be your north border: from the great sea you shall mark out for you Mount Hor-
Most commentators on :7,8 lament that "the geographical description of the northern boundary of the land of Israel is so indefinite, that the boundary line cannot be determined with exactness" (Delitzsch, typical of many). Why the unclarity? I suggest it was because as discussed on :3, the borders were still flexible and God would define them in more detail according to Israel's vision and obedience.

Num 34:8 from Mount Hor you shall mark out to the entrance of Hamath; and the goings out of the border shall be at Zedad-
As discussed on :7, the northern border is unclear, not least because it is not clear whether "Hamath" refers to the town on the Orontes river in Syria, or to a region called "Hamath", as in 2 Kings 23:33; 2 Chron. 8:4.

Num 34:9 and the border shall go forth to Ziphron, and the goings out of it shall be at Hazar Enan: this shall be your north border-
This implies detailed geographical knowledge of the area. It is doubtful anyone from

Israel knew that area, and so we have here the direct transmission of fact from God to man through His word.

Num 34:10 You shall mark out your east border from Hazar Enan to Shepham-
There was an intention that some kind of border fence or marker system should be put up. This was practically important, because many of the Mosaic laws were specifically intended to be obeyed within the land of promise. But there is no evidence Israel ever obeyed this command.

Num 34:11 and the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah, on the east side of Ain; and the border shall go down, and shall reach to the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward-
Literally, "pressed upon the shoulder of the lake of Chinnereth towards the east". The descriptions are written as if the author has a bird's eye satellite view of the topography. And so that author was ultimately only God. See on :4.

Num 34:12 and the border shall go down to the Jordan, and the goings out of it shall be at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land according to its borders around it'-
The eastern border roughly follows the river Jordan southwards from the sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. This is significant, because it reminds us that the two and a half tribes had chosen territory to the east of that which was not God's ideal intention to give them at that stage. We are reminded of His eagerness to work with us, despite our less than ideal decisions.

Num 34:13 Moses commanded the children of Israel, saying, This is the land which you shall inherit by lot, which Yahweh has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe-
The land within God's ideal territory for Israel at the time was to be distributed to each family by lot. That lot would have been overruled by God (Prov. 16:33). Just as we each have our specific calling and eternal place in His purpose, unique to us, so Israel had a specific inheritance for each family within the land. But those who wanted their land east of Jordan didn't have this gift of individual lots to each family to inherit. They tried to arrange the Kingdom their way, and in the end, it didn't work out well for them.

Num 34:14 for the tribe of the children of Reuben according to their fathers' families and the tribe of the children of Gad according to their fathers' families, have received, and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received, their inheritance-
It is often not appreciated that the extent of the area given to the two and a half tribes on the east of Jordan, as defined in Josh. 13:10-12, was roughly the same as the entire

territory given to the nine and a half tribes on the west of Jordan. The two and a half tribes saw good pasture land and wanted it there and then, as a king of short cut to the Kingdom of God. But there are no short cuts to the Kingdom. The conditions they were given demanded even more faith from them. Their men had to leave their flocks and families unprotected on the east of Jordan whilst they fought in the front line vanguard of Joshua's army to secure the territory on the west of Jordan. And the territory they were asked to possess was huge, far larger than the pasture lands they initially coveted, and inhabited by giants (see on Josh. 13:30)- which they probably didn't realize at the time.

Num 34:15 The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan at Jericho eastward, toward the sunrise-
The triple emphasis here that those who chose immediate inheritance east of Jordan had already received their inheritance may be behind Christ's triple emphasis that some "have their reward" in this life rather than waiting for the future, eternal reward (Mt. 6:2,5,16).

Num 34:16 Yahweh spoke to Moses saying-
We now have a list of the ten princes of the tribes who were to practically distribute the land allocations. Reuben and Gad aren't listed here as they had taken the land for themselves east of Jordan; and so were excluded from the Divine system of distributing individual inheritances by lot to each family. See on :13.

Num 34:17 These are the names of the men who shall divide the land to you for inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun-
"Divided" is s.w. "inheritance" or "inherit", and also "possessed". I have noted elsewhere the difference between Joshua slaying the kings, and Israel possessing or inheriting the land- which they generally failed to do. But here we read that Joshua also 'inherited' it to them. So much was done for them. We note too the king-priest association, again looking ahead to the work and dual office of the Lord Jesus.

Num 34:18 You shall take one prince of every tribe to divide the land for inheritance-
Apart from Caleb, we don't read of these men elsewhere as leaders. They are called in Josh. 14:1 "the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the children of Israel".

Num 34:19 These are the names of the men: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh-
The order of the tribes here runs from south to north, especially if we take the tribes as being mentioned in pairs, as if this was the order in which the land was to be possessed. But the original intention to take the land from south to north wasn't followed. Israel

were consistently disobedient and short termist in their approach to the conquest of Canaan.

Num 34:20 Of the tribe of the children of Simeon, Shemuel the son of Ammihud-
In contrast to previous lists of names from this period, we find the suffix 'El' common in this list of names. But we note that they had therefore failed to accept or appreciate the revelation of the Yahweh Name which Moses had given to them.

Num 34:21 Of the tribe of Benjamin, Elidad the son of Chislon-
'God of love', the son of 'hopeful'. Here we see some spiritual progress. The people had complained that Yahweh sought to slay them in the wilderness, and it seems this family had rejected that terrible idea. They were no longer just hopeful for something better, but had come to appreciate the love of God. See on :23.

Num 34:22 Of the tribe of the children of Dan a prince, Bukki the son of Jogli-
"Bukki" means 'wasteful'. Surely no mother would have named her baby that (as with Mahlon and Chilion). But the Hebrews often had several names, which were reflective of later life experience, character and achievement. So we can assume that this man became known like this, and was likely named this way because he failed to help Dan take the inheritance intended for them but rather wasted it. The name Bukki stands in sharp contrast to the spiritual meanings of the names of most of the other princes.

Num 34:23 Of the children of Joseph: of the tribe of the children of Manasseh a prince, Hanniel the son of Ephod-
'Grace of God', son of 'shortened', perhaps slain prematurely in the wilderness for his apostacy. Here we see some spiritual progress, as in :21. Hanniel realized that the inheritance of the land was by grace alone given the people's spiritual weakness.

Num 34:24 Of the tribe of the children of Ephraim a prince, Kemuel the son of Shiphtan-
'Established by God', the same word used in Ex. 6:4 of how God established His covenant to give Canaan to Israel. The names of the princes are generally reflective of spirituality, but just as Joshua enabled their inheritance of the land, Israel as individuals still had to personally respond to spiritual leadership. And they generally didn't.

Num 34:25 Of the tribe of the children of Zebulun a prince, Elizaphan the son of Parnach-
'Hidden / treasured by God', the same word used for how Moses was hidden and preserved. Again we have the sense that this man appreciated grace, that Israel were

only inheriting the land because God had preserved them to do so, despite all their catalogue of rebellions against Him.

Num 34:26 Of the tribe of the children of Issachar a prince, Paltiel the son of Azzan-
'Paltiel', delivered by God, as noted on :25, is another reflection of how God alone had delivered Israel to receive the Kingdom inheritance which they didn't deserve.

Num 34:27 Of the tribe of the children of Asher a prince, Ahihud the son of Shelomi-
'Ahihud' is a form of the Hebrew word often used for the glory / majesty of God. He saw the possession of the Kingdom as a manifestation of God's glory, rather than being due to Israel's obedience.

Num 34:28 Of the tribe of the children of Naphtali a prince, Pedahel the son of Ammihud-
'Pedahel' means 'God has ransomed', using the word commonly used for His ransom of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 13:13,15; 21:8 etc.). Nearly all these names reflect an awareness of God's saving grace in giving Israel the Kingdom.

Num 34:29 These are they whom Yahweh commanded to divide the inheritance to the children of Israel in the land of Canaan-
This is emphasized because it was not God's intention that the people just grabbed whatever bit of farmland appeared attractive to them. Likewise we are not to as it were decide how we would like to serve God, but to accept that we have a specific inheritance uniquely prepared for us; and to inherit that, rather than hankering for something else. For God intends only what is best for us in our latter end.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 35

Num 35:1 Yahweh spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying-
The Levites had no land inheritance, only cities. Or better, towns. As explained on Lev. 25:29,30, God's intention therefore was that Israel lived in small settlements and not walled cities. Ideally, the only cities were to be those of the Levites. This detailed potential intention was never realized by Israel; just as the extensive and intricate commands about the restoration of the temple in Ez. 40-48 never were. One of the greatest tragedies for God must be all the wasted potentials He sets up in countless lives. And His joy is when we at least begin to realize them.

Num 35:2 Command the children of Israel that they give to the Levites from the inheritance of their possession some cities to dwell in, and you shall give suburbs for the cities around them to the Levites-

This meant that the Levites were divided amongst the 12 tribes of Israel, enabling them to teach God's ways to the whole nation (Lev. 10:11; Dt. 33:9,10). In this way, the curse upon Levi that his children would be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7) turned into a blessing for all- and God so loves to work in this way, using the consequences of sin to bring about His work, purpose and glory.

Num 35:3 The cities shall they have to dwell in and their suburbs shall be for their livestock, and for their substance, and for all their animals-
Eve was "the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20), in its primary application explaining to the Israelites in the wilderness where *they* ultimately originated from. Israel were to trace their first origins and parents back not merely to Abraham, but to Adam and Eve. Num. 35:3 [Heb.] uses the term to describe the "all living" ["livestock"] of the congregation of Israel; indeed, that Hebrew word translated "living" is translated "congregation", with reference to the congregation of Israel (Ps. 68:10; 74:19). Note how the Hebrew idea of 'all living' repeatedly occurs in the account of the flood (Gen. 6:19; 8:1,17 etc.)- which I suggest was a flood local to the area which the Israelites knew and which had been ultimately promised to Abraham.

Num 35:4 The suburbs of the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be from the wall of the city and outward two thousand cubits around it-
The measurements of the "suburbs" or agricultural land around the Levitical towns was in a square with the measurements taken from the city wall. This implies that their towns were to be built as perfect squares within a town wall. The tabernacle was rectangular, not square. So they were not being asked to imitate the tabernacle but rather the altar, which is repeatedly described as foursquare (Ex. 27:1; 38:1; 30:2 cp. Rev. 21:16). The Levites were to have towns which were effectively the local altar for the people.

Num 35:5 You shall measure outside of the city for the east side two thousand cubits, and for the south side two thousand cubits, and for the west side two thousand cubits, and for the north side two thousand cubits, the city being in the midst. This shall be to them for the suburbs of the cities-
This grant of agricultural land to the Levites was really an indication of God's tacit acceptance that the whole system was not going to work as He ideally intended. If Israel were obedient to the covenant, they would be blessed with bumper harvests, of which they would tithe 10% to the Levites, and additionally the Levites received various tithes from the offerings, and also the freewill offerings. They would have no need to work the land but could dedicate themselves completely to studying and teaching God's law to the people, which would confirm them in their obedience to the covenant and

continued receipt of blessing. But God foresaw this situation would break down, and so He gave them land on which to grow their own food. His law continually reflects His gracious awareness of likely human failure.

Num 35:6 The cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the manslayer to flee to: and besides them you shall give forty-two cities-
The number 42 recalls the 42 stopping places of Israel in the wilderness, just listed in Num. 33. The idea was that the priestly cities were places of teaching which would be stages towards Israel's eternal inheritance of the Kingdom of God in its full sense. We think likewise of the 42 generations to the Lord Jesus which are listed in Matthew' genealogy of the Lord. The Levites were to teach the people and lead them towards Christ, for the law they taught was a schoolmaster which led to Christ (Gal. 3:24).

Num 35:7 All the cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be forty-eight cities together with their suburbs-
"Suburbs" is translated by some as "cattle drives". Josh. 21:41 adds: "All the cities of the Levites in the midst of the possession of the children of Israel were forty-eight cities with their suburbs". The idea was that the Levites would live "in the midst" of the people, teaching them God's way. But Israel's apostacy is often blamed upon the failure of the priesthood; and yet that in turn was partly due to Israel not providing for the Levites.

Num 35:8 Concerning the cities which you shall give of the possession of the children of Israel, from the many you shall take many; and from the few you shall take few. Everyone according to his inheritance which he inherits shall give of his cities to the Levites-
But the reality was that many of the cities the Israelites gave the Levites were in marginal areas or areas still under Canaanite domination. Thus Kedemoth was given to the Levites (Josh. 21:37) but was in fact a town which had not been captured from the local population (Josh. 13:18). They failed to learn the principle of 2 Sam. 24:24, that we are not to apparently sacrifice to God that which cost us nothing.

Num 35:9 Yahweh spoke to Moses saying-
This legislation assumes that the revenger of blood was free to operate. The structure of the law of Moses seemed to almost encourage the idea of serving God on different levels. After much study of it, the Rabbis concluded that there was within it “a distinction between holy and holy just as much as there is between holy and profane”. They were not to avenge (Lev. 19:18). But they *could* avenge, and provisions were made for their human desire to do so (Num. 35:12; Dt. 19:6). These provisions must also be seen as a modification of the command not to murder. The highest level was *not* to

avenge; but for the harshness of men's hearts, a concession was made *in some cases*, and on *God's* prerogative. *We* have no right to assume that prerogative.

Num 35:10 Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them, 'When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan-
This could imply that establishing the cities of refuge, of which we will now read, was to be immediately attended to. But there is no evidence Israel did this. They were satisfied with a bit of farmland, and showed no real interest in the development of a system of blessing and salvation as God had potentially enabled.

Num 35:11 then you shall appoint you cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person unknowingly may flee there-
But as noted several times in Josh. 19, some of these cities they had not even taken from enemy hands. "Appoint" is the usual word for "give". The tribes were to give these cities. But several of them they had not even bothered to take from the local inhabitants. Their disobedience to these commandments made their personal salvation so much more difficult. And so we again see the upward spiral, the self reinforcing nature, of God's commandments. They were not a burden, a chain that binds, but rather an opportunity to prosper spiritually.

Num 35:12 The cities shall be to you for refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer not die until he stands before the congregation for judgment-
The word *go'el* translated "avenger" is also that translated "redeemer" or 'ransomer'. The cities of refuge are therefore understood in Heb. 6:18 as looking ahead to refuge in the Lord Jesus: "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us". The allusion is to how the person who found they had committed a sin worthy of death, yet without as it were wishing to have done so, could flee to a city of refuge and be saved there by the death of the high priest. The curse upon Levi was that the members of this tribe were to be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7). However, this resulted in the cities of the Levites being scattered throughout the land, thus providing accessible cities of refuge to all who wished to escape the consequences of sin. Those cities were evidently symbolic of the refuge we have in Christ. Again and again, the curses and consequences of human sin are used by the Father to mediate blessing. It is the sure hope before us which is our refuge. "Hope", *elpis*, is a confident knowledge of a future reality, rather than a hoping for the best. We should be confident in our salvation. The 'guilty' person was made free totally through the death of the High Priest, clearly looking forward to the significance of the death of the Lord Jesus.

Num 35:13 The cities which you shall give shall be for you six cities of refuge-

Dt. 19:7 adds that they were to do so "for yourselves", or here "for you". The emphasis was very much upon *them* making the cities of refuge, and defining the paths which led to them from all settlements in the land (Dt. 19:3): "I command you, saying, You must set apart three cities for yourselves" (Dt. 19:7). Yet the record in Joshua 18-20 shows that Israel didn't do this, because they didn't even capture all the cities which were to be cities of refuge. All God's laws are and were for the spiritual benefit of His people, rather than simple tests of obedience. Disobedience therefore harms us more than anyone.

Num 35:14 You shall give three cities beyond the Jordan and you shall give three cities in the land of Canaan. They shall be cities of refuge-
Dt. 19:8,9 make it clear that more cities would be added if Israel were obedient and their land borders were enlarged. Those cities of refuge could have been increased in number, thereby making salvation that much 'easier' or accessible; but there is no evidence Israel availed themselves of this. Israel would be provided with more cities of refuge if they were obedient; the way of escape from sin would become easier, as it does for us the more we are obedient to God's principles.

Num 35:15 For the children of Israel and for the stranger and for the foreigner living among them, these six cities shall be for refuge; that everyone who kills any person unintentionally may flee there-
We are all in the position of the person who unintentionally killed another person and is therefore liable to death. We have all sinned, and yet as it were in the spirit of how Paul describes our sin in Romans 7- committed against our better intentions. Heb. 6:18 speaks of us fleeing for refuge into Christ- suggesting we are the one who flees after committing manslaughter, and becoming "in Christ" by baptism is our entry into Him as our city of refuge. But we must abide in Him- for if we leave Him then we are liable to death (:26). And our final salvation from the effects of sin is guaranteed by the death of the High Priest, the Lord Jesus (:25).

Num 35:16 But if he struck him with an instrument of iron, so that he died, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death
Dt. 19:13 expresses this as "you must put away the innocent blood from Israel". We would rather expect that guilty blood must be put away. AV has "the guilt of innocent blood", LXX "so shalt thou purge innocent blood". The idea was that the guilt for innocent blood must be purged by blood. The Lord's blood was the ultimate innocent blood, and so Israel were being prepared to accept that blood was to be shed for His blood. And thus it happened (Mt. 27:25; Acts 5:28).

Num 35:17 If he struck him with a stone in the hand, by which a man may die, and he died, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death-

The purpose of the system of cities of refuge was (Dt. 19:10) "so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, and so guilt for blood be upon you". Innocent blood would not be shed because there was a system of judging and punishing those who shed it (Dt. 19:12). If Israel were indifferent to preparing the way for others' salvation, then innocent blood would be shed and they would be responsible for it (Dt. 19:10). This is powerful stuff. Indifference to providing others with a way of escape from their sin and death means we are actually guilty of their lack of salvation. And yet we tend to think that committed sin is all we have to worry about / avoid. The lesson here, however, bites far more caustically and insistently into our comfort zone. If we are indifferent to marking out the way of escape for others, their blood will be upon our heads. Our chief excuses for not witnessing enthusiastically basically amount to laziness, indifference, not getting our act together because we don't see we have to... when actually, there is an intense urgency about our task.

Num 35:18 Or if he struck him with a weapon of wood in the hand, by which a man may die, and he died, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death-
The slayer of innocent blood was to be slain without pity: "you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you" (Dt. 19:13). But David seems to have stepped up to a higher level when he told the woman of Tekoah that he would protect her son from revenge murder, after he had slain another man (2 Sam. 14:8-10). The woman pointed out that if her son was slain, the inheritance would be lost in her husband's name. Here was a case where two principles seemed to be at variance: the need to slay the guilty, and the need to preserve the inheritance. The higher level was to forgive the slayer of innocent blood, even though the Law categorically stated that he should be slain.

Num 35:19 The avenger of blood shall himself put the murderer to death. When he meets him, he shall put him to death-
The idea of blood vendettas, whereby a family member of the murdered has a legal right to hunt and kill the murderer, is widespread in primitive societies. Yet the Law of Moses seems to make provision for it. Seeing that God is presented as the ultimate avenger (see on Num. 31:2), this may seem strange. Instead of grace and forgiveness being inculcated, revenge seems allowed. Yet the desire to repay murder with murder is so great within primitive society that it seems God made a concession to this weakness, and allowed it, whilst seeking to control it from being applied in any wrongful or doubtful context. The fact God makes concessions to human weakness doesn't mean we should eagerly make use of them; the spirit of all God's revelation to us in His word is that we should forgive and leave vengeance to Him.

Num 35:20 If he thrust him from hatred, or hurled at him, lying in wait, so that he died-

Dt. 19:6 defines this in more detail. The person was innocent of intentional murder "was not worthy of death because he didn't hate him in time past". We note that hatred of a neighbour was to be the reason for death. John appears to have this in mind when he reasons that hatred of our brother is effectively a living death sentence (1 Jn. 2:11; 4:20). It was to be that "whoever hates his brother is a murderer", not a manslaughterer (1 Jn. 3:15). And that hatred can be in someone's heart, even if they have not killed the object of their hatred. This is the principle which is taught here.

Num 35:21 or in enmity struck him with his hand, so that he died; he who struck him shall surely be put to death; he is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him-

As Hosea 'redeemed' Gomer in His attempt to force through His fantasy for her (Hos. 3:1), so Yahweh is repeatedly described in Isaiah as Israel's *go'el* , redeemer (Is. 41:14; Is. 43:14; Is. 44:6,24; Is. 47:4; Is. 48:17; Is. 49:7,26; Is. 54:5,8). The redeemer could redeem a close relative from slavery or repurchase property lost during hard times (Lev. 25:25,26, 47-55; Ruth 2:20; Ruth 3:9,12). The redeemer was also the avenger of blood (Num. 35:9-28; Josh. 20:3,9). All these ideas were relevant to Yahweh's relationship to Judah in captivity. But the promised freedom didn't come- even under Nehemiah, Judah was still a province within the Persian empire. And those who returned complained: "We are slaves this day in the land you gave..." (Neh. 9:36). The wonderful prophecies of freedom and redemption from slavery weren't realized in practice, because of the selfishness of the more wealthy Jews. And how often is it that the freedom potentially enabled for those redeemed in Christ is in practice denied them by their autocratic and abusive brethren?

Num 35:22 But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or hurled on him anything without lying in wait-

As discussed on :20, the essential difference between manslaughter and murder was whether or not there was "enmity" or hatred in the heart. Time and again, God's law judges matters of the heart, in a way which no human, secular law ever could.

Num 35:23 or with any stone, by which a man may die, not seeing him, and cast it on him, so that he died, and he was not his enemy, neither sought his harm-

Secular law would go into questions as to whether the man had taken due reasonable precautions, and judge him accordingly. But that aspect isn't considered under Divine law. The simple division was over the question of whether or not the person had intentionally harmed another, and whether he had previously had hatred in his heart for the person (:22). Questions of 'But did you take precautions? Were you careful enough?' were totally made irrelevant by the immense value God gives to the question of the state of heart.

Num 35:24 then the congregation shall judge between the striker and the avenger of blood according to these ordinances-
But Israel were not to avenge (Lev. 19:18). But they *could* avenge, and provisions were made for their human desire to do so in some cases (see too Num. 35:12). These provisions must also be seen as a modification of the command not to murder. The highest level was *not* to avenge; but for the harshness of men's hearts, a concession was made *in some cases*, and on *God's* prerogative. *We* have no right to assume that prerogative. Rather than continually make use of God's many concessions to human weakness, we should seek to live on a higher level.

Num 35:25 and the congregation shall deliver the manslayer out of the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge, where he was fled. He shall dwell therein until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil-
The death of the High Priest enabled the 'guilty' person to be totally freed because the principle that death was required to atone for death had been thus fulfilled (:33)- as if in his death, the High Priest was taking upon himself the guilt of the sin of murder, as a total representative of the sinner. In this we see foreshadowed the representative nature of Christ's death for us.

The command "You shall not kill" in Ex. 20:13 must be understood in the context of a situation where the same Law also commanded certain sinners to be put to death within the community, and at times Israel were Divinely commanded and enabled to kill others outside of the community. We have to look, therefore, for a more specific meaning for this commandment- and it seems it is speaking specifically of blood revenge, killing the person who murdered one of your relatives. According to Num. 35:25-28, if the murder was unintentional, i.e. manslaughter rather than murder, then the person could flee to a city of refuge lest he be slain by the avenger of blood. There is no guidance for the avenger of blood in these 'cities of refuge' passages; rather is there the assumption that he might well attempt to take revenge even for manslaughter, and in this case the unintentional murderer should flee from him into a city of refuge. But clearly enough, this was not God's will- for "You shall not kill". But such is God's grace that He built into His law a recognition that His people would fail. This isn't what we would expect of a 2+2=4 God, where broken commandments are to be punished and period. In this case, we see here a tacit recognition even within the Mosaic Law that the commandments- in this case "You shall not kill"- wouldn't always be obeyed, and therefore extra legislating was added to enable this situation to be coped with. This isn't only an example of God's sensitivity to human sin and weakness of hot blood [although it is that]. It's an insight into how the very structure of His law is such that He understands human weakness, and is eager to ensure that it hurts others as little as

possible. No more human 'god' would have dreamed this up. This grace has the stamp of the ultimately Divine, and any attempt to understand it within the frames of literalistic, legalistic analysis are doomed to failure.

Num 35:26 But if the manslayer shall at any time go beyond the border of his city of refuge where he flees-
These borders are defined in :4 as 2000 cubits from the foursquare city wall of the Levitical city; and the cities of refuge were Levitical cities. The Levitical towns were representations of the altar, which is repeatedly described as foursquare (Ex. 27:1; 38:1; 30:2 cp. Rev. 21:16). The Levites were to have towns which were effectively the local altar for the people. Hence the manslayer could flee to those towns as if fleeing to an altar. And that city of refuge represents finally the Lord Jesus (Heb. 6:18). Going out from it is therefore rather like leaving Him.

Num 35:27 and the avenger of blood find him outside of the border of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kill the manslayer; he shall not be guilty of blood-
This ruling was in order to point up the importance of the cities of refuge, and the need to take manslaughter seriously. Even if in fact the avenger of blood was acting in a morally deficient way. For slaying a morally innocent man out of personal anger and blood lust, not in order to cleanse the land of innocent blood, was surely far below ideal behaviour.

Num 35:28 because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest; but after the death of the high priest the manslayer shall return into the land of his possession-
One day, the manslayer who wandered outside the city of refuge could be slain; but the next he couldn't be, because the High Priest had died. This was to point up the huge significance of the death of the High Priest. This was clearly presented as a kind of atonement through death, and served no practical purpose apart from to point ahead to the atoning death of the great High Priest to come, the Lord Jesus.

Num 35:29 These things shall be for a statute and ordinance to you throughout your generations in all your dwellings-
"Throughout your generations" is a kind of way of saying 'for ever', but "in your dwellings" may suggest we are to interpret it as meaning 'for as long as you live in the land'. The significance of Israel being deported from their land was therefore that effectively the law of Moses had thereby been ended. And the destruction of the temple, tabernacle furnishings, the loss of the ark and Biblical priesthood, all meant that it was obvious that the law could no longer function. It effectively ended well before the death of the

Lord Jesus, so the Israelite wanting relationship with God had to return to the promises to Abraham for that basis of relationship. And those promises were the essence of the new covenant. It was the Lord's death which confirmed the new covenant.

Num 35:30 Whoever kills any person, the murderer shall be slain at the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person that he die-
Insisting on more than one witness before accepting the truth of an allegation meant that gossip and slander were limited; and Jesus applies this principle to dealing with disputes within His church (Mt. 18:16). Although His teaching about not condemning our brethren meant that He didn't advocate as it were 'putting to death', but rather stern rebuke and damage limitation. Those who served other gods had to die on the testimony of two or three witnesses. This idea is twice alluded to in the New Testament in the context of making the decision to cease fellowship with someone (Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). The implication is that death under the Old Covenant pointed forward to first century church discipline under the New Covenant. But we must note that the reason for this was serving other gods and wilful departing from covenant relationship with the Lord- not minor reasons. And yet the Lord appears to go a step beyond this; for I detect in Mt. 18:16 a reference to this law, but He goes on to suggest that the higher level in interpersonal offences is not to apply this but to simply forgive.

Num 35:31 Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death; but he shall surely be put to death-
"Ransom" is the word for atonement or covering, *kapher*. There is a position where there is no atonement possible. And yet David was at this point- there was no sacrifice or fine to get him out of his guilt over the sin with Uriah. But the 'sureness' of the command here was by grace not carried out, just as the 'sure' promise of death in the day Adam ate the fruit was not carried out. Possibly God factored in the way that David had not hated Uriah in his heart in the past; see on :20,23.

Num 35:32 You shall take no ransom for him who is fled to his city of refuge, that he may come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest-
We died and rose with Christ, if we truly believe in His representation of us and our connection with Him, then His freedom from sin and sense of conquest will be ours; as the man guilty of blood was to see in the death of the High Priest a representation of his own necessary death, and thereafter was freed from the limitations of the city of refuge (Num. 35:32,33).

Num 35:33 So you shall not pollute the land in which you are: for blood, it pollutes the land; and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed therein, but by

the blood of him who shed it-
Yet see on :31. Note how blood is a symbol of both life and also death (Gen. 37:26; Num. 35:19,33; Lev. 20:9). Both the Lord's death and His life form a covenant / testament / will for us to obey- in both baptism and then in living out the death and life in our daily experience. We cannot be passive to it. Gal. 3:15; Heb. 9:16 and other passages liken the blood of Christ to a covenant; and yet the Greek word used means definitely the last will and testament of a dead man. His blood is therefore an imperative to us to do something; it is His will to us, which we must execute. Thus His death, His blood, which is also a symbol of His life, becomes the imperative to us for our lives and living in this world.

Num 35:34 You shall not defile the land which you inhabit, in the midst of which I dwell; for I, Yahweh, dwell in the midst of the children of Israel'-
The implication is that if Israel were morally defiled, then Yahweh would be unable to dwell in the midst of them. Seeing they lived in the land of Canaan, this would mean that He would have to depart from that land. And that is the significance of Ezekiel's visions of the shekinah glory of Yahweh departing from the sanctuary and forsaking the land. The idea is not that the land of Israel was defiled in some metaphysical sense. The defilement was clearly related to the moral defilement of the people within the land. Hence Lev. 18:24,25 Don't defile yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations which I am casting out before you were defiled. The land was defiled; therefore I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out her inhabitants". But there was no ritual of cleansing the physical land; rather was the land intended to bring forth great harvests in reflection of Israel's obedience to the covenant.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 36

Num 36:1 The heads of the fathers' households of the family of the children of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of the sons of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before the princes, the heads of the fathers' households of the children of Israel-
They raise the matter of the special agreement and interpretation of the law given in Num. 27. They perhaps raised it again after hearing the discussion about the dividing up of the land in Num. 35 and wished to ensure that this special clarification was going to be upheld. For as noted on :3, this was to be a departure from social norms, in allowing land to be passed on through the female line.

Num 36:2 They said, Yahweh commanded my lord to give the land for inheritance by lot to the children of Israel; and my lord was commanded by Yahweh to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters-

Examples of spiritual ambition are inspirational; just as soldiers inspire each other by their acts of bravery. Achsah followed her father Caleb's spiritual ambition in specifically asking for an inheritance in the Kingdom (Josh. 14:12; 15:18); and this in turn inspired the daughters of Zelophehad to ask for an inheritance soon afterwards (Josh. 17:4). And so it ought to be in any healthy congregation of believers. Ponder the parallel between Is. 51:1 and 7: "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord... hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness". To know God's righteousness is to seek / follow it; of itself, it inspires us to ambitiously seeking to attain it.

I suggested on Num. 27:3 that we can identify Zelophehad as the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath.

Num 36:3 If they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the children of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of our fathers, and will be added to the inheritance of the tribe unto which they shall belong: so will it be taken away from the lot of our inheritance-

In most societies of the time, a woman didn't get her father's inheritance, but instead was intended to marry into another family. The inheritance of land passed through the male line. But these women had been perceptive, and realize that the inheritance was going to be eternal, and so they wanted their father to have his name preserved in association with his inheritance- otherwise he would as it were lose his inheritance because he had no sons. And so they were granted their request. We see from Ezra 2:61 another case of how this worked out in practice. God cannot be accused of being against women; His legislation valued every human person to a degree unseen in any contemporary legislation.

Num 36:4 When the jubilee of the children of Israel shall be, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe whereunto they shall belong: so their inheritance will be taken away from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers-

This is not the only example of where the Mosaic law was structured so as to intentionally need further interpretation and clarification. It was designed to provoke relationship with God, rather than as a legalistic total statement of how to live in every part of life. One wonders why this statute had not been included within the Law of Moses. Perhaps God had reserved it in potential, waiting the initiative of these women?

Num 36:5 Moses commanded the children of Israel according to the word of Yahweh, saying, The tribe of the sons of Joseph speaks right-

What was important was that the man's inheritance should pass on in his own name, or that of his family. As discussed on :10, the reasoning behind this was because it was

God's intention that Israel should eternally inherit their allotments in the land, at the time of resurrection.

Num 36:6 This is the thing which Yahweh does command concerning the daughters of Zelophehad, saying, Let them be married to whom they will; only into the family of the tribe of their father shall they be married-
This verse is alluded to by Paul in 1 Cor. 7:39, where we read that a Christian widow can marry whom she will but only to someone “in the Lord”- in the same way as the women here could marry whom they wished, but only in the tribe of their fathers, unless they would lose their inheritance permanently. It could be that Paul is teaching that marriage within the faith, to those also “in the Lord” by baptism into Him, is so important that doing otherwise may cause us to lose the promised inheritance of the Kingdom. Marriage within the faith is indeed an important principle and ignoring it often has terrible spiritual consequences. But note that she was free to marry whom *she* wanted- in a culture where arranged marriage was the norm, God valued the dignity and free choice of the woman.

If we deny our covenant with God by marrying into the world, we have effectively cut ourselves off from Him. The command for widows to marry "whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39) is alluding back to the command to Zelophehad's daughters to marry "whom they think best", but *only* "in" their tribe, otherwise they would lose the inheritance (Num. 36:6,7). The implication is that those who do not marry " in the Lord" will likewise lose their promised inheritance. And this rather strange allusion indicates one more thing: the extent of the seriousness of marriage out of the Faith is only evident to those who search Scripture deeply. As man and woman within Israel were joint heirs of the inheritance, so man and wife are joint heirs of the inheritance of the Kingdom (1 Pet. 3:7).

Num 36:7 So shall no inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe; for the children of Israel shall all keep the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers-
The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units. This was "The inheritance of fathers", "your possession" (Lev. 25:27,28; Num. 36:7,8). God had given specific inheritances to His people, that this was not to be sold or traded. The division by lot in Josh. 15:1 presumably meant that the tribal areas were defined and then distributed by lot. And then within those areas, each family was given a specific inheritance.

Num 36:8 Every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel shall be wife to one of the family of the tribe of her father, that the children of Israel may possess every man the inheritance of his fathers-
For land inheritance to pass on through the female was unheard of in contemporary legal codes. We are all somewhat in Zelophehad's position. He sinned and died for it, but he has the hope still of eternal inheritance in the Kingdom at the resurrection- in his own name.

Num 36:9 So shall no inheritance remove from one tribe to another tribe; for the tribes of the children of Israel shall each keep his own inheritance-
This repetition of :7 is because it was so important to God that each family kept the inheritance He had spied out for them and given them. The laws about redeeming sold property at the year of Jubilee shows the same special interest of God in this matter. We need likewise to take seriously the fact that Israel's individual inheritance in the land looks ahead to the specific, unique inheritance each of us shall have in eternity. We are being developed in this life so that we can inherit it. God had given each family a specific inheritance and wanted that to remain within the family name; see on Num. 30:1 for other legislation which defends this Divine intention. The fact the legislation about female heirs is repeated twice (here and in Num. 27) reflects the same Divine concern.

Num 36:10 The daughters of Zelophehad did as Yahweh commanded Moses-
The fact God allows His children to live His truth on different levels needs to be grasped firmly by us, lest we become discouraged that others live on an apparently lower level than we do in some aspects of life. Being surrounded by ‘lower levels’ ought to inspire us to the higher levels. Zelophehad had only daughters; usually, in his context, a man would have taken concubines in order to produce sons. The record of his only having daughters is presented in the context of genealogies which show that many Israelite men had more than one wife (1 Chron. 7:15). But Zelophehad wasn’t dragged down by this; God inspired him to maintain the higher level which he had chosen to live by. He didn't use the principle of Jephthah's vow. And his daughters likewise refused to be limited by their status as females, but obtained an inheritance amongst their brethren (Num. 27:1-7).

Num 36:11 for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to their father’s brothers’ sons-
The names of these women all feature the 'Yah' suffix. This is unusual as most of the names we read at this time at best have 'el' for God, or are just of secular meaning. All

these women had accepted the revelation of the Name of Yahweh given by Moses. I say they accepted it because it is clear that many people didn't keep their birth names but acquired other names later in their lives, reflective of their life experience and developed beliefs.

Num 36:12 They were married into the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph; and their inheritance remained in the tribe of the family of their father-
Considering the low status of women at that time, we see here a commendable spirit of initiative and spiritual ambition for these women to dare ask a male dominated society to change their rules to allow them to have an inheritance. We see too how God and Moses weren't at all anti-women, and responded positively. Note how the women were allowed to come directly to the decision makers, without needing to appoint a male representative for their case, as was common in surrounding cultures. The value of the human person is consistently seen throughout the Pentateuch. They asked about this matter *before* the land had been possessed, reflecting their strength of faith that God would fulfil His promise of giving His people the Kingdom; they imagined what it would be like there, and acted accordingly even before they got there, as if the land was already theirs in possession- just as we should.

Num 36:13 These are the commandments and the ordinances which Yahweh commanded by Moses to the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho-
"Ordinances" is "judgments" (AV), perhaps referring to judgments expanding and further defining the law, as we have just read about the matter of female inheritance. The contrast may be with the similar comment in Lev. 27:13 concerning the laws given *at Sinai*. There was clearly some progressive revelation of God's laws and covenant, and now we will come to Deuteronomy, the second law, where again there are additions, clarifications and ammendments. This reflects how the law was not a chain upon Israel, but part of a living dialogue and real relationship between Yahweh and His people. And it is even more evident under the new covenant.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: DEUTERONOMY

DEUTERONOMY

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 1

Deu 1:1 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah over against Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab-

Critics have made much of the apparent contradiction between the geographical details in Dt. 1:1 and the location details in Dt. 4:45,46. But I suggest that the names in Dt. 1:1 are not intended to be pinned down to specific locations. There are six of them, and it was unlikely that any reader would be able to pinpoint a location in the uncharted desert from these vague places. Rather, we are given a word picture of what the desert was like. The place names in Dt. 1:1 mean [in order] "Ornamental", maybe referring to the appearance of sand sculptures made by the wind; "quagmire", "whiteness", "tower" and "golden".

Another take is that these six places are all the locations of various apostacies of Israel. Six is a number associated with sin. And at each of them, Moses had appealed to Israel

with the words we now have in the speech transcripted in the book of Deuteronomy. The Hebrew name for the book is *Debarim* "These are the words…", suggesting these words were repeated often. They may indeed be the "words of this song" which Moses is described as singing to Israel- as if the whole book is "this song". Israel's failures and God's abiding grace and love is indeed a theme of this song. Deuteronomy records the sins of the generation that entered the land- at Massah (Dt. 6:16, 9:22), Horeb (Dt. 9:8–21) and at Taberah, Kibroth-hattaavah and Kadesh-barnea (Dt. 9:22,23). The context seems to indicate that it was the audience of Deuteronomy, "you", that generation and not their fathers, who had sinned at these places. Moses speaks as if he is talking with that generation when he says that the covenant was made "not with our ancestors… but with us" (Dt. 5:3). And it was "us", "you", whom he says had so sinned in the desert. They entered the land by grace.

The meanings of the place names as mentioned above could all have idol worship connotations. But the song of "Deuteronomy" is indeed the deuteros nomos, the second law, which is the name of the book in Russian [vtoroe zakon]. And the law as repeated here by Moses often differs to that given previously, reflecting God's adjustment of His requirements in harmony with His grace towards them. We see here that God's 'law' can change and His requirements do change as He Himself progresses in appreciation of His peoples' frailty. We see the same after the flood, where God promises Himself not to judge the earth with a flood again because He now perceives more the wickedness of the human heart.

Deu 1:2 It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea-
It took Israel 38 years to complete this journey, but it was only 11 days if they walked directly. Their exit from Egypt through the Red Sea represents our baptism into Christ (1 Cor. 10:1,2), and the wilderness journey is the prototype of our walk to God's Kingdom. We tend to walk around in circles as Israel did, rather than perceiving our end destination clearly and keeping our focus upon it. The theme of Deuteronomy is the conviction of Israel for their sins and an appeal to faithfulness to the covenant. And so Moses begins by posing the question- How come a journey of 11 days took 40 years? "The fortieth year" is mentioned in the very next verse. The answer of course was because of Israel's sin.

Deu 1:3 In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that Yahweh had given him in commandment to them-
Moses was now at the end of his life; Israel stood on the borders of the promised land, which he was disallowed from entering. He now gives his swansong, perhaps in the last month or even day of his life he gave Israel the address transcripted for us as

‘Deuteronomy’, literally ‘the second [giving of the] law’. He repeats some of the laws he had previously given them, with some additional comments and clarifications, and shares with them his reflections upon their journey. In this book, therefore, we perceive a man at the point of spiritual maturity.

Deu 1:4 after he had struck Sihon the king of the Amorites who lived in Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth, at Edrei-
Ashtaroth was the name of one of the deities which the surrounding tribes worshipped; Edrei means "strength". The message is that the apparent strength of the idols and those who trusted in them had been overcome. And having won victories which were foretastes of those Israel would win in Canaan, Moses now urges the people to go forward in faith. In Yahweh's strength, they could overcome the idol worshipping tribes, despite their apparent strength. But Israel still kept those idols with them.

Deu 1:5 Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began to declare this law saying-
"This law" suggests that the law he was now given was significantly different from the previous law that it could be spoken of as "this law". Clearly, God's law was open to change and reinterpretation, from its very beginning. It is mere literalism and legalism which insists that a Divine law cannot be changed by Him and is therefore eternal in a literal sense.

Deu 1:6 Yahweh our God spoke to us in Horeb saying-
The phrase "Yahweh our God" is used 46 times in Deuteronomy but hardly ever earlier in the law. Moses is exalting in the fact Yahweh was really their God, He was abiding by His promise to Abraham to be the God of Abraham's seed- despite their weakness. This is what we also perceive in our spiritual maturity, that Yahweh is my very own God, and not just generic "God".

You have lived long enough in this mountain-
They arrived at Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt (Ex. 19:1,2); and left it on the 20th day of the second month of the second year, so they were there nearly a year.

Deu 1:7 turn, and take your journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the places near there, in the Arabah, in the hill country, in the lowland, in the South and by the seashore, the land of the Canaanites and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates-
This was the boundary of the land promised to Abraham. But sadly Israel lacked the spiritual ambition to even go there, let alone settle and inherit the land. It may well be

that we inherit the Kingdom, but not to the extent that we could do. We in this brief life are deciding the nature of how we will spend eternity.

Deu 1:8 Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give to them and to their seed after them-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 1:9 I spoke to you at that time saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone-

Jethro had advised Moses to appoint elders so that "they shall bear the burden with you" (s.w. Ex. 18:22). These words recorded here were presumably said after Moses had accepted Jethro's advice. Ex. 18:12 says that this happened before they arrived at Sinai; whereas here we have the impression it happened afterwards. Although "at that time" can be vague. I suggest Moses is here recollecting the incidents of that broad period, but arranging them in terms of their significance and not chronologically. Or it could be that Moses accepted Jethro's advice, but not until some time later did he operationalize it. After their sin with the golden calf he may have realized more fully the weakness of the people and his own inability to personally cope with all the stress.

Deu 1:10 Yahweh your God has multiplied you and behold, you are this day as the stars of the sky for multitude-

He reminds them of the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham in them, although this is sandwiched in between his lament at their unspirituality (:9,12). The new covenant, which is based upon the promises to Abraham, is fulfilled only by grace. The idea is that the stars could not be counted, but we have in Numbers a very precise account of the

numbers of the people. So we can assume that Moses is seeing the fulfilment as potential.

Deu 1:11 May Yahweh the God of your fathers make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as He has promised you!-
The allusion is to the blessing promised to Abraham's seed; but that is interpreted in the New Testament as the blessing of forgiveness (Acts 3:25,26 etc.). And Moses is speaking here in the context of their spiritual weakness (:9,12). The fact the people had been numbered (see the book of Numbers) showed that the promises of the seed becoming innumerable as the stars had not in fact been fully fulfilled. Moses wished for the fuller fulfilment to come; and we might detect in that wish a desire for the coming of the Messianic seed through whom alone that could happen. We can also conclude that there are degrees of fulfilment of the promises of the Kingdom, just as one star differs from another in glory, some reign over more cities than others. "Yahweh your God has multiplied you" (:10), but Moses wishes for more fulfilment.

Deu 1:12 How can I myself alone bear your encumbrance and your burden and your strife?-
Jethro had observed how stressed Moses was with the burdens of the people, and we get the sense that they were at constant strife amongst themselves. Moses' sense of inability to bear the effects of the sins of the people could be read as a desire for the Messianic figure who would bear those sins and their effects; which was to come to full term in the sin carrying of the Lord Jesus on the cross. For the "burden" was of sin (s.w. Ps. 38:4). These feelings of Moses were not of themselves to be read as frustration or weakness; for the same words are used of how God Himself was weary of bearing the "encumbrance" of His people (s.w. Is. 1:14). Moses was sharing God's feelings.

But Moses didn't respond to this burden as he might have done; for in frustration he asks God to slay him, as he just couldn't bear the "burden" of the people (s.w. Num. 11:11). God responded at that point by giving 70 Spirit endowed elders to assist Moses (Num. 11:16), and we can assume this was because the sharing of the "burden" with a system of many elders (as suggested by Jethro and as described in Dt. 1:13-16) hadn't worked. Because those men were themselves weak and unspiritual.

"Strife" specifically refers to legal arguments, which were common amongst the Israelites (s.w. Ex. 23:2,3,6; Dt. 17:8; 19:17; 21:5; 25:1). Paul's command not to take our brother to court is an appeal for us to not be like natural Israel in this matter.

These are the words of Jethro in Ex. 18 "the thing is too heavy for you, you are not able to do it alone". His negative opinion of Moses' capabilities ["you are not able"] was absorbed by Moses and came to be felt by Moses. Yet now Moses looks back and sees

what happened; he admits this weakness, and later in this chapter speaks of how Yahweh carried the people. He is recognizing that he ought to have believed that, rather than Jethro's opinion of him. And in any case, Jethro's suggested answer to Moses' weakness never worked out in practice and was replaced by the priestly system. I discuss on Num. 11:11 how Jethro's words about "all this people" were clearly unduly on Moses' mind at this time. He was wrongly influenced by Jethro.

Deu 1:13 Take wise men of understanding and well known according to your tribes and I will make them heads over you-
As explained on :12, this system didn't really work. The 70 Spirit endowed elders had to be appointed.

Deu 1:14 You answered me and said, The thing which you have spoken is good to do-
The people liked the idea of a lay leadership, but it didn't really work. They were effectively rejecting the idea of direct Divine rule over them. It was the essence of their later desire for a human king and princes (Hos. 13:10), which was a rejection of God's rulership over them.

Deu 1:15 So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men and known, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, captains of hundreds, captains of fifties and captains of tens and officers, according to your tribes-
This system didn't really work, because Moses again felt the burden was too great for him, and the 70 Spirit filled elders were appointed (Num. 11:16). But this too didn't really work; because in Dt. 17:11; 21:5 we seem to read of the priests effectively being the judges, under the direct control of Moses and Aaron.

We note Moses set "wise men and known", but this contrasts with the qualifications required by Jethro: "You shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God: men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them" (Ex. 18:21). Clearly there weren't that many qualified men to be judges, and so the system didn't work.

Deu 1:16 I commanded your judges at that time, saying, Hear cases between your brothers and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the foreigner who is living with him-
We can deduce from this that one of the frequent causes for interpersonal strife was the tension between the "mixed multitude" and the Hebrews. But the entire community was to be accepted as the Israel of God. It was refusal to accept this which led to so much strife; just as happens today, due to a like rejection of the idea of all Christian believers being members of the same body of Christ.

Deu 1:17 You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 1:18 I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do-
Moses repeated to them the various laws he had received on Sinai, as recorded in the Exodus record. Or the specific reference may be to the commandments given there about how to judge.

Deu 1:19 We travelled from Horeb and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw, by the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as Yahweh our God commanded us, and we came to Kadesh Barnea-
"We travelled" may mean this is Moses addressing the new generation born in the wilderness. Likewise :20, "You have come to the hill country of the Amorites". For he is speaking 40 years after Israel left Egypt and the older generation were dead. So this journey from Horeb or Sinai could suggest that the people returned to Sinai, re-entered the covenant, and then journeyed to the promised land. The itinerary of Num. 33 would allow for this. It's as if God is starting over with His people; although Moses' criticisms of that new generation are significant. We get the impression of God trying and trying to forge a covenant relationship with the objects of His love, chosen by grace. And Moses / God appreciated how awful the wilderness was, just as He appreciates the difficulty of our path to His Kingdom. This journey was indeed through a terrible wilderness, full of aggressive snakes. It speaks of how terrible indeed is our journey after the experience of baptism / crossing the Red Sea. It was by God's grace alone they were preserved.

Deu 1:20 I said to you, You have come to the hill country of the Amorites, which Yahweh

our God gives to us-
The "mountain of the Amorites" could be a way of describing the land of Canaan. The following context seems to imply this because Israel send out spies into Canaan to assess how possible it was to take the land. Thereby they lacked faith in the simple statement that it was God's will to give them the Kingdom. We can fail to accept the simple implications of the same promise to us (Lk. 12:32). Hence GNB summarizes :20,21: "You have now come to the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God, the God of our ancestors, is giving us. Look, there it is. Go and occupy it as he commanded. Do not hesitate or be afraid".

Deu 1:21 Behold, Yahweh your God has set the land before you; go up, take possession, as Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed-
"Let not your heart be troubled... neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:1,27) repeats Moses' final encouragement to Israel "fear not, neither be dismayed" (Dt. 31:8; 1:21,29; 7:18). "Afraid" can carry the idea of hesitation (as GNB). If they had entered immediately, in faith in God without feeling the need to send out spies, then victory would have been certain. Quick response, "yes straight away", is part of the life of faith. This is not reckless abandon, but the way of faith. So often the way of disbelief takes refuge behind all manner of delaying tactics which the flesh suggests to us, often in the name of wisdom and prudence.

The command to subject the animals in Eden [the land promised to Abraham?] corresponds to later commands to subject the tribes living in the land (Gen. 1:28 = Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). The "fear and dread" of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the "fear and dread" which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21; 3:8; 11:25).

Deu 1:22 You came near to me every one of you and said, Let us send men before us that they may search the land for us and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up and the cities to which we shall come-

The Divine promise was that His angel would go ahead of them. But making use of this concession to weakness led them to the sin of believing the faithless spies. There is no easy way, no short cut to the Kingdom. The apparently easier ways are only harder.

The sending out of the spies was a concession to human weakness; Num. 13:17-20 says that they were sent in order to find out whether the land of Canaan was a good land, and the feasibility of overcoming the people who lived there. But God had categorically given assurances on these points already; yet Israel preferred to believe the word of men than that of God. They had been told not to hesitate but immediately

enter the land (see on :21). However, God made a concession to their weakness, and gave the command to send out the spies (Num. 13:2). But when Israel heard their faithless tales of woe, they decided they didn't want to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them. When we make use of concessions to human weakness, we often end up in situations of temptation which we find too strong for us. The best way is to simply go straight forward in faith in God's word of promise rather than relying on human strength.

Deu 1:23 The thing pleased me well and I took twelve men of you, one man for every tribe-

In this time of final spiritual maturity, Moses was keenly aware of his own spiritual failings (as Paul and Jacob were in their last days). This is one of the great themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He begins his Deuteronomy address by pointing out how grievously they had failed thirty eight years previously, when they refused to enter the good land. He reminds them how that although God had gone before them in Angelic power (Dt. 1:30,33), they had asked for their spies to go before them. And Moses admits that this fatal desire for human strength to lead them to the Kingdom "pleased me well". It seems to me that here Moses is recognizing his own failure. Perhaps he is even alluding to his weakness in wanting Jethro to go before them "instead of eyes", in place of the Angel-eyes of Yahweh (Num. 10:31-36). Moses at the end was aware of his failures. And yet he also shows his thorough appreciation of the weakness of his people. Moses admits at the end that Israel's faithless idea to send out spies "pleased me well"-when it shouldn't have done (Dt. 1:23,32,33). He realized more and more his own failure as he got older.

Deu 1:24 They turned and went up into the hill country and came to the valley of Eshcol and spied it out-

The idea seems to be as GNB "as far as Eshcol". Num. 13:24 explains: "That place was called the valley of Eshcol because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from there". The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32).

Deu 1:25 They took of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which Yahweh our God gives to us-

This is a very positive perspective on what the spies said; they said that Canaan was a good land, but the inhabitants of the land were far too strong for Israel, effectively calling God a liar. Moses is very positive about Israel in Deuteronomy. It's a sign of

spiritual maturity that we impute righteousness to others and seek to focus on the positive rather than for ever dwelling on the terrible failures of God's people.

They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8), although here they accept on one level that it was true. Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

If they had accepted the power of God, then *whatever* 'adversary' was in the land, in whatever form, was ultimately of no real power (Num. 13:32; 14:36; Dt. 1:25). And yet it was not God's way to specifically tell the people that there was no such dragon lurking in the land of Canaan – instead He worked with them according to their fears, by making the earth literally open and swallow up the apostate amongst them (Num. 16:30) – emphasizing that by doing this, *He* was doing "a new thing", something that had never been done before – for there was no dragon lurking in any land able to swallow up people. And throughout the prophets it is emphasized that *God* and not any dragon swallowed up people. "The Lord [and not any dragon] was as an enemy; *He* has swallowed up Israel" (Lam. 2:5 and frequently in the prophets). The people of Israel who left Egypt actually failed to inherit Canaan because they believed that it was a land who swallowed up the inhabitants of the land (Num. 13:32), relating this to the presence of giants in the land (Num. 13:33). As Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them, they needed to believe that whatever myths there were going around, God was greater than whatever mythical beast was there. And because they would not believe that, they failed to enter the land, which in type symbolized those who fail to attain that great salvation which God has prepared.

Deu 1:26 Yet you wouldn't go up-
This of course applied to a generation previous to that whom Moses was addressing at this point. There are examples of where the individual Israelite had the actions of the body of Israel in the past imputed to him (Dt. 1:26; 5:2; 29:1). This isn't 'guilt by association', but rather an example of the ineffable unity of all God's people, wherever and whenever they lived, over time as well as over space. Thus the most lonely individual can read the historical records of God's people in the past and feel a true sense of community with the people of God, knowing that these things are his very own personal legacy and spiritual inheritance.

But rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh your God-
We are left to imagine in what tone of voice Moses said that. Israel had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh through disbelief, and therefore couldn't enter Canaan (Dt. 1:26; 9:7,23,24; 31:27; Num. 27:4); they were as the rebellious son who rebelled against his father's commandment (s.w. Dt. 21:18,20). For he himself had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and because of this was also barred from entering Canaan (Num. 20:24; 27:14). One reason for this was that he had called the Israelites "rebels" (Num. 20:10), and no sooner had he done so, than he himself rebelled against Yahweh's commandment just like them, but in a different way.

Verses 26-28 form the central point of the chiastic structure of Deuteronomy 1. The essence was that they refused the offer of the Kingdom:

A. go in and possess the land (vv. 6-8)
B. triumphs and multiplication of Israel (vv. 9-12)
C. wise leaders chosen (vv. 13-18)
D. go up and possess the land (vv. 19-21a)
E. do not fear the peoples (v. 21b)
F. request for spies (vv. 22-24)
G. good report of spies (v. 25)
H. BUT, you were not willing, you rebelled; you did not believe
(vv. 26-28)
-G'. evil report of spies (v. 28)
- F'. rejection of the spies (v. 28)
-E'. expressed fear of the peoples (v. 28)
-D'. land is withheld, and given to others (vv. 34-40)
-C'. foolish choice by the leaders (v. 41)
-B'. defeats and decrease of Israel (vv. 42-44)
-A'. do not go in and possess the land (vv. 42, 45, 46)

Deu 1:27 and you murmured in your tents and said, Because Yahweh hated us He has brought us forth out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us-
Israel continually "murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12). "In your tents" reflects how God judges apparently secret conversations and thoughts, muttered in the unspoken assumption of confidentiality or within human minds. Their words as stated here were likely their thoughts rather than

their actual spoken words. But God counts thoughts as spoken words. Again we have highlighted the importance of being spiritually minded.

We marvel at how the passionate love of God for Israel at this time, falling in love with them and not beholding iniquity in Jacob, could be perceived now as hatred for Israel. It is a psychological classic, revealing the fickleness of the human mind when it is not firmly based in faith in God's stated words.

The bizarre claim that "Yahweh hates us" [perhaps they never said this, but their belief system implied it] means that their lack of faith influenced their theology. This often happens. Because a man had an angry and abusive father, and refuses to break free from that, he ends up believing God is like his father. Either God is very good, or very bad. We continually face that choice. As Paul puts it, we place God in the dock. He is either true, or a liar. Dt. 7:8 and elsewhere in Deuteronomy, Moses seeks to correct them by teaching them quite simply that God loves them and doesn't hate them: "it is because the Lord *loves* you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out" (RSV). "Because He loved your fathers therefore He brought them out [of Egypt]" (Dt. 4:37) is Moses' answer to Israel's belief that it was because Yahweh hated Israel that He brought them out of Egypt (Dt. 1:27). This is the abiding challenge- do you feel God's huge love or not? And we see it above all in the cross, wherein "God *so* loved the world".

Deu 1:28 Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our heart melt, saying, 'The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to the sky, and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there'-
The ten spies perceived the people as so strong that they could never defeat them, whereas Joshua and Caleb perceived how things really were- which is how Rahab described it. The paradox is that the hearts of the Canaanites melted (Josh. 2:11), and this is the phrase used of how the hearts of the Israelites melted (Dt. 1:28). Both sides were scared of each other; but victory could have been with Israel. They wasted so much potential.

The Israelites were aware of the existence of unusually large people – the Zamzumin, Zumin, Rephaim, Nephilim, Emim, and Anakim (Dt. 1:28; 2:10,11,20,21; 3:11). The bed of Og, King of Bashan, a Rephaim, was nine cubits long, over four meters (14 feet) – Dt. 3:11. In Canaanite mythology these giants came from intermarriage between human beings and the gods; but Moses in Genesis 6 is surely addressing this myth and correcting it. He's saying (by implication) that this didn't happen, but rather the Godly seed and the wicked intermarried; and yes, at that time, there were giants in the earth, but they were judged and destroyed by the flood, and the implication surely was that the

Israel who first heard Moses' inspired history could take comfort that the giants they faced in Canaan would likewise be overcome by God.

Deu 1:29 Then I said to you, Don't dread, neither be afraid of them-
The fact we were called to baptism therefore inspires us to believe that we really will be there in the Kingdom. This is prefigured by the way in which Moses pleaded with those who doubted in the wilderness that the fact they had been brought through the Red Sea was a guarantee that God would likewise bring them into their inheritance in Canaan (Dt. 1:29-33). Yet they failed to believe this; they forgot the wonder of their Red Sea deliverance, just as we can forget the wondrous implications of our baptism, and thus lose faith in our ultimate salvation.

We note that Moses in true humility doesn't mention his amazing intercession, which resulted in the anger of God being turned away in that He did not destroy Israel immediately: "I have pardoned according to your word" (Num. 14:20). Deuteronomy is after all autobiography, and yet Moses doesn't mention some of his finest spiritual moments. They remained between him and his God. And so it should be with us. Possibly Israel never knew how much they had been saved from by Moses' private intercession. Just as only in the Kingdom will we understand how much we were saved from, and how the Lord interceded for us to save us, without our knowledge.

This appears to be an offer of repentance, even at this very late stage. They decided not to enter Canaan, God says He will destroy them, Moses intercedes and this is changed; and now there is this offer to the condemned of a second chance. But they refuse it. They are then judged and told they will wander to death in the desert, and all too late they decide they want to be in the Kingdom. We get this by meshing this record with that in Numbers. Again we marvel at God's patient grace and desire to make it work with Israel. And this is such a theme of Deuteronomy. It was something Moses perceived in his maturity, and God's grace is something perceived likewise by all as they spiritually mature. "It's all of His grace" is a comment often heard in Christian old age facilities when you chat with the residents.

Deu 1:30 Yahweh your God who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes-
God had 'gone before' Israel through the Angel which was to lead them through the desert (s.w. Ex. 23:23). But as with all religious but not spiritual people, they wanted a visible leader. And so when Moses apparently disappeared in the mountain, they demanded that gods be made to "go before us". It was only by grace that God responded that despite their apostacy, He would still "go before you" through the Angel (Ex. 32:34; 33:14). Even the Gentile world had more faith than Israel in this; they believed that Yahweh "went before" His people in an Angel (Num. 14:14). But Israel themselves at the

time of the golden calf didn't believe that. Moses in his final speech therefore urges the people to believe that indeed the Angel was going before them (Dt. 1:30,33; 31:6,8).

Deu 1:31 and in the wilderness, where you have seen how Yahweh your God carried you as a man carries his son in all the way that you went, until you came to this place-
This is again a reflection of repentance by Moses. For in Num. 11:12, we note the alternative reading of the LXX, quoted in Acts 13:18: "as a nursing father He [God] carried them in the wilderness". It was God who carried the people, but Moses had been trying to do it in his own strength, without sharing it fully with God; and so he had wrongly complained that God was unreasonably asking *him* to carry them, and in frustration and depression wanted God to kill him. We note how God is there likened to a woman, a nursing mother, of a very difficult infant child; although as God He is presented as a "father". In those days it was common for a wealthy woman to employ another woman to be a 'nursing mother' for her infant child. But God likens Himself to such a woman, or to a poor woman who couldn't afford to hire such a woman.

Deu 1:32 Yet in this thing you didn't believe Yahweh your God-
Heb. "In spite of this word" of grace, of a second chance; they refused to believe the word of God, preferring the word of a majority of "experts" with supposed first hand information. We see many similarities in the battle of faith today. Again Moses is quoting the words of his own condemnation, for not believing Yahweh his God (Num. 20:12). Disbelief in God was the reason Israel too were barred from entering Canaan (s.w. Dt. 1:32). When Moses reminded them of this, he was alluding to how he was in essence no better than them, having also been rejected from entering Canaan for disbelief (Num. 20:12 "Because you didn't believe in Me... therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land"). So we wonder in what tone of voice he reminded them of this. For he appealed to them as a fellow sinner, in this sense no better than them. And this was the potential power of his appeal.

Deu 1:33 Who went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night to show you by what way you should go, and in the cloud by day-
The tragedy was and is that God has gone ahead of us to prepare a place in His Kingdom, in our case, that 'going ahead' three days journey referring to the Lord's death and resurrection. But they chose not to believe, and to instead believe the word of 'experts', the 10 spies, and to return to Egypt. See on Num. 10:31. Moses accepted Jethro's advice on the basis that he will "surely wear away" (Ex. 18:18); even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7), and God surely would not have asked him to do the impossible. Jethro at this time seems to have seen Yahweh as only one of many gods; he was a pagan priest. He prophesied that if Moses followed his advice, "all this

people shall go to their place in peace"- which they didn't. Num. 10:31 suggests Moses saw Jethro's knowledge of the desert as better than the Angelic " eyes" of Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3) who were going ahead of the camp to find a resting place (Num. 10:33 cp. Ex. 33:14 cp. Is. 63:9). It seems Moses recognized his error on the last day of his life, when he admits Yahweh, not Jethro's wisdom, had led them (Dt. 1:33). Likewise Paul in his final communication comments on the way that Mark with whom he had once quarrelled was profitable to him (2 Tim. 4:11).

We note that Yahweh both "went before" them and yet also "carried" them as a father (:31). He is both with us and yet also in the future with us, taking care of our future.

Deu 1:34 Yahweh heard the voice of your words and was angry and swore saying-
As noted on Dt. 1:26,32, Moses is pointing up the similarities between himself and Israel. Yahweh was angry with him and barred him from entry to the land (Dt. 1:37; 4:21), just as He had been angry with Israel and barred them likewise (Dt. 1:34). He however became their representative, having sinned in essence as they had, but having found forgiveness.

Deu 1:35 Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land, which I swore to give to your fathers-
Time and again in the Biblical record, Abraham is held up as a very real example, in whose steps all God's people are to tread. For example, as Abraham was bidden leave Ur and go and "see" the "land" of promise which God would "give" him (Gen. 13:15), so the spies were told to go and "see" the "land" which God had "given" them (Num. 13:18; 32:8,9- the same three words as in the promises to Abraham)- yet they lacked the faith of Abraham to believe that really, they could possess that land. They did "see" the land, yet they were punished by being told that they would not now "see the land" (Num. 14:23; Dt. 1:35). They saw it, but they didn't "see" it with the eyes of Abraham. And so it can be with our vision of God's Kingdom. Remember that Moses was the author of both Genesis and Numbers- such connections aren't incidental. Moses wished the people to see themselves as going forward in the spirit of Abraham- and hence he wrote up the Genesis record for Israel's benefit an inspiration.

Deu 1:36 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it and to him I will give the land that he has trodden on, and to his children, because he has wholly followed Yahweh-
Joshua and Caleb were earlier characterized by the comment that they “wholly followed the Lord” when they went to spy out Canaan (Num. 14:24; 32:11,12; Dt. 1:36; Josh.

14:8,9,14), and urged Israel to go up and inherit it. This refers to the way that the Angel had gone ahead of them, and they faithfully followed where the Angel had gone, and believed that Israel could follow that Angel wherever it led. When Israel finally did go into the land, they were told that Joshua would 'go before' them, and they were to follow him and thereby inherit the land (Dt. 31:3). From this we see that circumstances repeat in our lives.

Caleb was head of a household within the tribe of Judah. It could be argued that he was directly related to Judah through Hezron and Pharez (1 Chron. 2:5,18,25). But "Kenizzite" (also Num. 32:12) could refer to the Gentile tribe of Gen. 15:19; or to a man called Kenaz, memorialized by Caleb naming his son with that same name (1 Chron. 4:15). And Jud. 1:13 could mean that Caleb's father was called Kenaz. 'Caleb' means 'dog' in Hebrew, and God alludes to this in describing Caleb as His faithful follower (Num. 14:24). The intimacy between a man and his dog can be seen between God and His man. The genealogies are constructed in such a way that they don't preclude Caleb having been a Gentile who was fully accepted into the tribe of Judah.

Although not recorded in Num. 14:24; Dt. 1:36, it appears Caleb was specifically promised Hebron at that time. Caleb had explored that area as a spy (Num. 13:22) and taken a special liking to it. We see therefore his spiritual ambition; 'this shall one day be mine'. And we can do the same, as we in this life spy out our future inheritance.

Deu 1:37 Also Yahweh was angry with me for your sakes saying, You also shall not go in there-

See on :34. Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. His faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. He was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation (Ex. 32:32). In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. *For their sakes* he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that *therefore* "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Thus Moses says that he must die "Because *ye* [plural] trespassed against me" (Dt. 32:51). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). We have seen that Moses is a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). See on Ex. 32:32.

Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness "shall not enter into the land", with reference to how when Moses called the people "rebels" and beat the rock, he was

disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience; and on yet another, his prayer to the effect that he didn't want to be in the land if his people weren't going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel's sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways!

We can also conclude that Moses even at the end of his life failed to appreciate the real significance of his sin. He still chafed at the perceived injustice. He repeatedly claims that he was barred from the land because of Israel's sin- it was their fault (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). Just as so many come to their graveplanks imperfect and still not accepting the full import of their failures, still blaming others, and repeating the internal narrative that "I'm just a victim and it wasn't fair". Right up to a man's graveplanks. But even that will not ultimately exclude Moses from final salvation. But we do observe how such internal narratives are indeed powerful and hard to shift. We reflect that Moses lived a long life for his time, 120 years, with the added blessing of no decline of his natural faculties. He surely ought to have been grateful for that. But he doesn't appear to have been, because he was so fixated on what he saw as the injustice of his not being allowed to physically enter the land- the land which in any case he would eternally inherit. We might also ponder whether he ought not to have appreciated more that his not entering the land was in fact what he had offered to God, in order that Israel might enter. For he had asked that his name be removed from the book, and Ez. 13:9 speaks of the book of all those who enter the land: "neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel". So to be blotted out from that writing or book was to not enter the land. So his request was answered, using his own failure and judgment for it. But he doesn't seem to want to see ahead to that. In all this we see a man coming to his end still spiritually imperfect and with residual failings, to the point that God was "angry" with Moses for trying to keep changing the judgment on him (Dt. 3:26)- just as there will be in each of us, and also in the personalities of those we live with in Christ.

Deu 1:38 Joshua the son of Nun who stands before you, he shall go in there; encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it-
This states clearly that "Joshua... he shall cause Israel to inherit [s.w. possess]" the land. Yet by the end of Joshua's life, Israel were not inheriting the land in totality. He didn't live up to his potential. Joshua didn't give the people rest (Heb. 4:8); but he said he had (Josh. 22:4). He failed to fulfil the potential of Josh. 1:13-15- that he would lead the people to "rest". The Messianic Kingdom could, perhaps, have come through Joshua-Jesus; but both Joshua and Israel would not. Or we can understand that Joshua through

his military victories indeed 'caused' Israel to inherit the Kingdom, but they failed to make good on his work. Exactly as in the case of his namesake, the Lord Jesus.

Deu 1:39 Moreover your little ones, whom you said should be a prey-
This is a classic example of "But think of the children!" being used as an excuse for personal lack of faith and commitment. In fact it was their little ones whom they were hurting, and condemning them to wasting much of their lives wandering in the desert as a result of their parents' sins and unbelief.

And your children, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there and to them will I give it, and they shall possess it-
What were the motives of Adam and Eve for sinning, for accepting the serpent's suggestion? Considering this can help open a window onto the question of the *origin* of Adam's sin. They were attracted by the idea of "knowing good and evil". But this phrase is elsewhere used in the Bible about how an adult 'knows good and evil', but a child can't (Dt. 1:39; 2 Sam. 19:35; Is. 7:16). Adam and Eve were immature; like children, they wished to 'grow up', they resented the restraints which their immaturity required them to be under; they wanted, just as children want, to be the all-knowing adults / mature people whom they had seen the Elohim as. As children long to escape from what they see as meaningless and onerous restrictions, whilst having no idea what this would really mean in practice and how un-free it would really be- so Adam and Eve were attracted by the idea of having the knowledge of good and evil just for the bite of the forbidden fruit. I find this a perfectly understandable explanation of the *motive* for Adam and Eve's sin. It seems a quite imaginable exercise of the freedom of choice and behaviour which God had given them. There is no hint that 'Satan made them do it', or that they were 'possessed' by some sinful spirit.

Deu 1:40 But as for you, turn, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea-
This looks ahead to the terrible sending away of the rejected from the judgment seat at the last day. "Turn" is s.w. "turn away". They had turned away from God in their time of opportunity, and often wished to return to Egypt. And so it was appropriate for them to be told to return / turn away from the Kingdom. Condemnation is really self chosen, and will be a living out of the decisions already taken by the condemned. Truly "we make the answer now"; the essence of judgment is now. The rejected will be "condemned with the world", simply sent back into the world they so loved, as Israel were sent back on the route to the Red Sea. And this will be what the weeping and gnashing of teeth will be all about, anger with themselves.

Deu 1:41 Then you answered and said to me, We have sinned against Yahweh; we will go

up and fight, according to all that Yahweh our God commanded us. Every man of you put on his weapons of war and presumed to go up into the hill country-
They recognized they had "sinned", but it was just a passing flush of conscience, just as Saul and Pharaoh used the same phrase but without meaning in the words. Their sin was that of disbelief; and so it was inappropriate for them to now talking of going up with weapons to "fight" for entry to the land in their own strength. We must enquire whether our own 'repentance' is likewise just a passing feeling of bad conscience. For if they had perceived in what they had sinned, i.e. in the matter of faith, then they would have realized that all talk of weapons and fighting was inappropriate.

Deu 1:42 Yahweh said to me, Tell them, 'Don't go up, neither fight, for I am not among you, lest you be struck before your enemies'-
Moses had pleaded so strongly for Yahweh to "go among" them. He realized that those prayers had been answered at the time, but not ultimately. The Angel in the pillar of cloud had already turned away into the wilderness, and was not going to go up before them into Canaan. We must compare this "I am not among you" with the other scriptures which speak of Him "carrying" them as a baby (:31) and continually caring for them. So "not among you" must mean that His 'presence amongst' His people carries with it the idea of working with them in their endeavours, positively confirming them in their path. But even when He cannot do this, He has not abandonned us and still carries us, kicking and struggling, as best He can given our freewill choices and His respect for that freewill.

Deu 1:43 So I spoke to you and you didn't listen, but you rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and were presumptuous and went up into the hill country-
These Israelites who had crossed the Red Sea (cp. our baptism) and were now rejected from God's Kingdom, because they themselves had said they didn't want to inherit it, now wanted more than anything else to be there. This is a major Biblical theme- that the rejected will desperately ask to be allowed in to God's kingdom; the foolish virgins will knock on the closed door begging for it to be opened (Mt. 25:11; Lk. 13:25), just as the rejected, wandering Cain lived eastward of Eden, and the barred entrance to the garden was on the east. Our ultimate destiny is to stand before the Lord wanting to enter His Kingdom with every fiber in our being. But this must be our attitude now, for then it will be too late to change anything.

Deu 1:44 The Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you, as bees do, and beat you down in Seir, even to Hormah-
It was as if the Israelites had knocked the bee hive, and provoked the bees to attack them; hence the Amorites chased Israel "as bees do" (Dt. 1:44). The hornet had been

sent ahead of Israel to as it were chase out the Amorites; but now it was as if this was reversed, and they chased the Israelites. For in their hearts they were no better than the Amorites. LXX "from Seir".

Deu 1:45 You returned and wept before Yahweh; but Yahweh didn't listen to your voice, nor gave ear to you-
Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7). They "returned", i.e. repented- but only in the sense of re-thinking and wanting a changed outcome. There is no confession of sin, nor recognition that their sin consisted of unbelief. As Paul argues in 2 Cor., there is "Godly repentance" and on the other hand, the sorrow / repentance of the world which all the same leads to death. We must therefore enquire whether our repentance is sincere, or just mere regret.

Those rejected by God at His judgment still desperately want to enter His Kingdom (Mt. 25:11). In that day of final judgment, all present will desperately want only one thing- to enter the Kingdom. Nothing else will matter. We should have that spirit with us now.

The laboured emphasis in Dt. 1:45 that Yahweh did not listen nor give ear must be compared with Moses' insistence in Dt. 4:7: "Who is such a great nation, to whom there is a god so near as Yahweh our God in all our calling to him?". The contrast is intentional. The tragedy is being taught- that He was so eager to hear, but their refusal to trust Him meant that He did not hear them when they begged to be allowed to enter the Kingdom / promised land. He indeed is amazingly eager to hear and respond to those who truly want to be in His Kingdom. But He doesn't hear the vain words of those who in their hearts turned back to Egypt. Beyond dispute, therefore, God's love and responsiveness is conditional. Salvation is not on half hearted demand.

Deu 1:46 So you stayed in Kadesh many days, according to the days that you remained-
The ecclesia in the wilderness were 'types of us'. They were rejected from entry into the Kingdom; and when that finally sunk in, they "returned [s.w. convert, turn back] and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice" (Dt. 1:45). The rejected will "return [s.w. convert] at evening: they make a noise like a dog [whining for acceptance], and go round about the city [cp. the foolish virgins knocking on the closed door]" (Ps. 59:6,14). Nobody will be indifferent at the final judgment. All will desperately

seek to enter the Kingdom; and we must realize that now. Like Israel at this point, they will not want to return to Egypt [the world], but will be unable to enter the Kingdom. It will be an unbearable limbo, of weeping and gnashing of teeth. The descriptions of condemnation in figurative language all refer to this awful psychological anguish. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we are to persuade men now, to in faith go ahead and inherit the Kingdom.

Kadesh Barnea (cp. :2) is literally 'the wilderness of wandering '. The same word for wandering is used of Cain being a fugitive unable to die (Gen. 4:12), Israel wandering in the desert (Num. 32:13), the rejected outside of Zion wandering around like dogs looking for food (Ps. 59:15), Israel wander amongst the nations (Am. 9:9), the rejected wander like staggering drunks (Is. 29:9). But the pointless existence of the rejected will reflect the kind of pointless life they lived now. It is used of how Judah wandered aimlessly like blind men, from idol to idol, this passion to that (Jer. 14:10; Lam. 4:14).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 2

Deu 2:1 Then we turned and took our journey into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea as Yahweh spoke to me, and we circled Mount Seir many days-
The territory of Edom / mount Seir was within the territory promised to Abraham. But they were told to circle around the southern part of it. And for a long time, to teach them that they were not being allowed to enter the land promised to them.

Deu 2:2 Yahweh spoke to me saying-
The directions for travel were apparently given directly to Moses at this point, rather than through simply following the cloud. This may be a tacit reflection of the peoples' disobedience, or because at this critical time they had to understand very clearly that they were to move away from the border of the promised land and retrace their steps back to Egypt- which they had earlier wished to do. They were being made to realize what their desire to return to Egypt really felt like. Their condemnation was in fact only what they themselves had asked for. And that will be equally true in the judgment of the last day.

Deu 2:3 You have circled this mountain long enough; turn to the north-
This may be a reference to mount Seir, or "mountain" is being used to refer to a kingdom, in this case that of Edom (:1).

Deu 2:4 Command the people saying, 'You are to pass through the border of your brothers the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir, and they will be afraid of you-
Dt. 2:4 was but a conditional promise. For in Num. 20:18 we learn that "Edom said to him, You shall not pass through", and they came out against them. I suggest that instead

of believing these words, and the promise that the hearts of all would fear them (Ex. 15:16), the Israelites feared Esau- just as faithless Jacob had done. And so things were transferred the other war around. Esau was not afraid of Israel, as potentially they could have feared.

Take good heed to yourselves therefore-
Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9). Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves".

Deu 2:5 don't meddle with them, for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as for the sole of the foot to tread on, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau for a possession- And yet it was within the territory promised to Abraham's seed, who were now interpreted as the Israelites. We have here another recalculation of God's purpose and intended scope of salvation with His people. The whole territory was eventually reduced to Canaan, and even that was limited- for Israel lacked the spiritual ambition to accept the full extent of God's potential Kingdom promise.

Deu 2:6 You shall purchase food of them for money that you may eat, and you shall also buy water of them for money that you may drink'-
Dt. 2:4,6 sounds like definite prophecy: "Command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau... and they shall be afraid of you...ye shall buy meat of them for money.... ye shall also buy water of them for money". And yet when Israel came to these people and tried to pass through, and offered them money for bread and water, they were rejected by them (Num. 20:16-21; Jud. 11:17). The condition- that Edom had the freedom to reject them, and Israel had the faith to believe- isn't mentioned, but it nonetheless stood. Prophecy is an imperative to action- it isn't just a fascinating study of how predictions have been matched with reality.

Deu 2:7 For Yahweh your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand; He has known your walking through this great wilderness; these forty years Yahweh your God has been with you and you have lacked nothing-
Because God 'knew' Israel's journey through the wilderness, therefore they "lacked nothing". The Hebrew language reflects certain realities about the nature of God's ways. The common Hebrew word for 'to see', especially when used about God's 'seeing', means also 'to provide' (Gen. 16:13; 22:8,14; 1 Sam. 16:17;). What this means in practice is that the fact God sees and knows all things means that He can and will

therefore and thereby provide for us in the circumstances of life; for He sees and knows all things.

We must remember that the 40 years wandering were punishment for sin, it was the experience of condemnation, and serves as the basis for later Biblical pictures of the rejected. Unable to enter the Kingdom they so wanted to enter, wandering until they died. But Moses in Deuteronomy perceives that even for those condemned people, Yahweh provided and they "lacked nothing" by His grace. Dt. 8 says He ensured their clothes didn't wear out and their feet didn't swell. He ensured the condemned had comfortable footwear. How staggeringly gracious is that. We see something of God's essence here- that He cares even for the condemned. Such a far cry from the classical picture of "hell". A soldier, a man, a boxer, an army… is known by how they treat their wounded, especially their enemy. This is the measure of the man. And we see here how it is the measure of God.

Deu 2:8 So we passed by from our brothers the children of Esau who dwell in Seir, from the way of the Arabah from Elath and from Ezion Geber. We turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab-
The brotherhood between Jacob and Esau is stressed (:4). Perhaps this was to remind rejected Israel that they were no better than faithless Esau. And yet God later shows His awareness that Esau was indeed Jacob's brother, and condemns them for joining in the desecration of Jerusalem. We see here the way that the ties that bind in family life are respected by God over the generations.

Deu 2:9 Yahweh said to me, Don't bother Moab, neither contend with them in battle, for I will not give you of his land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the children of Lot for a possession-
Moab was within the territory promised to Abraham's seed, who were now interpreted as the Israelites. We have here another recalculation of God's purpose and intended scope of salvation with His people. I suggest that this statement is a 'new' decision of God. The whole territory was eventually reduced to Canaan, and even that was limited- for Israel lacked the spiritual ambition to accept the full extent of God's potential Kingdom promise.

Deu 2:10 (The Emim lived there before, a people great and many and tall as the Anakim-
The Israelites were aware of the existence of unusually large people – the Zamzumin, Zumin, Rephaim, Nephilim, Emim, and Anakim (Dt. 1:28; 2:10,11,20,21; 3:11). The bed of Og, King of Bashan, a Rephaim, was nine cubits long, over four meters (14 feet) – Dt. 3:11. In Canaanite mythology these giants came from intermarriage between human beings and the gods; but Moses in Genesis 6 is surely addressing this myth and

correcting it. He's saying (by implication) that this didn't happen, but rather the Godly seed and the wicked intermarried; and yes, at that time, there were giants in the earth, but they were judged and destroyed by the flood, and the implication surely was that the Israel who first heard Moses' inspired history could take comfort that the giants they faced in Canaan would likewise be overcome by God.

Deu 2:11 these also are accounted Rephaim, as the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim-
As noted on :12, the point is that unbelieving Moab drove out these tribes, and so how much more should Israel be able to, with God on their side and the weight of the promises to Abraham behind them. But as so often happens, the unbelieving secular world have more faith, hope and brave commitment to their principles than do God's people.

Deu 2:12 The Horites also lived in Seir before, but the children of Esau succeeded them, and they destroyed them from before them and lived in their place, as Israel did to the land of his possession, which Yahweh gave to them.)-
This history had been arranged by God to encourage His people; if those in the unbelieving world could do this, then how much more could they with God behind them. God arranges our lives so that we sometimes encounter others who without faith in God have achieved great things in their lives- in order to inspire us that if they can do it, how much more can we. See on Dt. 2:21.

Deu 2:13 Now rise up and cross over the brook Zered. We went over the brook Zered-
This was a tiny brook that could be walked over easily without hardly getting the feet wet. The idea is that they had been unable to cross this tiny river which was seen as the boundary of the promised land- for 38 years (:14). The tiny brook is given such significance to demonstrate to them how easy entrance into the land really was. It seems this was when the manna and water from the rock ceased (hence :28).

Deu 2:14 The days in which we came from Kadesh Barnea until we had come over the brook Zered were thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war were consumed from the midst of the camp, as Yahweh swore to them-
Gen. 15:13 had predicted 400 years of bondage in Egypt, a period which was increased to 430 (Ex. 12:40,41). The "fourth generation" were to return to the land of Canaan, when the iniquity of the Amorites was "full" (Gen. 15:16). That is exemplified in the genealogy given at Ex. 6:16-20: (1) Levi, (2) Kohath, (3) Amram, (4) Moses. But the extra 38 years stretch this, and is an example of where time periods can be expanded or decreased. The 70 years captivity in Babylon was thus reinterpreted to 70 x 7 in Dan. 9. It is all multi

factorial, and we cannot discern all the variables; only God can. Perhaps in this case, the sin of the Amorites took a bit longer to fill up [witness the repentant attitude of Rahab, an Amorite]; and the sin of Israel took longer to punish.

Deu 2:15 Moreover the hand of Yahweh was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed-
AV "from among the host" [i.e. army], seeing the reference was to men of military age being destroyed (:16 "the men of war").

Deu 2:16 So it happened. When all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people-
LXX "when all the men of war dying out of the midst of the people had fallen". We get the impression of these men dying in the midst of the people, falling as warriors fall in battle, but dying when no man pursued them. Ps. 91:5-7 describes Joshua surviving this kind of destruction of that generation: "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day; nor of the plagues that stalks in darkness, nor of the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you".

Deu 2:17 Yahweh spoke to me saying-
Some texts read "to us", hence GNB "the LORD said to us". What was spoken to Moses was spoken to the people. He was fully their representative, looking ahead to the nature of the Lord Jesus.

Deu 2:18 You are today to pass over Ar, the border of Moab-
It could be implied in Num. 21:13-15 that some significant action occurred here, perhaps even a miraculous parting of the waters similar to that at the Red Sea (Num. 21:14). The essence of the Red Sea deliverance continues throughout our wilderness journey, just as the cloud of water which enveloped them at the Red Sea actually continued over them throughout the journey. This was the spot where Balak and Balaam were to later meet (Num. 22:36), at the border of Moab. The internal agreement of geographical details within the Bible is significant, seeing that the writers lacked maps and geographical information. The chances of a contradiction are huge- but these records are Divinely inspired.

Deu 2:19 and when you come near to the children of Ammon, don't bother them or contend with them, for I will not give you of the land of the children of Ammon for a possession, because I have given it to the children of Lot for a possession-

As also commanded about other areas in :5 and :9. I suggested on those verses that these areas were within the land promised to Abraham, but God was now recalculating the land intended for Israel, in accordance with their own lack of vision. Or perhaps the idea was that Israel weren't to take anything less than the real promised land; they weren't to seek to develop their own kingdom wherever seemed easier and more convenient to them, they weren't to be satisfied with anything less than the Kingdom intended for them. Likewise we are surrounded by temptation to have our own pseudo-Kingdom of God in this life; but we are to keep focused on the one and only true Kingdom of God which is yet to come.

Deu 2:20 That also is accounted a land of Rephaim. Rephaim lived there before, but the Ammonites call them Zamzummim-
Again the point is made that the Ammonites had cast out giants, and Israel should do likewise in their intended territory. They were given these encounters with those who had done so in order to encourage them that it was possible. We too are given such meetings with people and situations in our lives; people who have already done what we are intended to do.

Deu 2:21 a people great and many and tall, as the Anakim; but Yahweh destroyed them before them and they succeeded them and lived in their place-
If giants weren't a barrier to the children of Lot taking land for a possession, neither should they be for Israel; but they greatly feared them (Num. 13:28,33). If worldly people can achieve as they do, quitting alcoholism, achieving amazing goals... how much more can we with God on our side.

Deu 2:22 as He did for the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them and they succeeded them and lived in their place to this day-
Although Esau had chosen the way of idolatry, God still worked with him and his seed in order to destroy the tribes of giants in his intended inheritance. It seems God at times works with those who are not truly His people; and this is all encouragement for us to go ahead in His strength, as His true people.

Deu 2:23 and the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came out of Caphtor, destroyed them and lived in their place-
The point is that giants as far as Gaza had been destroyed by Edom. But Jacob's sons were to struggle to subdue Gaza; it was a continual source of Philistine opposition to them until the days of David.

Deu 2:24 Rise up, take your journey and pass over the valley of the Arnon. Behold, I have

given into your hand Sihon the Amorite king of Heshbon and his land; begin to possess it and contend with him in battle-

The implication could be that Moses was disobedient to this and tried to avoid confrontation with him (:27). But we can't ultimately avoid the confrontations which God at times puts in our path (:32). Moses seems to express his own weakness in his final speeches to Israel in Deuteronomy. He recalls how even towards the end of the wilderness journey, God told him to contend with Sihon in battle (Dt. 2:24); and yet Moses admits: "I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the highway, I will turn neither unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me food for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only let me pass through on my feet" (Dt. 2:26-28). And yet God by grace to Moses hardened Sihon's heart so that there was a battle in which, again by grace, he gave Israel victory.

Deu 2:25 This day will I begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you on the peoples who are under the whole sky, who will hear the report of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you-

Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), and were given fear and dread of humans, so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

Deu 2:26 I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace saying-

See on :24. The Divine intention was that the victory over Sihon would put fear into the hearts of all the other tribes (:25). But it was God's ideal intention that Sihon would have accepted the message of peace- perhaps implying peace with God, as "peace" often means in the Bible. We see here the complexity of God's workings with men. Little

surprise, therefore, that at times we fail to perceive what God is doing in our lives. Things appear to be left hanging, or events lack apparent meaning, or things could have various possible outcomes, some of which are quite contradictory when compared against each other. This offering of peace before fighting was to be typical of Israel's approach (Dt. 20:10).

Deu 2:27 Let me pass through your land; I will go along by the highway; I will turn neither to the right hand nor to the left-
The king's highway; they promised not to eat food from the fields nor drink water from the wells (Num. 21:22). Such a large body of people would have required a huge amount of food and water each day.

Deu 2:28 You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat and give me water for money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on my feet-
The implication would be that the water from the rock "which followed them" and the manna had ceased- as soon as they entered the land by crossing the brook Zered (:13). To drink water for money was a sign of being subservient to the seller of the water (Lam. 5:4). Water was to be freely provided to travellers; Israel were being taught humility by offering to pay for it.

Deu 2:29 as the children of Esau who dwell in Seir, and the Moabites who dwell in Ar, did to me, until I shall pass over the Jordan-
Dt. 2:29 says that the Edomites and Moabites sold Israel food and water as they passed through. But Dt. 23:3,4 says that the Moabites didn't do this and were cursed because of it. Perhaps a few Moabites did do so, but Moab generally didn't. Or perhaps the sense of Dt. 2:29 is that Moab and Edom did let Israel pass through without harassing them, hence GNB "All we want to do is to pass through your country... The descendants of Esau, who live in Edom, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, allowed us to pass through their territory". But Edom didn't let Israel pass through (Num. 20:18). So the point of Dt. 2:29 may be that Sihon was warned that Edom and Moab had been asked to do this but had not done so, and Sihon was to take warning from this, to learn from the mistakes of others. However, we should note that Dt. 2:29 speaks of "the children of Esau who dwell in Seir". These Edomites perhaps did let Israel pass through, whereas the Edomites in the Kadesh area didn't.

Into the land which Yahweh our God gives us-
This phrase or idea occurs many times in Deuteronomy. Moses was urging the people to believe the most basic reality- that God would really give them the promised Kingdom. And we too are likewise continually encouraged by God's word. In this particular

example, Moses quite openly tells a Gentile people about their destination, in the same way as we should be unashamed to speak of our hope of the Kingdom to unbelievers.

Deu 2:30 But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for Yahweh your God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as at this day-

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Gentile heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too. "Obstinate" in Dt. 2:30 is the word used when appealing for Israel and Joshua to be "of good courage" (Dt. 31:6,7). The strength of heart in Dt. 2:30 was given by God's activity upon the heart of Sihon, confirming him in the way he wanted to go, 'hardening his spirit' in that way. And so the exhortation to have a courageous of strengthened heart was an appeal to let God's Spirit work upon their spirit, to allow themselves to be strengthened in their mind, that they might inherit the Kingdom. And that appeal comes to us too.

Deu 2:31 Yahweh said to me, Behold, I have begun to deliver up Sihon and his land before you; begin to possess, that you may inherit his land-

The victory against Sihon was a beginning, in that it was a guarantee of further success (:25,26). "Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 2:32 Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Jahaz-
"Jahaz" is the word for 'threshing floor', and suggests the victory was therefore a foretaste of judgment upon the tribes opposing Israel. But they could have avoided that condemnation- for peace was offered to them first (:26).

Deu 2:33 Yahweh our God delivered him up before us and we struck him and his sons and all his people-
This would have been Israel's first battle experience. And God gave them a total victory, in order to encourage them that the opposition in Canaan would likewise crumble before them. We continually sense His hand working to educate us in the path of faith.

Deu 2:34 We took all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed every inhabited city, with the women and the little ones. We left none remaining-
Even on our wilderness journey, before we have possessed the Kingdom, we do have some foretastes of that Kingdom; in the same way as Israel began to possess the promised land in some limited sense whilst still in the desert.

There is a harder side of God, the side we'd rather not see. God almost seems to underline the hardness of it in the way He records His word; thus He emphasizes that the "little ones" of the Canaanite cities were to be killed by the sword (Dt. 2:34), the male babies of the Midianites were to be killed by God's command (Num. 31:17; which was exactly what Herod ordered). The unfulfilled believer will accept the gracious side of God (which is undoubtedly the aspect more emphasized in the Bible), but refuse to really accept this other side, while passively admitting that this harder aspect of God is revealed in His word. But it's all or nothing. We either accept the self-revelation of God in the Bible, or we reject it- that's how *He* sees it. Our temptation is to think that God sees things as we see them, to think that God is merely an ideal human being. But the day of judgment will reveal otherwise (Ps. 50:21). He is God, not man. It is not for us to set the terms.

Deu 2:35 Only the livestock we took for a prey to ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we had taken-
We see here the widely differing possible outcomes for Sihon and his people. They were offered peace with God and fellowship with His people (:26); and the opportunity to materially benefit by selling Israel a huge amount of food and water for money. They refused, and so they ended up losing their lives, families, cattle- everything. In the end, these are the choices facing those who encounter the gospel of peace.

Deu 2:36 From Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the city that is in the valley, to Gilead, there was not a city too high for us; Yahweh our God delivered up

all before us-
"Too high" recalls how earlier the people had turned away from Canaan because they thought that walled cities were impossible to conquer. These victories were to lead them towards faith that even the legendary walls of Jericho would fall before them. God likewise gently educates us in the path of faith; victory over a relatively small wall leads us to believe in victory against far taller walls which we will later encounter in life.

Deu 2:37 Only to the land of the children of Ammon you didn't come near, all the side of the river Jabbok, and the cities of the hill country, and wherever Yahweh our God forbad us-
Paul speaks of how he had been given areas in which it was potentially possible for him to preach in, and he didn't enter into those areas which had either already been preached in, or which were another brother's responsibility (2 Cor. 10:16). This seems to suggest that God does indeed look down from Heaven and as it were divide up the world amongst those who could preach in it. This is why Paul perceived that he had been 'forbidden' from preaching in some areas [e.g. Macedonia] and yet a door was opened to him in Achaia. This language is allusive to the way in which the Lord forbad Israel to conquer certain areas on their way to the promised land (Dt. 2:37). The point is, between us, our preaching is a war of conquest for Jesus, pulling down strong holds and fortresses as Paul put it; or, as Jesus expressed it, taking the Kingdom by force, as storm troopers.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 3

Deu 3:1 Then we turned and went up the way to Bashan, and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei-
God gives us potential victories, but we still have to fight the human battle. Og lived in Ashtaroth (Dt. 1:4). Ashtaroth was the name of one of the deities which the surrounding tribes worshipped; Edrei means "strength". The message is that the apparent strength of the idols and those who trusted in them had been overcome. And having won victories which were foretastes of those Israel would win in Canaan, Moses now urges the people to go forward in faith. In Yahweh's strength, they could overcome the idol worshipping tribes, despite their apparent strength. But Israel still kept those idols with them.

Deu 3:2 Yahweh said to me, Don't fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon-
See on Ex. 34:27. Moses seems to have appreciated fully his representative role when he addressed Israel: "The Lord said unto *me*... I will deliver [Og] into thy [singular]

hand... so the Lord our God delivered into *our* hands Og" (Dt. 3:2,3). David recognized this unity between Moses and Israel; David describes both Israel and Moses as God's chosen (Ps. 16:5,23). All these things looked forward to our victory on account of being "in" Christ; through baptism, and then through a life lived in Him and in identity with Him.

Deu 3:3 So Yahweh our God delivered into our hand Og also, the king of Bashan and all his people, and we struck him until none remained-
Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

Deu 3:4 We took all his cities at that time. There was not a city which we didn't take from them; sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan-
As noted in Num. 21:33; Dt. 3:4,10, some of the places they had known in their wilderness journeys (cp. our life now after baptism, which is like crossing the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:1,2) were revisited and taken by Joshua (Josh. 12:4), and incorporated into God's Kingdom. Perhaps situations and places we know in this life will then become eternally ours when we possess them in God's Kingdom.

Deu 3:5 All these were fortified cities with high walls, gates, and bars, besides the unwalled towns very many-
No wall was "too high" for them (Dt. 2:36). This recalls how earlier the people had turned away from Canaan because they thought that walled cities were impossible to conquer. These victories were to lead them towards faith that even the legendary walls of Jericho would fall before them. God likewise gently educates us in the path of faith; victory over

a relatively small wall leads us to believe in victory against far taller walls which we will later encounter in life.

Deu 3:6 We utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying every inhabited city, with the women and the little ones-
"Utterly destroyed" is the word *herem*, used of 'devotion' to Yahweh; see on :8. Their complete destruction therefore was as if these cities were whole burnt offerings, offered to Yahweh. And yet it would see from Dt. 2:26; 20:10 that they all had the opportunity to accept peace with God. They refused to devote themselves to Him- and so they devoted to Him in their death. In this we see the logic of absolute devotion to Yahweh. The death of unbelieving rebels is not as it were a victory for sin; but it is all the same the glorification of God, His victory over flesh. But if we consciously choose to devote ourselves to Him, then we shall be as living sacrifices.

Deu 3:7 But all the livestock and the spoil of the cities we took for a prey to ourselves-
I explained on :6 that the "utter destruction" of these cities is described in terms which present them as sacrifices. But the people were allowed to eat their animals. This recalls the priests eating parts of the sacrifices, and confirms the desire of God for all Israel to see themselves as a nation of priests (Ex. 19:5,6); just as we are all a priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), not leaving spiritual work to others, but ourselves taking responsibility for it.

Deu 3:8 We took the land at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, from the valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon-
It is significant that there were mountains called Hermon in the extreme north and south of the land. It is a form of the word *herem*, the term used in :6 for the 'devotion' of the conquered land to Yahweh. Perhaps that was the idea. But we note that already, God has recalculated Israel's inheritance, bounded now by these mountains; whereas His initial intention was to give them the far wider area promised to Abraham. He likewise adjusts His hopes and expectations of His individual people, never giving up on any of us, but always seeking to lead us to at leas some inheritance in His Kingdom.

Deu 3:9 (The Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir)-
This is an example of how some parts of the Bible which we have were written for its primary readership, and the language used reflects this (Dt. 3:9,11). Thus the early church possessed the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, which have now been withdrawn; yet the New Testament records commands concerning them which were relevant only to the New Testament church. We can learn general principles from these accounts, but their existence is no proof that we can possess the gifts today.

Deu 3:10 We took all the cities of the plain, all Gilead, and all Bashan, to Salecah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan-
These areas were as far north as the west of the sea of Galilee; a very large area is in view.

Deu 3:11 (For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the Rephaim; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron. Is it not in Rabbah of the children of Ammon? Nine cubits was its length and four cubits its breadth, after the cubit of a man.)-
We note that the *Rephaim* had children like other human beings (2 Sam. 21:16,18; Dt. 3:11), inhabiting an area known as the valley of Rephaim (Josh. 15:8). The "giants" of Gen. 6:2-4 were therefore humans and not celestial beings. The record at this point seems to have been edited, under Divine inspiration, at some later point. For the bedstead or sarcophagus of Og was now in Ammonite hands, presumably having taken it from Israel. And that was a challenge to Israel at the time- they ought to be able to take Ammon, seeing that with God's help they had destroyed Og.

The Israelites were aware of the existence of unusually large people – the Zamzumin, Zumin, Rephaim, Nephilim, Emim, and Anakim (Dt. 1:28, 2:10,11, 20,21, 3:11). The bed of Og, King of Bashan, a Rephaim, was nine cubits long, over four meters (14 feet) – Dt. 3:11. In Canaanite mythology these giants came from intermarriage between human beings and the gods; but Moses in Genesis 6 is surely addressing this myth and correcting it. He's saying (by implication) that this didn't happen, but rather the Godly seed and the wicked intermarried; and yes, at that time, there were giants in the earth, but they were judged and destroyed by the flood, and the implication surely was that the Israel who first heard Moses' inspired history could take comfort that the giants they faced in Canaan would likewise be overcome by God.

Deu 3:12 This land we took in possession at that time: from Aroer which is by the valley of the Arnon, and half the hill country of Gilead and its cities I gave to the Reubenites and to the Gadites-
"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23

13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 3:13 and the rest of Gilead and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, all of Bashan. (The same is called the land of Rephaim)-

These are the 60 cities of "Argob" (Dt. 3:4), which is "called the land of giants / Rephaim" (Dt. 3:13; Josh. 13:30). The two and a half tribes saw good pasture land and wanted it there and then, as a king of short cut to the Kingdom of God. But there are no short cuts to the Kingdom. The conditions they were given demanded even more faith from them. Their men had to leave their flocks and families unprotected on the east of Jordan whilst they fought in the front line vanguard of Joshua's army to secure the territory on the west of Jordan. And the territory they were asked to possess was huge, far larger than the pasture lands they initially coveted, and inhabited by giants.

Deu 3:14 Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob to the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and called them, even Bashan, after his own name, Havvoth Jair, to this day-

The boundaries of Gad appear to in practice encroach upon that given to Manasseh (1 Chron. 5:11 cp. Josh. 13:8,7,11,25,30; Dt. 3:10-13). But the tribe of Manasseh had extended their borders northward (1 Chron. 5:23). The territory was given to Israel as their intended inheritance in the Kingdom of God; but God was open to some flexibility about this. We think of Caleb and Othniel asking for territory as an inheritance. And so it is with our dialogue with God's and His eternal intentions for us.

Deu 3:15 I gave Gilead to Machir-

Num. 32:39 describes how the tribes of Gilead were displaced by Machir; but Dt. 3:15 says that God through Moses "gave Gilead to Machir". The land they took was not therefore taken so much by their human effort, swords and bows, even though they played a role- but by the gracious gift of God. And it's the same with our inheritance of the Kingdom. We note that it was God's intention that Israel lived permanently in the promised land. Yet their specific inheritances were related to their behaviour during the time when they took the kingdom; thus Machir received the territory which he had ethnically cleansed. And so our eternal inheritances, the nature of our eternity, will be a direct reflection of our work in this life. It's not that works can save us. Salvation itself is

the gift of grace, represented by how Gilead was given to Machir by God. But it is so that the nature of our eternity will is being forged by our experiences and spiritual intentions now. We are right now shaping the nature of our eternal future.

Deu 3:16 To the Reubenites and to the Gadites I gave from Gilead to the valley of the Arnon, the middle of the valley and its border, to the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon-
Josh. 1:13 describes this as having been "given rest". After the pattern of the Reubenites, we have been given the promised rest of the Kingdom here and now (Josh. 1:13 cp. Heb. 4:3); but we will, like them, only take possession of that inheritance after we have ensured that our brethren have received their possession (Josh. 1:15). Josh. 1:13,15 present a paradox: the Reubenites were given their "rest", but they would only get their "rest" once their brethren had. Those Reubenites really were symbols of us: for this passage is surely behind the reasoning of Heb. 4, where *we* are told that *we* have entered into rest, but that we must labour if we want to enter into it.

Deu 3:17 the Arabah also, and the Jordan and its border, from Chinnereth to the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, under the slopes of Pisgah eastward-
These descriptions imply a birds eye awareness of the geography of the land which no man then living would have had. Clearly Moses was given Divinely inspired understanding in order to define the various allotments of the tribes at this time.

Deu 3:18 I commanded you at that time, saying Yahweh your God has given you this land to possess it; you shall pass over armed before your brothers, the children of Israel, all the men of valour-
Moses has just said that *he* gave Israel their land possessions (:12,13,15,16). So often we encounter this kind of thing; Moses loves to emphasize that God is working through him, that he is identified with God and merely His agent doing His work. Likewise the language of God can be applied to all His servants and supremely to His Son. This doesn't mean that they were God in person, neither was Jesus; but it also doesn't mean that we as individuals are meaningless because God is manifest through us.

This was no small sacrifice, because it left their much beloved flocks, as well as their women and children, without protection. That is the significance of the agreement that "all" their soldiers were to pass over Jordan. And they were to be in the front line, "before your brothers", forming the vanguard (Josh. 1:14). Further, their inheritances east of Jordan were huge, and included areas inhabited by giants and strong enemies. So the agreement required them to live by faith in God's protection far more than did the other tribes. Their attempted short cut to the Kingdom didn't work, it ended up with far greater challenge to their faith. And that is true to this day.

Deu 3:19 But your wives and your little ones and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock)-
We see here God's awareness of every human situation. The livestock had come from the spoil of the towns they had destroyed.

Shall live in your cities which I have given you-
They had to leave their women and children without protection. That is the significance of the agreement that "all" their soldiers were to pass over Jordan. So the agreement required them to live by faith in God's protection far more than did the other tribes. Their attempted short cut to the Kingdom didn't work, it ended up with far greater challenge to their faith. And that is true to this day.

Deu 3:20 until Yahweh gives rest to your brothers as to you, and they also possess the land which Yahweh your God gives them beyond the Jordan; then you shall return every man to his possession which I have given you-
See on Josh. 22:2-4. He had promised Reuben and Manasseh that they could return to their possessions only when the others had possessed the land (Dt. 3:20). This condition never happened- yet they were allowed to return. And our very salvation from death and the consequences of sin is in a sense another example of this kind of grace. Indeed, the conditions of Dt. 3:20 were in their turn an easier form, a concession to, the terms of the initial agreement in Num. 32:20-32.

Although context is indeed important, it isn't *always* so. The New Testament writers so often quote the Old Testament *without* (apparently) attention to the context of the words they are quoting. And this is indeed the approach of the Rabbis, who tend to expound each Bible verse as a separate entity. But all the same, in seeking to understand a verse, attention should be paid to the context. Because a word or phrase means something in one context doesn't mean it *always* means this in *any* context. Thus "leaven" can be a symbol of both the Gospel and also sin. And the eagle is a symbol of several quite different enemies of Israel, as well as of God Himself. Another simple example is in Dt. 3:20; the land "beyond Jordan" refers to land on the West of the river; but in Josh. 9:10 the same phrase refers to land on the East. That same phrase "beyond Jordan" means something different in different contexts. We can't always assume, therefore, that the same phrase *must* refer to the same thing wherever it occurs.

Deu 3:21 I commanded Joshua at that time saying, Your eyes have seen all that Yahweh your God has done to these two kings; so shall Yahweh do to all the kingdoms where you go-
We are given some foretastes of the Kingdom of God even in this life; just as their

victories in the wilderness were foretastes of the greater victories they would have against the inhabitants of Canaan.

Deu 3:22 You shall not fear them, for Yahweh your God, He it is who fights for you-
Fear was therefore disbelief in God's fighting for them. And so much wrong human behaviour arises from fear- fear of possible consequences, ever dwelling upon 'what if?' scenarios. But this is not the stuff of faith, but rather of secular life. Fear is always the antithesis of faith. God is often called an "awesome God" (Dt. 7:21 etc.). The Hebrew word for "awesome" is that for 'fear' (s.w. Gen. 3:10; 15:1; 18;15 etc.). The idea is that God's people are to be in such fear / awe of Him that they fear / are in awe of nothing else. Hence Dt. 7:21 says that Israel should "not be scared of" their enemies, because their God is "awesome", He is the one to be feared.

Deu 3:23 I begged Yahweh at that time saying-
"Begged" is s.w. "gracious" in Ex. 33:19, where Moses was told that Yahweh had sovereign power to "be gracious to whom I will be gracious". He cast himself upon that grace, in asking for God to change His decision about barring Moses from entry to the land (:25). Moses knew God well enough to know that He was capable of changing His stated purposes. Indeed, Moses had persuaded God to do so with regard to Israel's destruction.

Deu 3:24 Lord Yahweh, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to Your works and according to Your mighty acts?-
The might of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched our arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the

work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 3:25 Please let me go over and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan, that good mountain, and Lebanon-
Moses asked at least twice (maybe three times?) for him to be allowed to enter the land (Dt. 3:25; Ps. 90); but the answer was basically the same as to Paul when he asked for his thorn in the flesh to be removed: "My grace is sufficient for you". The fact Moses had been forgiven and was at one with his God was so great that his physical entering the land was irrelevant. And for Paul likewise, temporal blessings in this life are nothing compared to the grace of forgiveness which we have received (Ex. 34:9).

Moses knew God well enough to know that He is capable of changing His stated intentions; for Moses had persuaded God not to destroy Israel as He once planned in His wrath. God is open to dialogue, He isn't the impervious 'Allah' of Islam who must be merely submitted to; and this gives our prayer life real energy and zest, knowing that we're not simply firing requests at God in the hope we might get at least some response; we can dialogue with God, wrestling in prayer over specific, concrete situations and requests.

The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Deu 3:26 But Yahweh was angry with me for your sakes and didn't listen to me; and Yahweh said to me, Let it suffice you; speak no more to Me of this matter-
Moses says "for your sakes" several times. Although he spoke Deuteronomy in his spiritual maturity at the end of his life, it could be argued that like all of us, he died with some spiritual point of weakness; and in his case it would have been his failure to own up fully to his sin of striking the rock, still blaming it on others even at the end of his life.

But Moses will be saved; without any complacency, we all the same shouldn't think that we won't be saved because we have weaknesses we failed to overcome, and likewise we shouldn't assume others won't be saved because they can't recognize what to us is an obvious failure in their behaviour or personality.

The Lord Jesus would have meditated upon the way righteous men had taken upon themselves the sins of their people. Thus Jeremiah speaks as if he has committed Israel's sins; Ezra rends his clothes and plucks off his hair, as if *he* has married out of the faith (Ezra 9:4 cp. Neh. 13:25; the Lord received the same sinner's treatment, Is. 50:6). Moses' prayer for God to relent and let him enter the land was only rejected for the sake of his association with Israel's sins.

At the very end of his life, Moses reeled off this great speech of Deuteronomy, knowing full well that he was to die without entering the land. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 was heard- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded- and yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter. Moses' fleeting requests to enter the land must be read as a flagging from the height of devotion he reached, rather like the Lord's request to escape the cross in Gethsemane. But ultimately he did what he intended- he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stresses on the last day of his life that he wouldn't enter the land for Israel's sake (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went ill with him for their sakes" (Ps. 106:32).

We can also conclude that Moses even at the end of his life failed to appreciate the real significance of his sin. He still chafed at the perceived injustice. He repeatedly claims that he was barred from the land because of Israel's sin- it was their fault (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). Just as so many come to their graveplanks imperfect and still not accepting the full import of their failures, still blaming others, and repeating the internal narrative that "I'm just a victim and it wasn't fair". Right up to a man's graveplanks. But even that will not ultimately exclude Moses from final salvation. But we do observe how such internal narratives are indeed powerful and hard to shift.

Deu 3:27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and see with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan- This was to encourage him that he was indeed as Abraham, who had been bidden do

the same. He like Abraham was seeing the land which he would possess eternally in the Kingdom, but not in this life.

Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. His faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. We have seen something of the intensity and passion of his love for Israel, to the point where he was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation. In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. For their sakes he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that therefore "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness “shall not enter into the land”, with reference to how when Moses called the people “rebels” and beat the rock, he was disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience; and on yet another, his prayer to the effect that he didn’t want to be in the land if his people weren’t going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel’s sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways! Thus Moses says that he must die “Because ye [plural] trespassed against me” (Dt. 32:51 AV). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). Moses was a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). As Christ declared God's Name just before his death (Jn. 17:26), so did Moses (Dt. 32:3 LXX).

Deu 3:28 But commission Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go over before this people and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you shall see-

"Obstinate" in Dt. 2:30 is the word used when appealing for Israel and Joshua to be "of good courage" (Dt. 3:28; 31:6,7). The strength of heart in Dt. 2:30 was given by God's activity upon the heart of Sihon, confirming him in the way he wanted to go, 'hardening his spirit' in that way. And so the exhortation to have a courageous or strengthened heart was an appeal to let God's Spirit work upon their spirit, to allow themselves to be strengthened in their mind, that they might inherit the Kingdom. And that appeal comes to us too.

Deu 3:29 So we stayed in the valley over against Beth Peor-
The way Israel remained in the valley and didn't enter the land is parallel with how Moses was not to pass over Jordan (:27). He was sharing in their condemnation. I suggest God forgave his sin, but he didn't enter the land because he had wished to share their judgment as their representative, so that they might enter.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 4

Deu 4:1 Now Israel, listen to the statutes and to the ordinances which I teach you. Do them so that you may live and go in and possess the land which Yahweh, the God of your fathers gives you-
He pleaded with them to "take heed to thyself" (AV- 'you' singular) that they kept God's word and taught it to their children, so that they would enter the land (Dt. 4:1,9). These words are alluded to by Paul in 1 Tim.4:16, where he says that attention to the doctrine of the new covenant will likewise save us and those who hear us. Paul's last words to Timothy are in the spirit of the whole of Deuteronomy, Moses' farewell warning: love the word, be obedient to it, because this will lead you to inherit the promised land for ever.

Deu 4:2 You must not add to the word which I command you, neither must you take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you-
Pharaoh had insisted that nothing should be "diminished" from the quota of bricks he had set (Ex. 5:11), and the same word is later used of how Israel were not to "diminish" ["take away"] from obeying Yahweh's commandments (Dt. 4:2; 12:32). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

The last message of Jesus, like that of Moses, emphasizes we are not to add to nor subtract from God's word (Rev. 22:19). The commandments we have been given are designed by God to be a system of living which brings us to Him as He wishes. Jesus was perfect before God not just because He kept the commandments fully, but because the life elicited by that obedience produced a totally God-like person. If we omit some commandments and add others, then this will not be the end result. They are intended to synthesize together to produce a truly spiritual character and way of life.

If we ignore some of them and add others then we will actually find obedience to the commandments *in toto* far more difficult. See on Dt. 11:22.

Dt. 4:2 suggests that God had given them just the right commands "*that* you may keep" them. In other words, obedience to one command would lead to obedience to another, so that a whole way of life could be developed which was in accord with God's laws. Successful keeping of the commandments of Christ is similar. Viewed one by one, they can seem just too much to cope with. David found that keeping God's laws made it even easier to keep them; there was an upward spiral of conformity to God's mind. Thus he asks God to give him any other commandments which God desired; rather than thinking 'I can't cope with all these, so no more, *please*!'.

Deu 4:3 Your eyes have seen what Yahweh did because of Baal Peor; for all the men who followed Baal Peor, Yahweh your God has destroyed them from the midst of you-
Dt. 4:3 implies that all who followed Baal Peor were destroyed, and only those who "were faithful" to Yahweh survived (Dt. 4:4). But Num. 25:9,11 suggests that virtually all Israel went after Baal Peor and would all have been destroyed, had not Phinehas and his men slain 24,000 of them. What Phinehas did therefore had real and absolute meaning for God- those who did follow Baal Peor were counted as if they hadn't done so. This was imputed righteousness, and looks forward to the even greater effect of the intercession of the Lord Jesus for us.

Deu 4:4 But you who were faithful-
AV "you that did cleave to Yahweh". The idea of 'cleaving' to God is also a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

To Yahweh your God are all alive this day-
Moses in his final speech in Deuteronomy uses the name "Yahweh" over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh *thy God*" or "Yahweh *our God*". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 4:5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as Yahweh my God commanded me-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

That you should do so in the midst of the land where you go in to possess it-
The reference may specifically be to the sanctuary envisioned as being built "in the midst of the land".

Deu 4:6 Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations who shall hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people!-
The preacher of the Gospel *is* the Gospel; the man is the message, just as the very same word / message was made flesh in the Lord. Israel of old were taught this. They were to keep and do the commandments of God, and *this* would be the witness of their wisdom and understanding to the nations around them- who would thereby be brought to Israel's God (Dt. 4:6-8). The imparting of wisdom and understanding therefore didn't come so much through specific doctrinal exposition, as through living out those principles in daily life.

Deu 4:7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to them as Yahweh our God is whenever we call on Him?-
"So near" is s.w. kinsman. God was as a kinsman to Israel. No other God was able to be this close and therefore this close to being human as Yahweh. A relative was seen in those days as one who would provide for you, redeem you, stand up for you, one you could always turn to. And God was Israel's kinsman *par excellence*. It is thrice emphasized that Israel were a "great nation" because of this closeness of their God (Dt. 4:6-8). The Hebrew term "great nation" is at the foundation of the promises to Abraham which form the new covenant. Through the seed [the Lord Jesus] "I will make of you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2; 18:18). God had earlier told Moses that He would destroy Israel and make of Moses a "great nation" (Ex. 32:10; Num. 14:12); but Moses had

successfully pleaded with God not to do so and to continue His attempt to make Israel the intended "great nation". So all Moses' references here to Israel as a "great nation" are a reflection of his own desire that they would come to this status. But their greatness was in having God so close to them. Moses himself had known God very near to him, had spoken with God and heard God's voice- he had experienced the 'greatness' of the relationship God intended with all His people. But Israel preferred not to hear God's voice direct, they moved away from the possible intimacy, and preferred instead a human mediator and system of religion interposing between God and man.

The Lord Jesus speaking of "The Angels of God in Heaven" (Mt. 22:30) suggests that they spend a fair proportion of their time located there physically. God 'comes near' whenever we call upon Him (Dt. 4:7 RV). Perhaps this refers to an Angel literally being sent out from Heaven to come near to us in working out the answer to our prayer. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

The laboured emphasis in Dt. 1:45 that Yahweh did not listen nor give ear must be compared with Moses' insistence in Dt. 4:7: "Who is a great nation, to whom there is a god so near as Yahweh our God in all our calling to him?". The tragedy is being taught- that He was so eager to hear, but their refusal to trust Him meant that He did not hear them when they begged to be allowed to enter the Kingdom / promised land. He indeed is amazingly eager to hear and respond to those who truly want to be in His Kingdom. But He doesn't hear the vain words of those who in their hearts turned back to Egypt.

Deu 4:8 What great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?-
The law was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), and David often perceives this in Ps. 119. The effect of perfect obedience to it would elicit a character like that of the Lord Jesus, the only one to fully obey it- perfect in every way. This is one reason why His death fulfilled the law of Moses. It fulfilled the intentions of that law. And His righteousness and perfection of character is counted by grace to those of us who are in Him, despite our failures to keep Divine law.

Deu 4:9 Only take heed to yourself-
"Take heed" runs like a refrain throughout Moses' speech. Despite such great love for Israel, Moses knew them so well that he fully appreciated that they were extremely prone to weakness. This is one of the major themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He did not turn a blind eye to their sins; Deuteronomy is punctuated with reminders of how grievously they had sinned during their journey. Time and again he comments on how easily they will be tempted to disobey commandments.

And keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes saw and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; therefore make them known to your children and your children's children-
Israel's guardian Angel was to "keep" them in the way (Ex. 23:20), clearly echoing how the Angels kept the way to the tree of life in Eden. The same Hebrew word for "keep" occurs very often in Exodus in the context of Israel being told to keep God's commands; but their freewill effort was to be confirmed by the Angel keeping them in the way of obedience. They were to "keep" themselves in the way (Dt. 4:9 and many others; s.w. "take heed", "observe" etc.), but the Angel would keep them in it. This mutuality is developed in Ex. 23:21, where having said the Angel will keep them, Israel are told "Beware of him, and obey his voice". "Beware" translates the same Hebrew word as "keep". The Angel would keep them, but they were to keep to the Angel. And they didn't, and so that generation died and were not brought to the Kingdom as was potentially possible. This is an example of how we are intended to have a mutual relationship with the Lord, leading to Him strengthening us in the one way. This word translated "keep" is also translated "spies" in Jud. 1:24; the spies were the keepers in the way of Israel, to bring them in to the land. And yet the Angel at the exodus was their 'keeper' to bring them into the land. The spies were working in harmony with their Angels; and thus they succeeded.

This is an evident allusion to the Angel-cherubim keeping the way to the tree of life. But did all Israel remain "in the way" whilst in the wilderness? Evidently not. Did the Angel fail? No. The Angel was given power and strength in order to potentially enable Israel to remain "in the way", just as our Angels are given that same power. But Israel refused to work with the Angel; they didn't make use of the Angel's efforts to keep them in the way.

Deu 4:10 Remember the day that you stood before Yahweh your God in Horeb, when Yahweh said to me, Assemble me the people and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they live on the land-
The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other recorded words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). In his spiritual maturity in Deuteronomy, he was very aware of the "ecclesia". Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of his maturity. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

And that they may teach their children-
The very process of teaching or explaining something to others makes us fully conscious of the material we are teaching; and so preaching or teaching our children God's principles enables us to be the more conscious of them and to ourselves remember them. The whole concept of evangelization is partly for our benefit.

Deu 4:11 You came near and stood under the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the heart of the sky, with darkness, cloud and thick darkness-
The mountain appeared to be burning with fire when Moses ascended it due to the pillar of fire standing there, appearing to reach to the "midst of Heaven", showing Heaven and earth were connected through this manifestation. The Angel led them through the wilderness, and elsewhere we read that the pillar of fire led them; the conclusion is therefore that the pillar of fire was where the Angel dwelt. Thus the Angel literally "went before" them as God promised it would, in the form of the pillar. Angels are elsewhere associated with pillars of fire, e.g. the one which came to Manoah, and not least in that God came down in a pillar of fire to speak to Moses. Ex. 14:19 conclusively shows the pillar of fire/cloud and the Angel to be identical: "the Angel of God which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud (the Shekinah glory) went from before their face, and stood behind them".

The idea was as in Ex.19:13 LXX "when the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on Ex.19:14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on Ex.19:10. Instead of all of them ascending the mountain, only Moses was invited to ascend (Ex.19:20). This was a departure from the initial intention. And when he got to the top, he was simply told to go down and ensure the people didn't break through the cordon and come up the mountain as originally planned. Some of them had already touched the mountain; for the commentary of Heb. 12:20 is that "They could not endure [s.w. "uphold"] that which was commanded- If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned". The argument in the context seems to be that Israel were disobedient even to the peripheral command not to touch the mountain. The whole narrative is the story of an intimacy with God which didn't come about as potentially possible. And that is the sad story of so much of the Divine-human encounter. But Moses at the end of his life was full of grace and he doesn't remind them of all this. He focuses on just one point he wishes to make- that they saw no form, and so should make no images. Faced with people with a range of immaturities, we likewise must show grace and focus on just one or two issues specifically.

Deu 4:12 Yahweh spoke to you out of the midst of the fire-
Moses graciously doesn't mention that they shied away from Yahweh's appearance at that time and wanted him only to engage with Yahweh. Grace and speaking graciously about others' weaknesses is a sign of spiritual maturity, and we see it in Moses now at the end of his life.

The references to fire, smoke, furnace, earthquake and the descent of Yahweh (Ex. 19:18) is very similar to the language of Divine judgment, especially of Sodom (Gen.

19:28; Rev. 9:2). And we know from the prophets that Israel were considered by God as Sodom. We could read this as His wrath with Israel for breaking His simple commandments about not touching the mountain, and for not having sufficiently sanctified themselves (see on Ex. 19:10,14,18). The argument of Heb. 12 appears to be that the scene here is one of condemnation of sinful man- and we have not been called to that, but to salvation by grace in the new covenant in Christ. But out of that condemnation, God earnestly wished to reach out to His people, with words of covenant salvation.

You heard the voice of words, but you saw no form; you only heard a voice-
The fact they saw no similitude is sandwiched between two statements that they heard God's word. The idea surely is that they were the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26) and God's intention was to fashion them through His word into His moral image. Instead, they rejected this closeness to God by wanting to turn Him into a similitude, an idol, creating Him as a "likeness" of something familiar (:16-18). God's likeness is to be found in us who are made in His physical image and transformed by His word into His moral image. He has no other likeness apart from in and through us. His closeness to us is amazing.

Sinai burnt with a fire which came "from the heart of Heaven" (Dt. 4:11 RV). But the people saw nothing; all they heard was a voice. The word of God was thus visually associated with a fire coming from Heaven's heart- from the very core of God Himself. The focus was upon the voice of God's words- hence "you saw no form; only a voice" (Dt. 4:12 Heb.). They 'saw' the voice in that they saw it associated with the fire that came from the heart of Heaven. This is the intensity of God speaking with us in His word. And Israel turned away from this intensity- for they asked that this experience not happen again, and that Moses instead be a mediator of God's word to them.

Deu 4:13 He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments, and He wrote them on two tablets of stone-
This verse makes a clear connection between the ten commandments and the old covenant. The ten commandments include the Sabbath. That old covenant has now been replaced by the new covenant. The Lord's teachings repeat the essence of nine of the ten commandments- but not the Sabbath.

Deu 4:14 Yahweh commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances that you might do them in the land you go over to possess-
Moses was indeed "apt to teach". “The servant of the Lord [A very common title of Moses] must not strive [As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)] but be gentle unto all [The spirit of Moses] apt to teach [As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12; Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)], patient [As was Moses], in meekness [Moses was the meekest man (Num. 12:3)]

instructing those that oppose themselves [at the time of Aaron and Miriam's self-opposing rebellion] if God peradventure will give them repentance [i.e. forgiveness] ["Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30)]"- and he prayed 40 days and nights for it. And note too: 2 Tim. 2:19 = Num. 16:5,26; 2 Tim. 2:20 = Num. 12:7; 2:21 = Num. 16:37; 2 Tim. 2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3; 2 Tim. 2:26 = Num. 16:33. This is quite something. The height of Moses' devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn't just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half-heartedly ask our God to 'be with' brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others. For the Judaists, an appeal to be like Moses, to emulate him in teaching, was blasphemous; for they considered Moses at such a level that he could never be imitated. Yet Paul urges timid Timothy and all teachers to realistically be Moses to our audience.

Deu 4:15 Take therefore good heed to yourselves, for you saw no kind of form on the day that Yahweh spoke to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire-
Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

"Form" or "likeness" is used in the LXX in the frequent warnings not to make an image or likeness of any god, let alone Yahweh (Ex. 20:4; Dt. 4:16-25; Ps. 106:20; Is. 40:18,19). The reason for this prohibition becomes clearer in the New Testament; the ultimate likeness of God is in His Son, and we are to create the likeness of His Son not as a mere physical icon, but within the very structure of our human personality and character.

Deu 4:16 Do not corrupt yourselves-
The idea may be that it is man who is made in the form / image / likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Our emphasis must be upon replicating God's thinking in ourselves, making ourselves after His image and likeness. Rather than seeking to worship a physical image of Him in the form of an idol or animal. To do so is to corrupt both Him and the humanity which He intends to be in His image and likeness.

And make yourself an engraved image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female-
God's people are to accept Him as He is in His word, rather than try to create God in a form which seems attractive to us. As we read His word, it is not for us to say 'I don't

think God would be like *that*, He will be like *this*, which is how I imagine He ought to be'. And it is not for us to work around those words of His which are inconvenient to us by forced, out of context interpretation, dismissing their inspiration or using other tricks of the human intellect. By doing so we are effectively making a graven image, fashioning God as we want Him to be rather than accepting Him as He is.

Deu 4:17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky-
As discussed on :16, it is humans who are made in God's image and likeness. We are to seek to become after His spiritual, mental image and likeness. To worship physical idols or "nature" is a corruption of that intention, and in fact a devaluing of ourselves as humans and what it means to be human, made in God's likeness.

Deu 4:18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth-
The Egyptians were fond of making idols in the form of animals and the plagues had therefore been a judgment upon Egypt's gods. Yet Israel had taken those gods with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:7,8).

Deu 4:19 Do not lift up your eyes to the sky and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the army of the sky, be drawn away and worship them and serve them, which Yahweh your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole sky-
This warns Israel not to worship the stars, because God has shared them with "all the peoples under the whole heaven" (RV)- but He Has shared Himself only with Israel, and brought them out from the world to be separated unto Him (:20). Because of this unique and awesome entrance into their lives by God, they ought to have naturally separated themselves from any other god. The positive separation *unto* naturally resulted in the negative separation *from*.

Deu 4:20 But Yahweh has taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be to Him a people of inheritance, right up to this day-
In the eternity of the Kingdom, we will be God's inheritance (Dt. 4:20; 9:29), and He will be ours (Ps. 16:5). This mutuality between God and His people is a common theme. "The ashes of the furnace" which created the plague of boils (Ex. 9:8) may have been a reference to the furnaces used for the brick kilns, where the Hebrews were made to slave away making bricks. The result of this abuse was to come down upon the Egyptians as boils (Ex. 9:9). Egypt is therefore likened to a furnace of oppression to Israel (Dt. 4:20; Jer. 11:4). The Lord describes condemnation as being cast into a furnace (Mt. 13:42,50). He is not speaking literally, but rather using the figure of Egypt as

a furnace- for the condemnation of the unworthy in God's Israel is to be sent back into Egypt / the world (Hos. 8:13; 9:3), and share their judgments.

Deu 4:21 Furthermore, Yahweh was angry with me-
As noted on Dt. 1:26,32, Moses is pointing up the similarities between himself and Israel. Yahweh was angry with him and barred him from entry to the land (Dt. 1:37; 4:21), just as He had been angry with Israel and barred them likewise (Dt. 1:34). He however became their representative, having sinned in essence as they had, but having found forgiveness.

For your sakes and swore that I should not go over the Jordan, and that I should not go in to that good land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance-
See on Dt. 1:37. The love of Moses for Israel is reflected in his final address to them in Deuteronomy, his knowledge of them, his sensitivity to their weakness, his constant desire for them to be spiritually strong and to enter the land; God's respect of him at the end of his life, shown in his burial and in subsequent comments about him. Although Moses is at a spiritual peak in Deuteronomy, he does repeatedly comment- almost under his breath as it were- that he was not going to enter the land “for your sakes”, and that he was thereby bearing the anger of God against Israel (e.g. Dt. 4:21 etc.). Whilst in a sense this was true, God’s anger was against Moses personally regarding the sin of striking the rock. Given that “that rock was Christ”, his inappropriate striking of it was some kind of symbolic crucifixion of Christ. He was in the wrong- the record of the event makes that clear. And yet at the end of his life, Moses is blaming Israel for his sin and his exclusion from the land. Perhaps he was indicating his understanding of how his prayer to not enter the land for their sakes was being answered. On the other hand, one could argue that even on the last day of his life, Moses never came to terms with that sin, sought to justify himself in the eyes of Israel, to shift the blame... and yet even then, God’s grace was big enough to accept him. Quite how to score Moses on this point will always be debatable, but the exercise certainly provokes a lot of introspection about our own attitudes to public confession of sin, both in ourselves and in others, and its relationship to God’s ultimate acceptance of a person.

In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 was heard- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. His faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. We have seen something of the intensity and passion of his love for Israel, to the point where he was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation. In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of

promise. For their sakes he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that therefore "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness “shall not enter into the land”, with reference to how when Moses called the people “rebels” and beat the rock, he was disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience; and on yet another, his prayer to the effect that he didn’t want to be in the land if his people weren’t going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel’s sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways! Thus Moses says that he must die “Because ye [plural] trespassed against me” (Dt. 32:51 AV). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). Moses was a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). As Christ declared God's Name just before his death (Jn. 17:26), so did Moses (Dt. 32:3 LXX).

We can also conclude that Moses even at the end of his life failed to appreciate the real significance of his sin. He still chafed at the perceived injustice. He repeatedly claims that he was barred from the land because of Israel's sin- it was their fault (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). Just as so many come to their graveplanks imperfect and still not accepting the full import of their failures, still blaming others, and repeating the internal narrative that "I'm just a victim and it wasn't fair". Right up to a man's graveplanks. But even that will not ultimately exclude Moses from final salvation. But we do observe how such internal narratives are indeed powerful and hard to shift.

Deu 4:22 but I must die in this land. I must not go over the Jordan; but you shall go over and possess-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23

13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

That good land-
The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Deu 4:23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of Yahweh your God which He made with you, and make you an engraved image in the form of anything which Yahweh your God has forbidden you-
Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 4:24 For Yahweh your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God-
This is quoted about us in Heb. 12:29 with a slight change of pronoun; "*Your* (Israel's) God" becomes "*our* God". The God of the Christian believers is the Old Testament Yahweh God of Israel; in this we see the significance of studying the accounts of how our God revealed Himself in the Old Testament.

Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling

themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

Deu 4:25 When you father children and children's children and you have been long in the land and corrupt yourselves and make an engraved image in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh your God, to provoke Him to anger-
God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

Deu 4:26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from off the land you go over the Jordan to possess; you shall not prolong your days on it, but shall utterly be destroyed-
Always in the OT, "I say unto you this day" was used as a Hebraism to bring home the utter solemnity of some great truth (e.g. Dt. 4:26,39; 8:19). The Lord used this idiom in assuring the thief on the cross that he could solemnly assure him, that he would share His Kingdom with Him. It's worth noting that the comma is placed after 'today' in the Curetonian Syriac version of the New Testament; the Syriac versions would reflect better the original Aramaic in which the Lord likely spoke.

Deu 4:27 Yahweh will scatter you among the nations and you shall be left few in number among the nations where Yahweh shall lead you away-
Israel were indeed disobedient and were scattered throughout the provinces of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires. "There you will serve gods..." (:28) - but the prophets (especially Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) condemned them for this. There is a downward spiral in spirituality, whereby if people choose to go to false gods, the true God confirms them in their delusions. This is why followers of false religions are so totally convinced they are right, everything makes sense to them within the theological system they adopt- because God confirms them in the delusion they have chosen (2 Thess. 2:11).

"Left few in number" could suggest they were few in number at that time, but would remain like this instead of multiplying. This affects how we read the "thousands" with which they apparently left Egypt; see on Ex. 12:37.

Deu 4:28 There you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell-
Condemnation is always essentially the choice made by the condemned themselves. The gods of the nations were nearly always understood as local gods, which had power in their homeland. Yet Israel worshipped those gods. By doing so, they effectively identified themselves with those lands. And so they were sent to live in those lands, and as it were properly worship those gods, on their home territories. In this sense the Lord Jesus could say that He judges / condemns no man; condemnation is self inflicted, and a reflection of the dominant desire of the condemned person. And likewise, all who truly love the Lord's appearing and the things of His Kingdom will be accepted into it (2 Tim. 4:8).

Deu 4:29 But from there you shall seek Yahweh your God and you will find Him, when you search after Him with all your heart and with all your soul-
We're wrong to think that God passionlessly waits for us to repent or pray to Him, and then He will forgive or act for us. He loves us, simply so; and with all love's manipulation of circumstances and proactive taking of the initiative, He seeks to pour out His love upon us. Thus repentance itself is a gift which God gives and is not totally upon human initiative (Dt. 4:29-31; 30:1-10; 1 Kings 8:58).

The judgment will be the time when God 'requires' of us our behaviour. And yet the Hebrew word is used about our enquiring / searching to God in prayer now (Gen. 25:22; Ex. 18:15; Dt. 4:29; 12:5; 1 Kings 22:5), as well as His 'requiring' / searching of us at the last day (Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 1 Sam. 20:16; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8). There is a mutuality between a man and his God.

Time and again in Deuteronomy, Moses speaks of the state of the *heart*. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This was perhaps his greatest wish as he faced death; that God's people should develop a spiritual *mind* and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. He saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? There is so much in our modern world which is mind-corrupting. Perceiving the importance of spiritual mindedness is a sign of our spiritual maturity.

Deu 4:30 When you are oppressed and all these things have come on you, in the latter days you shall return to Yahweh your God and listen to His voice-
This is one of many indications that just before Christ returns, at least some Jews will repent and turn to the Father and His Son in truth. For His voice is supremely in the word made flesh, His Son. We should therefore always given special attention to witnessing the Gospel to Jewish people, because their repentance will be one factor which brings about Christ's return.

Deu 4:31 for Yahweh your God is a merciful God; He will not fail you neither destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them-
"Corrupted" in Dt. 4:16,25 is s.w. "'destroyed" here. All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew word for "corruption" also means "destruction", for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves.

To forsake Yahweh was to break covenant with Him (Dt. 31:16,17). Israel did forsake Yahweh (Jud. 2:13), but still He remained faithful to them, as Hosea remained faithful to Gomer despite her infidelity to their marriage covenant. Instead of forsaking them as He threatened, He instead by grace sent them saviours, judges, looking forward to His grace in sending the Lord Jesus, Yah's salvation. Consider the following examples, of where God says He won't do something; and then does: Ex. 33:3 cp. 34:9; Dt. 4:31; 31:6,8 cp. 31:17. God is therefore open to change, because of His basic love and pity being such a major component of His basic personality.

Deu 4:32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and from the one end of the sky to the other, whether there has been anything like this great thing, or has been heard like it?-
No other God came so close to His people to speak to them directly. The tragedy was that Israel asked that God *not* do this, and speak with them through Moses. They wanted to interpose a religious system between God and themselves for fear of facing up to the awesome reality of personal relationship with God. And so it has ever been amongst 'religious' people. The invitation to search through the records of all human history would have been more relevant to Judah in captivity in Babylon, with access to such records, than to Israel in the wilderness. I suggest this is another example of where Deuteronomy was rewritten under Divine inspiration for the exiles- for they too needed to quit idolatry and go forward in faith to possess the same promised land and establish God's Kingdom in it. See on :44.

Deu 4:33 Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as you have heard, and live?-
Israel complained that no other nation had ever been asked to hear the voice of their

God in a personal way; they feared that hearing this voice meant their condemnation (Dt. 5:26). But God meant it so positively; the fact they had heard God's voice was a sign of His amazing grace (Dt. 4:32,33). Yet Israel turned the display of that grace into a reason to fear condemnation. They were far happier not being confronted by such radical grace, and the personal engagement of God with them. And so they desperately sought to use mere religion to shield them from this, asking Moses to go through with this engagement with God and then give them a few rules to obey, which didn't too deeply interrupt their lives. This is the abiding tendency of men of all ages; to flee from grace to the structures of mere religion.

Deu 4:34 Or has God tried to take a nation for Himself-
The Hebrew word for "trials" means just that. God tried, He attempted, to take Israel out of Egypt and make them His own loyal people- just as He tries, unsuccessfully, with so many today. And it seems not all Israel kept the Passover, some were slain, and perhaps some chose to remain in Egypt. And the majority He took out, returned there in their hearts. But He tried, with amazing effort. In this we see the limitation of God, albeit self-imposed, due to His huge respect for human freewill. No other God tried [and tries] so hard to bring His people out from Egypt [the world] to be solely His. Every Red Sea / baptism deliverance of an individual is the sum of a huge amount of work from God. Those who were raised as believers need not think this to be irrelevant to them.

From the midst of another nation by trials, by signs and by wonders-
It is stressed that Israel were taken out from the "midst of Egypt" (Dt. 4:34; 1 Kings 8:51). The plagues and wonders were done in "the midst of Egypt" (Ex. 3:20; Dt. 11:3). The midst of Egypt appears to be defined in Ps. 135:9; Is. 19:3; Ez. 29:3 as being Pharaoh and his servants. The narrative therefore stresses so much his response to the plagues. God's especial focus had been upon his conversion, and yet he refused. Israel were taken out right from under his nose, from the very heart of Egypt. Ez. 20:8 reveals what is not recorded in the historical record; that because the Israelites were so devoted to Egyptian idolatry still, His thought had been to destroy them "in the midst of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:8). But God's pole of grace overcame the pole of necessary judgment. He tolerated them and saved them, with enthusiasm, by the grace which comes from love-love taken to its ultimate, saving term. The whole narrative speaks as if the Hebrews were all at one place at one time and left "the midst of Egypt" together. Although unrecorded in the historical narrative, this would have meant that they gathered together "in the midst of Egypt" with Moses, who was not in Goshen but in the locality and presence of Pharaoh.

By war and by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, according to all that Yahweh your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?-
Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and

return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched our arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 4:35 It was shown to you so that you might know that Yahweh is God and that there is none else besides Him-

"I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God (the Hebrew word for 'god' essentially means 'power') beside Me" (Is. 45:5); "Is there a God beside Me? There is no God; I know not any", God says (Is. 44:8). Such verses occur time and again throughout the Bible. Because God is the source of all power and the only God, He is therefore a jealous God, as He often reminds us (e.g. Ex. 20:5; Dt. 4:24). God gets jealous when His people start believing in other gods, if they say to Him, 'You are a great God, a powerful God, but actually I believe there are still some other gods beside You, even if they are not as powerful as You'. This is the problem with believing that there are demons or a Devil in existence as well as the true God. This is just the mistake Israel made. Much of the Old Testament is spent showing how Israel displeased God by believing in other gods as well as in Him. The "demons" some people believe in today are equivalent to those false gods Israel believed in.

Deu 4:36 Out of heaven He made you hear his voice so that He might instruct you, and on earth He made you see His great fire and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire-

Although God spoke to Moses alone in the mount, Moses stresses that actually God "spake unto *you* in the mount out of the midst of the fire". The word of God to His scribes really is, to the same gripping, terrifying degree, His direct word to us (Dt. 4:36; 5:45; 10:4). This explains why David repeatedly refers to the miracle at the Red Sea as if this had affected him personally, to the extent that he could ecstatically rejoice because of it. However it has to be noted that it was God's intention that Israel heard His voice directly. This would persuade them of His unique existence. But they refused to hear that word directly, preferring to hear it through Moses indirectly, and therefore the

potential strengthening of faith didn't happen. And that is true of so many apparently Christian people today.

Deu 4:37 Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them and brought you out-
"You did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world" (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel "out of all peoples" (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2). Israel stood at Sinai and were told that if they were obedient, then they would be God's people. But then they were told that actually, God accepted them anyway as His people. And only *then* was the Law given to Moses- with the message that it was to be kept out of gratitude for what God had *already* done by grace in saving them just "simply so", because he loved them and had chosen their ancestors by grace (Dt. 4:34-40). Likewise it was *because* God sanctified Israel that they were to keep the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13,14; Dt. 5:15). It wasn't that any human obedience made them holy- the laws were simply an opportunity to respond to the grace shown them. For God's salvation of them from Egypt, like ours from this world, was nothing but grace.

"Because He loved your fathers therefore He brought them out [of Egypt]" (Dt. 4:37) is Moses' answer to Israel's belief that it was because Yahweh hated Israel that He brought them out of Egypt (Dt. 1:27).

With His presence, with His great power, out of Egypt-
After the sin with the golden calf, God had told Israel that His presence would not go with them. But Moses had persuaded God to change on that (Ex. 33:15-17), and he cites this as yet another amazing grace toward Israel by God. We note that he doesn't boast about the power of his prayers, but instead glories in what God had therefore done.

Deu 4:38 to drive out nations from before you greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as at this day-
Our separation from this world isn't merely negative. We are separated *from* the world ["brought you out", :37] so that we might be separated *unto* the things of God ["to bring you in"]. These two ideas are found together in the Hebrew word for 'holiness'. We learn here that the nations of Canaan were "greater", more numerous, than Israel. I have discussed on Ex. 12:37 how the word "thousand" has a wide range of meaning; and it is used of the six hundred "thousand" military age men who left Egypt. I suggested that we need not read this as a literal number, and that therefore the people of Israel were still relatively few, rather than several million as would be required if they had 600,000 military age men amongst them. For if Israel numbered a few million people, then the nations in Canaan would have numbered many million, if they were so much more

numerous than Israel. And there are huge logistical problems with supposing a population in Canaan of say 20 million people.

Deu 4:39 Know therefore this day and lay it to your heart, that Yahweh He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is none else-
Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 4:40 You must keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you this day, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh your God gives you forever-
That God is one is a command, an imperative to action (Mk. 12:28,29). It underlies the whole law and prophets (Mt. 22:40)- it's that fundamental. If there were two Gods, Yahweh would only demand half our energies. Nothing can be given to anything else; for there is nothing else to give to. There's only one God. There can be no idolatry in our lives, because there is only one God (2 Kings 19:18,19). Because "there is none else, you shall keep *therefore* his statutes" (Dt. 4:39,40). The Hebrew text of Dt. 6:4 suggests: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one", thereby linking Yahweh's unity with His being our God, the sole Lord and unrivalled Master of His people. It also links the first principle of the unity of God with that of the covenant to Abraham; for "I will be their God" was one of the features of the covenant. The one God has only one people; not all religious systems can lead to the one Hope of Israel.

So does "prolong your days" mean that long life promised to the obedient Israelite under the Old Covenant? Solomon observed that a just mad perished young and "a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness" (Ecc. 7:15). Ez. 12:22 suggests that faithless Israel cynically observed that "The days are prolonged" and God's prophetic

word of condemnation had failed- implying they thought that prolonged days were being experienced by them despite their disobedience. The Hebrew phrase 'to prolong days' is found in Is. 53:10, where it is applied to how Messiah would 'prolong His days' not in this life, but in the resurrection. The repeated promises recorded in Deuteronomy of prolonged days upon the land of Israel would therefore hint at the eternity of the Kingdom rather than this life. Indeed, Dt. 4:40 says they would prolong their days "for ever". For an individual Israelite might be faithful but not prolong his or her days in the land because the whole people were to be carried away captive for their sins and the land given to a Gentile power. The opposite of 'days being prolonged' was 'utter destruction' (:26)- which would then speak of condemnation in the second death. This is one of many examples of where eternal life was possible under the Old Covenant- there were multiple different possibilities and plans God could have worked by. Israel could have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and not killed Him, and so forth. It seems the closer we probe God's word, the more open He is revealed as being.

Deu 4:41 Then Moses set apart three cities beyond the Jordan toward the east-
The emphasis was very much upon *them* making the cities of refuge, and defining the paths which led to them from all settlements in the land (Dt. 19:3): "I command you, saying, You must set apart three cities for yourselves" (Dt. 19:7). Yet the record in Joshua 18-20 shows that Israel didn't do this, because they didn't even capture all the cities which were to be cities of refuge. Moses attempted to arrange it all for them; for Moses set apart cities of refuge. But arrangements for personal salvation cannot be done by someone else.

Deu 4:42 that the manslayer might flee there, who kills his neighbour unawares, and didn't hate him in time past, and that fleeing to one of these cities he might live:-
We are all in the position of the man who unintentionally committed manslaughter and must therefore die. We are under sentence of death by reason of being human, as well as for our actual sins. The avenger of blood could be seen as God, for it is He alone who has the right to execute judgment for sin. And we must note that the word *ga'al* translated "avenger" is also that translated "redeemer" or 'ransomer'. The cities of refuge are therefore understood in Heb. 6:18 as looking ahead to refuge in the Lord Jesus: "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us". The allusion is to how the person who found they had committed a sin worthy of death, yet without as it were wishing to have done so, could flee to a city of refuge and be saved there by the death of the high priest. The curse upon Levi was that the members of this tribe were to be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7). However, this resulted in the cities of the Levites being scattered throughout the land, thus providing accessible cities of refuge to all who wished to escape the consequences of sin. Those cities were evidently symbolic of the refuge we have in Christ. Again and again, the curses and consequences of human sin

are used by the Father to mediate blessing. It is the sure hope before us which is our refuge. "Hope", *elpis*, is a confident knowledge of a future reality, rather than a hoping for the best. We should be confident in our salvation. The 'guilty' person was made free totally through the death of the High Priest, clearly looking forward to the significance of the death of the Lord Jesus.

Moses was so sensitive to Israel's weakness. He often reminds them that he knows that they will turn away from the Covenant he had given them (e.g. Dt. 30:1; 31:29). He knew that one day they would want a king, even though God was their king (Dt. 17:14). He foresaw how they would see horses and chariots and get frightened (Dt. 20:1-4). He knew that there would always be poor people in the land, even though if the Law was properly kept this would not be the case (Dt. 15:4mg, 11). He knew they would accidentally commit murder and would need a way of escape; therefore he twice repeats and explains the law concerning the cities of refuge (Dt. 4:42; 19:5). These being a symbol of the future Messiah (Heb. 6:18), this emphasis would suggest that like Paul and Jacob, the mind of Moses in his time of spiritual maturity was firmly fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ. See on 5:22

Deu 4:43 Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country for the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites-
But Ramoth Gilead passed in and out of Israelite possession; and it is doubtful whether Manasseh ever bothered securing Golan from the local inhabitants. Likewise Kedesh, a city of refuge on the west of Jordan, was listed in Josh. 19 as a city not yet taken by Naphtali; yet it was commanded to be given by them to the Levites as a city of refuge (Josh. 20:7). So their refusal or 'being slack' to take the city meant they had no wider vision, of providing a place of refuge for the needy within Israel as a whole. And there is no real evidence that this wonderful system of salvation and justice ever really worked in practice.

The cities were generally in the wilderness or mountainous areas; perhaps the idea was that they should not be used casually, but the person had to make quite some effort to get there.

Deu 4:44 This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel-
Deuteronomy is largely a transcript of the final speech of Moses, given at the very end of his life. But verses like this indicate an editorial hand, and I suggested on :32 that this was done under Divine inspiration in Babylon.

Deu 4:45 these are the testimonies, the statutes and the ordinances, which Moses spoke to the children of Israel when they came forth out of Egypt-
"Came forth" is s.w. "brought forth". Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they

had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

Deu 4:46 beyond the Jordan, in the valley over against Beth Peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel struck, when they came forth out of Egypt-
Critics have made much of the apparent contradiction between the geographical details in Dt. 1:1 and the location details in Dt. 4:45,46. But I suggest that the names in Dt. 1:1 are not intended to be pinned down to specific locations. There are six of them, and it was unlikely that any reader would be able to pinpoint a location in the uncharted desert from these vague places. Rather, we are given a word picture of what the desert was like. The place names in Dt. 1:1 mean [in order] "Ornamental", maybe referring to the appearance of sand sculptures made by the wind; "quagmire", "whiteness", "tower" and "golden".

Deu 4:47 They took his land in possession, and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise-
"They took" again suggests an inspired editorial hand; see on :32,44.

Deu 4:48 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, to Mount Sion (the same is Hermon)-
This is not to be confused with Mount Zion in Jerusalem, nor the Hermon in the north. It is significant that there were mountains called Hermon in the extreme north and south of the land. It is a form of the word *herem*, the term used in Dt. 3:6 for the 'devotion' of the conquered land to Yahweh. Perhaps that was the idea. But we note that already, God has recalculated Israel's inheritance, bounded now by these mountains; whereas His initial intention was to give them the far wider area promised to Abraham. He likewise adjusts His hopes and expectations of His individual people, never giving up on any of us, but always seeking to lead us to at leas some inheritance in His Kingdom.

Deu 4:49 and all the Arabah beyond the Jordan eastward, even to the sea of the Arabah,

under the slopes of Pisgah-
The way Deuteronomy refers to cities East of Jordan as being "on this side Jordan" (e.g. Dt. 4:41,49 AV) would suggest that the editor of the book was writing from a location East of Jordan- likely Babylon. Thus books like Deuteronomy were edited, under Divine inspiration, in the captivity- in order to show Judah how they were repeating the sins of their forefathers, and appealing to them thereby to learn the lessons. It has been observed that the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings have certain similarities. For example, they all quote the Deuteronomy version of Israel's earlier history, leading to the suggestion that Deuteronomy was the first of the collection, a kind of introductory background history. See on Dt. 28:41.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 5

Deu 5:1 Moses called to all Israel and said to them, Hear, Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your ears this day, that you may learn them and observe to do them-
Learning / understanding God's principles is the way towards being obedient to them. None of His laws are mere senseless tests of our obedience or submission to Him; they have specific intention. They were to "hear" in such a way as they learned and observed the commandments. But "hear" means effectively 'to obey'. Our attitude to God's word, how we hear it, is critical. We can be a forgetful hearer, or a hearer who "does" (James 1:25). And obedience, 'hearing', leads to further obedience. But it all depends upon our attitude to God's word.

Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" or obey God's words. "*Hear*, O Israel" in Deuteronomy must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "*Hear* ['be obedient'], O Israel" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuteronomy Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

Deu 5:2 Yahweh our God made a covenant with us in Horeb-
But that generation to whom Moses spoke at the end of his life had not been at Horeb / Sinai 40 years previously. Israel were to teach their children that God had personally saved *them* at the Red Sea. The covenant made with Israel then was made not only with

the “fathers” who were then alive, but with every member of every generation of God’s people (Dt. 5:3; 6:20). In this sense, Biblical history is a living word to every generation.

Deu 5:3 Yahweh didn’t make this covenant with our fathers but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day-
We must read in an ellipsis here; clearly the idea is that what God had done at Sinai wasn’t *only* between Him and the people there at that time, *not so much* with the first hearers as with the later ones, with all His subsequent people. In our Bible study we must be aware that we are reading translations of languages which often rely on understanding the idiom for their real meaning to be delivered to us the readers. In Hebrew especially, we often have to read in an ellipsis; and this verse is a parade example.

Deu 5:4 Yahweh spoke with you face to face on the mountain out of the midst of the fire-
Moses himself realized the extent to which God saw him as representative of Israel; thus he told Israel: "The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord" (Dt. 5:4,5). This is similar to the Lord Jesus Christ saying that because he had spoken God's words to us, we have seen God (Jn. 14:8). It was Moses who saw God face to face (Ex. 33:11), yet he knew he was so representative of Israel that in reality *they* had seen God face to face. All the honours and glory given to Moses were thereby given to Israel *if they identified themselves with him*. And ditto for us and the Lord Jesus.

Deu 5:5 (I stood between Yahweh and you at that time to show you the word of Yahweh, for you were afraid because of the fire, and didn’t go up onto the mountain) saying-
The way Moses sees Israel as far more righteous than they were reflects the way the Lord imputes righteousness to us. He says that Israel didn't go near the mountain because they were afraid of the fire (Dt. 5:5), whereas Ex. 19:21-24 teaches that Israel at that time were not so afraid of the fire, and were quite inclined to break through the dividing fence and gaze in unspiritual fascination at a theophany which was beyond them. Standing between God and man means effectively to intercede (Num. 16:48), so it seems even on the first or second ascent of Sinai, Moses was interceding for the people.

Israel heard a voice, but were scared by the noise (Dt. 4:12), and so perhaps the idea is that Moses "showed" them the words by interpreting the words to them.

Deu 5:6 I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage-

The fact that Yahweh really did redeem His people from Egypt is connected and associated with the command to have no other Gods apart from Him (Dt. 5:6,7). The more we believe that we really have been redeemed, perceiving the saving hand of God in leading us out of Egypt, the more evident it becomes that this Saviour God demands our whole and total devotion. The exit from Egypt is described as a jail break, from the house of bondage. Their desire to return to it was strong, and so Moses continually stresses the true and awful nature of Egypt / the world. The language echoes that of God to Abraham: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments.

Deu 5:7 You must have no other gods before Me-
It could be argued that this was a concession to weakness; for we could read this as meaning that even if Israel had other gods, Yahweh was to be supreme, and the others were not to be placed before Him. This was the attitude taken by the Lord Jesus in His tolerance of belief in demons, which were also false gods and connected with idols. But "before Me" can also mean 'in My presence'. To come into Yahweh's presence with any idol... would be unthinkable. See on Ex. 18:11.

Deu 5:8 You must not make an engraved image for yourself, any likeness of what is in heaven above, or what is in the earth beneath, or what is in the water under the earth-
“Likeness” is used in the LXX in the frequent warnings not to make an image or likeness of any god, let alone Yahweh (Ex. 20:4; Dt. 4:16-25; Ps. 106:20; Is. 40:18,19). The reason for this prohibition becomes clearer in the New Testament; the ultimate likeness of God is in His Son, and we are to create the likeness of His Son not as a mere physical icon, but within the very structure of our human personality and character.

Deu 5:9 You must not bow down yourself to them nor serve them, for I Yahweh your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me-
It's especially easy for young people to assume that they have little influence, that they can chose to act as they like and their choices won't affect anyone much beyond themselves. Yet we read of how God "visits" (Heb. to arrange, set in order, ordain) the sins of the fathers unto the third and even fourth generations- i.e. the number of generations which an old man is likely to see gathered around him (Ex. 20:5; 34:7; Num. 14:18; Dt. 5:9). The choices of youth affect family life, which means our children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren are affected by the choices we make in carefree youth.

Throughout Ez. 18 God clarifies that He doesn't punish children for the sin of their parents; He deals with people on an individual level. However, the effect of sin is often felt in the society of subsequent generations, and in the process of how that works out, God is there enabling and permitting it to happen; in the same way as we all suffer the consequence of Adam's sin and yet can still be God's acceptable children.

Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

The prophets were up against the same passionless spirit that pervades our societies today. "The Lord thy God [is] a jealous God" (Ex. 20:5) was changed in the Targums to "I am a God above jealousy" (*Mechilta*). The prophets speak so often of God's wrath, love, hurt, pain, passion, anger, pathos... And they speak too of the terrible "repentings", the kindling of contradictory impulses, which there apparently is in the mind of God. But jealousy is a lead feature within Yahweh's personality (Ex. 20:5; 34:14). It speaks specifically of the jealousy of a man concerning the faithfulness of his wife (Num. 5:14). God was the passionate lover and husband of His people, and it is inevitable therefore that the extent of that love would produce jealousy when they spurned Him and went after other men, the idols.

Deu 5:10 and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments-
"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus.

God is His word (Jn. 1:1); to love God is to love His word. If we love Christ, we will keep His words (Jn. 14:15,21; 15:10). This is evidently alluding to the many Old Testament passages which say that Israel's love for God would be shown through their keeping of His commands (Ex. 20:6; Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,13,22; 30:16; Josh. 22:5). Israel were also told that God's commands were all related to showing love (Dt. 11:13; 19:9). So there is a logical circuit here: We love God by keeping His commands, the essence of which is love of people, therefore His commands are fundamentally about love. Thus love is the fulfilling of the law of God; both under the Old and New covenants (Rom. 13:10).

Deu 5:11 You must not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain-
One reference of this is to the idea of a wife taking her husband's name; just as we do when we call the Name upon ourselves in baptism (Acts 15:17; 22:16). The Hebrew for "take" is also translated "marry" or "accept". Perhaps 2 Cor. 6:1 alludes to the idea in urging us not to "accept" or 'take' God's grace [the essence of His Name] "in vain". The vulnerability and sensitivity of God is reflected in the way that He is concerned that His covenant people, His wife, who bears His Name, might profane His Name (Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11). His repeated concern that His Name be taken in vain doesn't simply refer to the casual use of the word "God" as an expression of exasperation. God is concerned about His people taking His Name upon themselves (Num. 6:27) in vain- i.e., marrying Him, entering covenant relationship with Him, taking on His Name- but not being serious about that relationship, taking it on as a vain thing, like a woman who casually marries a man who loves her at the very core of his being, when for her, it's just a casual thing and she lives a profligate and adulterous life as his wife. When God revealed His Name to His people, opening up the very essence of His character to them, He was making Himself vulnerable. We reveal ourselves intimately to another because we wish for them to make a response to us, to love us for what we revealed to them. God revealed Himself to Israel, He sought for intimacy in the covenant relationship, and therefore was and is all the more hurt when His people turn away from Him, after having revealed to them all the wonders of His word (Hos. 8:12).

We take on the Name of the Lord by baptism into that Name, just as Israel carried God's Name as a people in Old Testament times. Our relationship with Him is not to be a vain thing to us, a mere social club we joined, a casual association- it is to be our life, at the very core of our being.

But the idea of not taking Yahweh's Name "in vain", 'vanity', is often associated with idolatry. Israel never formerly rejected Yahweh, and never became atheists. They mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry on the basis that they claimed that they worshipped Yahweh through worshipping the idols. This is what emboldened them to later place idols in Yahweh's temple. They were taking Yahweh's Name as a form of vanity, "in vain", a kind of idol. Thus their relationship with Yahweh was not to be a "vain thing" (Dt. 32:47).

"Guiltless" is a term which can mean "clear of responsibility to covenant relationship' (Gen. 24:8,41). God would not overlook the fact they were in covenant with Him and had taken His Name upon them, just as we take His Name upon us in baptism. And we are therefore not guiltless or clear of responsibility to Him.

Deu 5:12 Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as Yahweh your God commanded you-

We note that the Sabbath was one of the ten commandments. But the Sabbath was specifically "a sign between them (Israel) and Me (God), that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them" (Ez. 20:12). As such, it has never been intended to be binding on Gentiles (non-Jews). "... the Lord has given *you* [not all mankind] the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29); "... You [God] made known to them [Israel] Your holy Sabbath" (Neh. 9:14). The Old Covenant refers to the Law of Moses, which was replaced on the cross by the New Covenant. The ten commandments, including that concerning the Sabbath, were part of the Old Covenant which was done away by Christ. God "declared to you (Israel) His covenant which he commanded you (Israel) to perform, that is the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone" (Dt. 4:13). God "wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments" (Ex. 34:28). If we argue that keeping the covenant made in the ten commandments is necessary, we must also observe every detail of the entire Law, seeing that this is all part of the same covenant. It is evidently impossible to do this. "There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb ... the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:9,21). Those tablets, on which were the ten commandments, were the covenant. Heb. 9:4 speaks of "the tablets of the covenant". The ten commandments were written on the tablets of stone, which comprised "the (old) covenant". Paul refers to this covenant as "written and engraved on stones", i.e. on the tablets of stone. He calls it "the ministry of death... the ministry of condemnation..." that which is "... passing away" (2 Cor. 3:7-11).

However, nine of the ten commandments have been reaffirmed, in spirit at least, in the New Testament: 1st. - Eph. 4:6; 1 Jn. 5:21; Mt. 4:10; 2nd. - 1 Cor. 10:14; Rom. 1:25; 3rd. - James 5:12; Mt. 5:34,35; 5th. - Eph. 6:1,2; Col. 3:20; 6th. - 1 Jn. 3:15; Mt. 5:21; 7th. - Heb. 13:4; Mt. 5:27,28; 8th. - Rom. 2:21; Eph. 4:28; 9th. - Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25; 2 Tim. 3:3; 10th. - Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5. Numbers 3,5,6,7,8 and 9 can be found in 1 Tim. 1 alone, and numbers 1,2 and 10 in 1 Cor. 5. But never is the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath repeated in the New Testament as obligatory for us.

Deu 5:13 You shall labour six days and do all your work-

The context in :15 explains that one reason for the Sabbath was so that servants might rest, just as Israel had been servants in Egypt and had been given rest. The Sabbath was therefore not just to remember creation, but also the salvation from Egypt. Which is why, as explained on :12, the Sabbath was uniquely a sign between God and Israel rather than with other nations.

The idea is that man's week of labour is to reflect God's six days of labour during the creation week (:11). This parallel empowers us to see the grind of daily work as

ultimately creative, and not mere vanity. The daily work which was part of the curse in Eden now becomes creative- if done "as unto the Lord". But we could also consider "you shall labour" to be a command to work, rather than laze around and by all means seek to avoid the results of the curse. Rather we are to see in the six days of labour an opportunity to reflect God's creative work; to use our labour to create, rather than to merely exist. This lifts the curse of labour so far above what it otherwise is.

Deu 5:14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God in which you must not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your livestock, nor the stranger who is within your gates; so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you-

The Lord Jesus invites those who follow Him to accept the “rest” which He gives (Mt. 11:28), using the word which is used in the Septuagint for the Sabbath rest. Jesus was offering a life of Sabbath, of rest from trust in our own works (cp. Heb. 4:3,10). We shouldn’t, therefore, keep a Sabbath one day per week, but rather live our whole lives in the spirit of the Sabbath. Just as we are to live the "eternal life" now, the type of life we will eternally live in the Kingdom is to be lived and experienced now. In this sense, as Hebrews makes clear, we "have entered into rest", and yet in another sense we labour now to enter into that rest at the Lord's return. This is a classic case of the "now but not yet" theme of the Bible.

Deu 5:15 You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm, therefore Yahweh your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day-

Israel stood at Sinai and were told that if they were obedient, then they would be God's people. But then they were told that actually, God accepted them anyway as His people. And only *then* was the Law given to Moses- with the message that it was to be kept out of gratitude for what God had *already* done by grace in saving them just "simply so", because he loved them and had chosen their ancestors by grace (Dt. 4:34-40). Likewise it was *because* God sanctified Israel that they were to keep the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13,14; Dt. 5:15). It wasn't that any human obedience made them holy- the laws were simply an opportunity to respond to the grace shown them. For God's salvation of them from Egypt, like ours from this world, was nothing but grace.

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched our arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8).

That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 5:16 Honour your father and your mother as Yahweh your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you-
Paul quotes this in Eph. 6:2, with the comment that this is "the first commandment with promise". Paul clearly saw "the promise" of the old covenant as being the hope of the new covenant; the hope of the promises made to the Jewish fathers was the Christian hope, as Paul so clearly stated at his trials. This involves eternal possession of a glorified earth- and not going to Heaven on death as an immortal soul.

The contemporary Near Eastern legal codes prescribed the most severe penalties for crimes against the wealthy and their property. Rich people were given lesser punishments than poor people for the same crime. The value of persons reflected in Yahweh's law meant that all people were judged equally before the law, and truly there was no respect of persons with the true God. Both father and mother are placed together as worthy of equal honour (Lev. 19:3; Ex. 20:12)- whereas the contemporary laws were oriented towards respect of the male rather than females.

The Lord Jesus saw as parallel the commands to honour parents and also not to curse them. These two separate commands (from Ex. 20:12 and 21:17) He spoke of as only one: "*the* commandment" (Mk. 7:9). He therefore saw that not to honour parents was effectively to curse them (Mk. 7:10). *Omitting* to honour parents, even if it involved appearing to give one's labour to God's temple, was therefore the same as *committing* the sin of cursing them. Sins of omission are perhaps our greatest weakness.

Deu 5:17 You must not murder-
The command not to murder has as its basis the fact that human life is not for us to use as we will (Ex. 20:13; Lev. 17:11; Gen. 9:6). It is God's life and is His- and this applies to our view of others lives as well as our own. Others, therefore, are not for us to use as we will. Gentleness and sensitivity to the life of others, in family life, the workplace, on the road... is therefore an outcome of our belief that the 'other' person likewise has been created by God and has life from Him. To drive in an unkind way, to act in a thoughtless

way to others detriment, is therefore the same basic error as taking human life in murder.

The command "You shall not murder" must be understood in the context of a situation where the same Law also commanded certain sinners to be put to death within the community, and at times Israel were Divinely commanded and enabled to kill others outside of the community. We have to look, therefore, for a more specific meaning for this commandment- and it seems it is speaking specifically of blood revenge, killing the person who murdered one of your relatives. According to Num. 35:25-28, if the murder was unintentional, i.e. manslaughter rather than murder, then the person could flee to a city of refuge lest he be slain by the avenger of blood. There is no guidance for the avenger of blood in these 'cities of refuge' passages; rather is there the assumption that he might well attempt to take revenge even for manslaughter, and in this case the unintentional murderer should flee from him into a city of refuge. But clearly enough, this was not God's will- for "You shall not kill". But such is God's grace that He built into His law a recognition that His people would fail. This isn't what we would expect of a 2+2=4 God, where broken commandments are to be punished and period. In this case, we see here a tacit recognition even within the Mosaic Law that the commandments- in this case "You shall not kill"- wouldn't always be obeyed, and therefore extra legislating was added to enable this situation to be coped with. This isn't only an example of God's sensitivity to human sin and weakness of hot blood [although it is that]. It's an insight into how the very structure of His law is such that He understands human weakness, and is eager to ensure that it hurts others as little as possible. No more human 'god' would have dreamed this up. This grace has the stamp of the ultimately Divine, and any attempt to understand it within the frames of literalistic, legalistic analysis are doomed to failure.

Deu 5:18 Neither must you commit adultery-
This is as is, but we note the majority of references to "adultery" in the Hebrew Bible refer to unfaithfulness to God. And we cannot rule out the possibility that God also had that in view; for these commandments were the basis of His relationship with His people.

Deu 5:19 Neither must you steal-
The Hebrew indeed means to steal, but also carries the idea of deceit. For to deceive another is to effectively steal from them, to take away and misuse their belief and trust in you and your integrity. And all deceit is ultimately in order to gain something wrongly, even the thing gained isn't anything material.

Deu 5:20 Neither must you give false testimony against your neighbour-

AV "bear false witness". But the Hebrew for "bear" means not only "to give" in a legal sense. Otherwise this commandment would only apply to the need to be truthful in a court case. The Hebrew *anah* is literally "to eye", 'to give heed to'. Don't pay attention to lies, don't listen to gossip- understood like that, this commandment becomes relevant to daily life, and not just to the occasional times when a person might have to bear legal witness against someone.

Deu 5:21 Neither must you covet your neighbour's wife, neither shall you desire your neighbour's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's-
The Law of Moses was the only legal code to criminalize internal attitudes; nobody knows who covets what in their hearts, and there was no legal apparatus to punish this particular transgression of law. But the Law of Moses was a direct covenant between God and every individual amongst His people, and to Him they were personally responsible and answerable.

The command not to covet what looks good is very much rooted in a warning not to commit Eve's sin of seeing the fruit and yielding to temptation (Ex. 20:17 = Gen. 3:6). The sin in Eden was every sin; we see elements of every one of our own sins in that sin. The frequent command "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17 etc.) uses the same Hebrew word translated "desire" when we read of how Eve "desired" the fruit (Gen. 3:6); yet Israel "desired" the wrong fruit (Is. 1:29). As Eve saw the fruit and fell for it, so the people of Reuben and Gad saw the land East of Jordan and imagined how good it would be to have it, despite having been given 'all the land' West of Jordan to enjoy [cp. Adam and Eve's dominion in Eden] (Num. 32:1,2,7). In all these allusions [and they exist in almost every chapter of the Bible] we are being shown how human sin is a repetition in essence of that of our first parents. The insistent emphasis is that we should rise above and *not* be like them. And yet this call for personal effort and struggle with ourselves in order to overcome sin is muted and misplaced by all the stress upon a supposed Devil tempting Eve, pushing the blame onto him, and thereby de-emphasizing our role in overcoming sin within ourselves. And so we see so many loud-mouthed condemners of the Devil totally not 'getting it' about the need for personal self-control and spiritual mindedness in daily life and private character.

Deu 5:22 These words Yahweh spoke to all your assembly on the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud and the thick darkness, with a great voice; and He added no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me-
When he commented about the commandments that God "added no more" (Dt. 5:22), he foresaw his people's tendency to add the Halacahs of their extra commandments... He could foresee the spiritual problems they would have in their hour by hour life, he

appreciated how both their nature and their disobedience would be such a problem for them, and Moses foresaw that they would not cope well with it (ditto for our Lord Jesus). See on Dt. 4:42.

Ex. 13:21 says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)? When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud* of *fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:15-17; Dt. 5:22).

Deu 5:23 When you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness as the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders- They came near to Moses, but remained at a distance from God, indeed they fled away from Him (Ex. 20:18). The original plan had been as in Ex. 19:13 LXX: "When the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on Ex. 19:14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on Ex. 19:10. The people "perceived" Yahweh's holiness and their sinfulness and continued idolatry. And they shied away from Him, whereas His intention was that they came close. These words are so sad. It was a rejection of intimacy with God.

There were so many similarities between Elijah and Moses; Dale Allison points out:
Confronted Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) = Confronted Pharaoh (Ex. 5:1)
Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (1 Kings 19:3) = Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (Ex. 2:15)
Miraculously fed "...bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening..." (1 Kings 17:6) = Miraculously fed "...meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning..." (Ex. 16:8, 12)
Gathered all Israel to Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19)=Gathered all Israel to Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:17)
Combated the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40) = Combated the magicians of Pharaoh (Ex. 7:8-13, 20-22; 8:1-7)
Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (1 Kings

18:36-39) = Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Ex. 32:11-14)
Elijah took twelve stones at Carmel "…according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob…" (1 Kings 18:30-32) = Moses had twelve pillars set up at Sinai "…corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel…" (Ex. 24:4)
The Lord accepted Elijah's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (1 Kings 18:36-39) = The Lord accepted Moses and Aaron's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (Lev. 9:22-24)
By Elijah's authority 3000 idolatrous prophets were slain (1 Kings 18:40) = By Moses' authority 3000 idolaters were slain (Ex. 32:25-29)
After killing the prophets of Baal Elijah climbed Carmel to pray. (1 Kings 18:42) = After killing the idolaters Moses climbed Sinai to pray (Ex. 32:30)
Went without food for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8) = Went without food for forty days and forty nights (Ex. 34:38; Dt. 9:9)
Elijah was in "the cave" on Horeb (=Sinai) when the Lord "passed by" (1 Kings 19: 9-11) = Moses was hidden "in the cleft of the rock" when the Lord passed by Sinai (Ex. 33:21-23)
Elijah saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Horeb (=Sinai). (1 Kings 19:11-12) = Moses saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Sinai (Ex. 19:16-20; 20:18; Dt. 4:11; 5:22-27).
Prayed that he might die (1 Kings 19:1-4) = Prayed that he might die. (Num. 11:10-15).
The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon his enemies (2 Kings 1:9-12) = The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon those who rebelled against him (Num. 16; cf. Lev. 10:1-3)
Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan by striking the waters with his cloak and passed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8) = Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea by stretching out his staff and passed over on dry ground (Ex. 14:16, 21-22)
His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had (2 Kings 2) = His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had the Red Sea (Josh. 3)
Was taken away in the Transjordan (2 Kings 2:9-11) = Died in the Transjordan (Dt. 34:5)
Mysteriously translated (2 Kings 9-18) = Died mysteriously and buried in a valley, but his burial place was unknown. (Dt. 34:6)
The point of these similarities was that the Angel wanted Elijah to be like Moses; to pray for the peoples' salvation, to return to the people and lead them and teach them. Moses had begged for God's mercy for His people; but Elijah was so full of self-justification that he prayed against Israel. And so with us, we are potentially led into situations where we are to discern the similarities between us and Bible characters; we are set up with opportunities to respond in a way that reflects how we have learnt the lessons from

them. The way the Lord Jesus perceived this in His wilderness temptations is a great example.

Deu 5:24 and you said, Behold, Yahweh our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God does speak with man and he lives-
They recognized the theory- that they had heard the voice of their God, and that God could speak with a man like Moses directly without the man dying. But they didn't want that intimacy; it was not for them (:25). And they justified it beneath a veneer of fake humility, claiming they were too sinful to hear God's voice. They rejected intimacy with God for religion and following a man, even if he were a very good and genuine man.

Deu 5:25 Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of Yahweh our God any more, then we shall die-
The tragedy was that to hear the personal voice of their God was intended to build their faith, and was the most wonderful empirical, experiential evidence that He was real (Dt. 4:32,33). But faced with it, they hurriedly turned away. And this is true in essence of so many people. See on :26.

Deu 5:26 For who is there of all humanity that has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire as we have, and has lived?-
Israel complained that no other nation had ever been asked to hear the voice of their God in a personal way; they feared that hearing this voice meant their condemnation (Dt. 5:26). But God meant it so positively; the fact they had heard God's voice was a sign of His amazing grace (Dt. 4:32,33). Yet Israel turned the display of that grace into a reason to fear condemnation. They were far happier not being confronted by such radical grace, and the personal engagement of God with them. And so they desperately sought to use mere religion to shield them from this, asking Moses to go through with this engagement with God and then give them a few rules to obey, which didn't too deeply interrupt their lives. This is the abiding tendency of men of all ages; to flee from grace to the structures of mere religion.

Deu 5:27 Go near and hear all that Yahweh our God shall say, and tell us all that Yahweh our God shall tell you, and we will hear it and do it-
See on Dt. 30:12. God wanted to speak directly with Israel at Sinai; and yet they urged Moses personally to go and hear what God wished to say, and tell them about it: "Go thou [you singular] near and hear" (Dt. 5:23,27). Moses urged them not to fear, and told them that this was all a test from God for them (Ex. 20:20). But they didn't rise to it. Yet

God accepted this lower level, so did He wish to communicate with them. And He used Moses as a mediator through whom He spoke His word to His people.

We too have a tendency to shy away from a direct relationship with God through His word, and prefer a system of human mediators to bring God to us- as we see in the established churches. But God wants to have direct contact with us through the medium of His word.

Deu 5:28 Yahweh heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me and Yahweh said to me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you; they have well said all that they have spoken-
This is all intentionally similar to the situation with Pharaoh in Ex. 10:29, when "Moses said, You have spoken well. I will see your face again no more". For Israel had seen God's face insofar that Moses had seen it (Dt. 5:24). And they didn't want it, and so they would not be given it.

Deu 5:29 Oh that there were-
God's capacity to imagine, to see possible futures to some extent, explains the poignancy behind His words in places like Is. 48:18: "O that you had hearkened to my commandments!", "Oh that they would have a mind such as this always" (Dt. 5:29), "O Israel, if you would but listen to me" (Ps. 81:8,13). It's as if He could see the potentially happy future which they could've had stretching out before Him.

Such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!-
Adam Clarke correctly understands the Hebrew here as meaning "Who will give such a heart to them, that they may fear, etc. They refuse to receive such a heart from me; who then can supply it?". God was willing to give them a new heart, to work through His Spirit directly upon their spirit. But they didn't accept that gift, just as many refuse it today, preferring to keep God at a distance and follow mere religion. The new covenant as explained in Jeremiah and Ezekiel is all about accepting this new heart and spirit from God.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-

corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 5:30 Go, tell them, Return to your tents-
God went along with their rejection of intimacy with Him, and so He surely said these words with much regret. They preferred *their* tents to His tent.

Deu 5:31 But as for you, stand here by Me-
God through the Angel had earlier stood upon a rock in Sinai with Moses next to Him (Ex. 17:6). Later, Yahweh asks Moses to stand upon a rock in Sinai next to Him (Ex. 33:21 s.w.). We see how God gently and progressively leads His people closer to Him, using every experience He gives us to prepare for the next one, on an ever more intimate level with Him.

And I will tell you all the commandments, the statutes and the ordinances, which you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 5:32 You must observe to do therefore as Yahweh your God has commanded you; you must not turn aside to the right hand or to the left-
The wall of water on their right hand and left when they crossed the Red Sea is twice emphasized (Ex. 14:22,29). It is alluded to later, when they are urged to not depart from God's way, not to the right hand nor left (Dt. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14). We passed through

the Red Sea when we were baptized (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were set upon a path which is walled up to keep us within it. And we are to remain in that path upon which we were set. To turn aside from it would be as foolish as Israel turning away from their path and trying to walk into the walls of water.

Deu 5:33 You must walk in all the way which Yahweh your God has commanded you, in order that you may live and that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days-

Does "prolong your days" mean that long life promised to the obedient Israelite under the Old Covenant? Solomon observed that a just mad perished young and "a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness" (Ecc. 7:15). Ez. 12:22 suggests that faithless Israel cynically observed that "The days are prolonged" and God's prophetic word of condemnation had failed- implying they thought that prolonged days were being experienced by them despite their disobedience. The Hebrew phrase 'to prolong days' is found in Is. 53:10, where it is applied to how Messiah would 'prolong His days' not in this life, but in the resurrection. The repeated promises recorded in Deuteronomy of prolonged days upon the land of Israel would therefore hint at the eternity of the Kingdom rather than this life. Indeed, Dt. 4:40 says they would prolong their days "for ever". For an individual Israelite might be faithful but not prolong his or her days in the land because the whole people were to be carried away captive for their sins and the land given to a Gentile power. The opposite of 'days being prolonged' was 'utter destruction' (:26)- which would then speak of condemnation in the second death. This is one of many examples of where eternal life was possible under the Old Covenant- there were multiple different possibilities and plans God could have worked by. Israel could have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and not killed Him, and so forth. It seems the closer we probe God's word, the more open He is revealed as being.

In the land which you shall possess-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were

promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 6

Deu 6:1 Now these are the commandments-
Dt. 6:1 RV reads: "Now this is *the commandment* [singular], the statutes and the judgments... the Lord our God is one" (:4). And then they are told to write the statutes on their door posts etc. It would have been hard to literally write all 613 of them there. Yet the whole way of life for Israel was epitomized in the single command... that God is one. It was and is a *command*; not a mere statement; and it was this they were to speak to their children about and continually meditate upon. Thus the unity of God is even today a summary of all God's desires and requirements for us, that He should be the one and only in our lives, with all this means in practice. The Jewish zealots who died at Massada had as their battle cry "the Lord our God is one!", and some time later Rabbi Akiba was flayed alive by the Romans, crying as the skin was stripped from his bones: "The Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might". And there are many accounts from the Holocaust of similar things.

The statutes and the ordinances which Yahweh your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land which you go over to possess-
Dt. 6:1,2,6,7 stress that Israel must *do* the law so that their children would do it also. Whilst on one hand we each have sovereign free will, there can be no doubt that we are affected by others.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were

constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 6:2 in order that you might fear Yahweh your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, yes you, your son and your son's son, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged-
The commandments were given in order to be obeyed (:1), so that they would keep the commandments. This at first blush appears circular reasoning. But rather the idea is of an upward spiral of spirituality, whereby obedience led to obedience. The various laws were designed to be self reinforcing, which is why the law was "perfect", and was not to be added to nor subtracted from. The intention was that obedience to the commandments elicited a spirit of life which was spiritual, and which facilitated further obedience and spirituality.

Deu 6:3 Hear therefore, Israel, and observe to do it, so that it may be well with you and that you may increase mightily, as Yahweh the God of your fathers has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey-
It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity.

Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" or obey God's words. "*Hear*, O Israel" in Deuteronomy must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "*Hear* ['be obedient'], O Israel" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuteronomy Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 6:4 Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is one-
The fact there is only one God means that He is to have our total loyalty and love (:5). If

there were two gods, each would have 50%. But the one God demands our total devotion. That God is one is a command, an imperative to action (Mk. 12:28,29). It underlies the whole law and prophets (Mt. 22:40)- it's that fundamental. If there were two Gods, Yahweh would only demand half our energies. Nothing can be given to anything else; for there is nothing else to give to. There's only one God. There can be no idolatry in our lives, because there is only one God (2 Kings 19:18,19). Because "there is none else, you shall keep *therefore* his statutes" (Dt. 4:39,40). The Hebrew text of Dt. 6:4 suggests: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one", thereby linking Yahweh's unity with His being our God, the sole Lord and unrivalled Master of His people. It also links the first principle of the unity of God with that of the covenant to Abraham; for "I will be their God" was one of the features of the covenant. The one God has only one people; not all religious systems can lead to the one Hope of Israel.

Dt. 6:4 is far more than a Sunday School text. Indeed God is one; but consider the context. Moses has set the people up to expect him to deliver them a long list of detailed commands; he has told them that God told him to declare unto them "all the commandments... that they may do them... ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you... ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you... now these are the commandments... that ye might do them... *hear therefore O Israel and observe to do it* [singular]...". Now we expect him to reel off a long list of commands. But Moses mirrors that last phrase with simply: "*Hear, O Israel*, the Lord our God is one" (Dt. 5:31-6:4). And in this context he gives no other commandments. "Observe to do *it*" is matched with "The Lord our God is one". This is the quintessence of all the commands of God. And he goes straight on to say: "And these words...shall be in your heart" and they were to talk of them to their children in the house and by the way, bind them upon their hands and on the posts of their homes. Some Jewish traditions, perhaps correctly, place the *shema*, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one" in their phylacteries. And this is indeed the context. It was the unity of God and the imperative from it to love Him with all the heart which is what was to be programmatic for their daily living. This is why it was Jewish practice to recite the *shema* several times a day, and also on their deathbed.

The record in Mk. 12:32 presents an obviously monotheistic Jewish scribe as being in complete agreement with the Lord Jesus about the unity of God. The Lord Jesus evidently supported the Old Testament's strict monotheism. When Jesus speaks of His Father as "the one who alone is God" (Jn. 5:44 NRSV), He is evidently alluding to the classic statement of monotheism in Dt. 6:4- that Yahweh is the one God. And the inspired writers of the New Testament did the same thing. James commented to Jews upon their belief in one God: "You believe that God is one. You do well" (James 2:19). He doesn't seek to correct their monotheism. Why, if the Trinity issue was so utterly vital and obvious?

Deu 6:5 and you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might-

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word ekklesia eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

"Love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your might". Time and again, Moses in his final hours used these words, as he pleaded on that last day of his life for Israel to grasp the nettle, to take on board the idea of loving God, of giving our all (Dt. 6:5; 10:12; 11:13,22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6 ; an impressive seven-fold emphasis). I can almost hear his voice cracking as he stressed the word "all" . Having pleaded six times for them to love God with *all* their soul and *all* their might, Moses then makes the point that if they enter the Kingdom, there they will be *made by God* to love Him then with all their soul and might (Dt. 30:6). The logic is over-powering. In the Kingdom, our very nature, every fiber of our being, will be bent towards love of God. If this will be our eternal destiny, isn't it logical that we at least aspire to it now? Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Loving Yahweh with all the heart, soul and mind was understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

Deu 6:6 These words which I command you this day shall be on your heart-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

The names of God's people are in the heart of the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest (Ex. 28:29); just as God's words are to be upon the hearts of His people (Dt. 6:6). Through the medium of His word, there is thus a mutuality between God and man.

Deu 6:7 and you must teach them diligently to your children and talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up-

The latter day repentant remnant will be characterized by talking to each other of spiritual things (Mal. 3:16 cp. Dan. 12:2), especially of the law (Mal. 3:7). But we are to do this now in our day of opportunity, and not be forced to it by tribulation. The priests were the official teachers of Israel, but it was ever God's intention that all Israel should be priests. All under the new covenant are declared priests (1 Pet. 2:5). All Israel were to be teaching each other (Jer. 31:34), especially their children- not leaving it to others, nor over relying upon a priesthood or spiritual eldership to teach their children. This is a myth inadvertently created by the Sunday School movement, excellent and commendable as that movement is- that a child is sent to "Sunday School" and there learns God's ways. The real teaching is done sitting in the house and walking by the way, and not by specialist teachers. The specific reference to teaching when you lie down and rise up could suggest that God specifically intended His people to teach their children, every morning and every evening. This is the essence of family life in the Lord.

Deu 6:8 You shall bind them for a sign on your hand and they shall be for memorials between your eyes-

As taught in Dt. 6:6, the essence was that "These words which I command you this day shall be on your heart". The heart refers to the mind, the brain, if you will; and we could understand this as meaning that this was to be externally memorialized by binding them between the eyes. This is how orthodox Judaism understands it. But I suggest that the memorial was essentially in the heart, and this is just another way of speaking about the wholeness of internal and external devotion to God's words. Whatever is done externally with the hand, whatever is thought about in our mind between our eyes, is to be dominated by our awareness of God's laws. We fail to read in later scripture any mention of literally making boxes containing God's law and wearing them. The Passover deliverance was likewise to be a "frontlet" (s.w. "memorial") between the eyes and upon the hand (Ex. 13:16); but not in any literal sense. They were to be ever mentally aware of their great salvation, and live accordingly.

The idea is not that the entire law could literally be placed there. Rather, the equivalent of pagan amulets was to be a mental awareness of God's law. The use of phylacteries in Judaism is a complete missing of this point.

Contemporary ideas about Satan, demons etc. are often alluded to in the Pentateuch, and Israel are given the true understanding. Wearing a phylactery wasn't a new concept; the idea "refers to amulets which were worn in order to protect their wearers against demons". So by giving this command, Israel's God was showing His people that instead of being on the *defensive* against demons, needing good luck charms against them, they should instead replace these by a positive remembrance of God's words in their hearts and actions. Rejoicing in His salvation and constantly remembering it was intended to totally sideline the various false beliefs about demons which were prevalent at the time. It could be argued that God is saying that instead of the literal phylacteries of the pagan Gentile world, they were to have an internal mental awareness of their God.

Deu 6:9 You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates-
Writing God's laws on door posts recalls the daubing of Passover lamb blood on the door posts. Indeed at Passover time, the faithful Israelite would have painted over the laws of Moses with the blood of the Passover lamb. This was looking ahead to how those laws were to be blotted out by the Lord's sacrifice. It was perhaps also to remind them that the blood of the Passover lamb, shed for their salvation, was an imperative to their obedience to God's laws. And again we see contemporary religious ideas deconstructed; for "It was the custom of the ancient Egyptians to inscribe on lintels and door-posts sentences of good omen". Such good luck charms were to be replaced with realistic practical calls for obedience in real life; for this was the basis of Divine blessing, and not good luck charms.

Deu 6:10 When Yahweh your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers to give you, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, great and good cities which you didn't build-

This continues the repeated reminder that they had been shown grace and a place in the Kingdom not according to works. This emphasis upon grace now leads up to the appeal to quit any other gods (:14)- because Yahweh alone is the God of grace. The other gods had no concept of this; it was unique to Yahweh. And true grace is likewise the unique feature of true Christianity.

Jonah 2:8 reflects Jonah's understanding of this: "Those who regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy". This is a profound truth; true grace ["mercy" is *hesed*] and salvation is only found in Yahweh the God of Israel. To forsake Him is to forsake our own access to mercy and grace. Jonah was surely reflecting upon how the sailors had begged their idols and gods for salvation, and not found it. Only Yahweh had provided such saving grace, both to them and to Jonah. This reflection was surely to motivate Jonah to now go and try to persuade the Ninevites of Yahweh's grace. Jonah is constantly quoting from the Psalms, and here he may have in mind Ps. 31:6: "I have hated them that regard lying vanities". But now Jonah doesn't hate the idolaters personally, but rather perceives the tragedy of the fact that they are rejecting their own access to Yahweh's grace. Yahweh is all about mercy, or grace; again, Ps. 59:17 "the God of my mercy" is in mind. But we preclude His grace if we trust in the lying vanities of this world.

Deu 6:11 houses full of all good things which you didn't fill, and wells dug out which you didn't dig, vineyards and olive trees which you didn't plant, and you shall eat and be full-

The gift of these things to Israel was by God's grace- for He could have commanded them to destroy all such vineyards. They were intended to learn from this grace, that works cannot save, and our blessings are a pure gift from God rather than achieved by our works. But instead they forgot Yahweh (:12) and turned to justification by religious works, because they had refused to be awed by His grace.

Deu 6:12 then beware lest you forget Yahweh, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage-

Israel never became atheists, they never formally abrogated Yahweh, never formally rejected Him. But they forgot Him, in that in daily life they forgot the wonder of His grace, especially in His historical salvation of them. And it is day by day spiritual mindedness which is the context here. The exit from Egypt is described as a jail break, from the house of bondage. Their desire to return to it was strong, and so Moses continually stresses the true and awful nature of Egypt / the world. The language echoes that of God

to Abraham: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments.

Deu 6:13 You must fear Yahweh your God and you shall serve Him and shall swear by His name-
Lk. 4:8 records how "Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve". He understood that we can only serve two masters: God or the flesh ("mammon" is another personification of the flesh, similar to 'satan'). He saw His own flesh, His own internal thoughts, as a master begging to be served which He must totally reject. His words are a quotation from Dt. 6:13, which warns Israel to serve Yahweh alone and not idols. He perceived His own natural mind and desire as an idol calling to be served.

Deu 6:14 You must not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you-
The Lord quoted Dt. 6:13 against His wilderness temptations "You shalt fear the Lord your God (alone)". He probably had Dt. 6:14 in mind "You shall not go after other gods". Perhaps He interpreted the pagan idols as the evil thoughts of His heart. Earlier Dt. 6:7,8 had warned that not repeating the Law would result in idol worship – and Christ saw that His neglect of the Father's word would result in His serving His evil desires. Thus the purpose of the temptations was to prove whether Christ would really keep and apply the word in His heart (Dt. 8:2), as it was for Israel in their wilderness.

"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God, then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh, throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own

covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations and heart, as revealed in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

Deu 6:15 for Yahweh your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of Yahweh your God shall be kindled against you and He shall destroy you from off the face of the land-
Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for he salvation of others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10.11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again- because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

Deu 6:16 You must not test Yahweh your God as you tested Him in Massah-
Meditate upon scripture as you go around daily life. Israel were told: "Ye (plural) shall not tempt the Lord". The Lord Jesus personalized this to Himself, and quoted it as: "Thou (singular) shalt not tempt the Lord" (Dt. 6:16 cp. Mt. 4:7). He told the Jews that when it is written "I am the God of Abraham", this was God speaking unto *them personally*

("...which was spoken unto you by God, saying..."), teaching them personally that there would be a resurrection (Mt. 22:31).

At the very time Israel put God to the test at Marah (Dt. 6:16), God responded by testing *them* (Ex. 15:25). When Israel were weary of God, He wearied them (Is. 43:22,24). Because they turned their back on Him (Jer. 2:27), He turned His back on them (Jer. 18:17); because they broke His eternal covenant with them, He eventually did likewise. On the other hand, God set the rainbow in the sky so that whenever *He* looks upon it, He will remember His covenant with man (Gen. 9:16). The pronouns seem wrong; we would expect to read that the rainbow is so that whenever *we* look upon it, we remember... but no. God condescends to man to such an extent that He invites us to understand that whenever we remember the covenant with Him, He does likewise.

God comes down to the terms and language of men in His zeal to save. He invites the Jews to put Him to the test: if they paid their tithes, He would bless them with fruitful harvest (Mal. 3:10). And yet surely the whole message of God's revelation is that we are to accept His hand in our lives, that obedience won't automatically bring blessing now, that we are not to put our God to the test (Dt. 6:16 cp. Mt. 4:7) but to trust in Him and the coming of His Kingdom to resolve all things. And yet Yahweh seems to come down from these high principles in Malachi's time, to try to convince them of the logic of devotion to Him.

Ahaz quoted these words about not testing God. "The pride that apes humility" says all that is necessary. We can appear to be humble, and by doing so actually express our pride. The point has been made elsewhere that a brother may say to a sister full of praise for his Bible study: "It was nothing really, no, not that good". But if another sister says to him: "I thought your Bible study was nothing really, not much good at all"; how does he react? Did he *really* mean his 'humble' words to his admirer? Ahaz is one of many Biblical examples of this kind of false humility. He refused to ask a sign of Yahweh, when invited to, lest he be like apostate Israel in the wilderness, and tempt Yahweh (Is. 7:12 cp. Dt. 6:16). But this was actually a 'wearying' of God, and he was given a sign relating to his condemnation (Is. 7:12,13).

Deu 6:17 You must diligently keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you-
The word so often used for "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge

ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 6:18 You must do that which is right and good in the sight of Yahweh, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which Yahweh swore to your fathers-

Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is *constantly* thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. "The Lord thy God *shall* bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands", even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Israel had been told by Moses that their doing what was "good and right" was required for them to possess the land (Dt. 6:18; 12:28). The Gibeonites use the same phrase in appealing for Joshua to do what was "good and right" (Josh. 9:25) in not slaying them but accepting them into covenant relationship with Yahweh. The people generally didn't want to do this (Josh. 9:26). It seems God's providence used Joshua's initial unwisdom in order to give Joshua a chance to do what was "good and right", so that Israel could indeed possess Canaan. We marvel at how God works through human unwisdom and dysfunction, in order to achieve His final purpose of giving His people His Kingdom.

The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Deu 6:19 to thrust out all your enemies from before you, as Yahweh has spoken-
The thrusting out of Israel's enemies from the land was conditional upon Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19). They were disobedient, and yet still God thrust out the tribes and warned them therefore not to think that this was done because of their righteousness (Dt. 9:4). It was by grace alone that they inherited the Kingdom, as with us. But there was always a tendency for Israel to forget that they had been given the Kingdom despite their lack of the required personal righteousness; they became over familiar with living in it under such grace. And so the warning comes down to us.

Deu 6:20 When your son asks you in time to come, What do the testimonies, the statutes and the ordinances which Yahweh our God has commanded you mean?-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 6:21 then you shall tell your son, We were Pharaoh's bondservants in Egypt and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand-

The might of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Deu 6:22 and Yahweh showed great and awesome signs and wonders on Egypt, on Pharaoh and on all his house, before our eyes-
Subsequent generations were to consider that the wonder of redemption had been played out before their own eyes. There is a deep sense in human beings that history is bunk, or at best of merely passing historico-cultural interest, which the hurrying man of modern life has little serious time for. This is where Biblical history is so different; and it's why God's word in the Bible is in a sense all history. But it is history to live by, moment by moment. The implications of our redemption on a hill just outside Jerusalem, on a Friday afternoon, on a day in April... affect today and every day our every thought and action in secular life.

Deu 6:23 He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore to our fathers-
The meaning of 'holiness' is both to be separated *from* and separated *unto*. Separation isn't only something negative; it's more essentially something positive. We are separated *from* this world because we are separated *unto* the things of God's Kingdom; the separation *from* is a natural, unpretended outcome of our involvement in the things of God's Kingdom. It's not part of a cross which the believer must reluctantly, sacrificially bear. Like all spiritual growth, it is unaffected; the number of hours spent watching TV. goes down (to zero?) *naturally*; the friendships with the world *naturally* frizzle out, the way we dress, the things we hope for and talk about... all these things will alter in their own time. Israel were brought out from Egypt through the Red Sea (cp. baptism) that they might be *brought in* to the land of promise (Dt. 6:23). The Nazarite was separated *from* wine, because he was separated *unto* the Lord (Num. 6:2,3).

Deu 6:24 Yahweh commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Yahweh our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive-
A striking difference between the Pentateuch and other contemporary legal codes is that those codes are straight codices of statutes; whereas God's law isn't like that. It is commandment interspersed between historical documents and incidents. We read of some incident in the wilderness journey, then we have some commandments recounted, then another incident, some more commandments, etc. This surely reflects how God intended obedience to His law to not be a legalistic exercise- it was a code for

real human life, which should affect the very spirit of human existence in a way which no dry legal code really could. It was to set a rhythm of life, revealing how that law was "for our good always, that God might preserve us" (Dt. 6:24)- the person who obeyed the law was to live in it (Hab. 2:4 etc.). The motive for obedience to the law was not so that God might give them salvation or status as His people- it was precisely because He had done that, by grace, that they were to respond in obedience (Ex. 12:26; 13:8,14; Dt. 6:20).

It might help if we try to visualize the practical benefits of keeping the laws. "In keeping of them is great reward", David commented (Ps. 19:11). Moses likewise: "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes... *for our good always*" (Dt. 6:24)- not for their irritation, or as a pointless test of obedience. Perhaps this is why the giving of the Law is described as an expression of God's *love* for Israel (Dt. 33:2-4). It was the loving marriage contract between God and Israel. We must see the keeping of the law by the faithful Israelite as being done within a certain spiritual atmosphere. It would have been impossible to keep all those laws from a series of deliberate acts of the will. The truly obedient Israelite would have developed a way of life and thinking, a culture of kindness to others, which achieved obedience to them. This was surely how Jesus was able to perfectly fulfil the Law. "If a man do (the commands) he shall even live in them" (Lev. 18:5) seems to refer to this atmosphere of obedience.

As at this day-
Israel were to teach their children that God had personally saved *them* at the Red Sea. The covenant made with Israel then was made not only with the “fathers” who were then alive, but with every member of every generation of God’s people (Dt. 5:3; 6:20). In this sense, Biblical history is a living word to every generation.

Deu 6:25 It shall be righteousness to us if we observe to do all these commandments before Yahweh our God, as He has commanded us-
"Righteousness to us" is an Old Testament foretaste of Paul's teaching about imputed righteousness. For that is the idea here; not that they should congratulate themselves at their own righteousness in keeping Passover. But rather that remembering their deliverance with faith and gratitude would be counted to them as righteousness. The NIV in Tit. 1:1 speaks of "the truth which leads to Godliness". Thus true understanding *is* related to true Godly living- *if* we translate the doctrines into practice. The Passover would only be properly kept, Moses explained, if the meaning of it was understood (Dt. 6:20-25).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 7

Deu 7:1 When Yahweh your God brings you into the land where you go to possess it and casts out many nations before you, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations greater and mightier than you-

God and Moses had stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, but here Moses enthuses that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (see too Dt. 6:18,19). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech in Deuteronomy, Moses is constantly thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. Roughly 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart; just as like Paul we should enthuse about others' salvation, not simply our own. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 show how His thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Seven nations were to be destroyed (Dt. 7:1), but Josh. 12:8 lists six as having been defeated. The Girgashites are omitted from the list there. So it seems that only the Girgashites were completely destroyed as was potentially possible. The remaining six were defeated by Joshua, but remained in the land, to be thorns in the flesh for Israel.

Passages like Dt. 7:1 confidently proclaim that "When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land... and shall pluck off / cast out many nations...". Yet this casting out was dependent upon Israel doing this work; if they did it, God was eager to work mightily with them. But the reality is that they didn't drive out all the nations. This doesn't falsify Scripture; rather does it indicate the positive hope of God that His people will work with Him to make His potentially true prophecies turn into reality. Even the promises to Abraham were to some extent conditional- Israel would no longer be "as the stars of heaven for multitude; because you would not obey the voice of the Lord" (Dt. 28:62). Hence the fulfillment of those promises was dependent to some extent upon the obedience of the promised seed. Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is constantly thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. "The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands", even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Deu 7:2 and when Yahweh your God delivers them up before you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. You must make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them-

Heb. 11:31 comments that "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace". Rahab's faith was faith in God's grace. For Rahab was an Amoritess and according to the law of Moses there was to be no pity or covenant with them- only death (cp. Dt. 7:2).Rahab had the spiritual ambition to ask that they make a covenant with her- she requests *hesed*, the common term for covenant relationship ("deal kindly with me", Josh. 2:12 cp. 1 Sam. 20:8). And the spies made a covenant with her. Grace, like love, finds a way.

Rahab was aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and not make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18). When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (Josh. 2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "Your terror is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word for "terror" is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "fainting" in fear- quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "faint" (AV "melt away") because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the impossible- that she would be the exception, that with her a covenant would be made. When she says that "we have heard" about the Exodus (Josh. 2:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people shall hear and be afraid". In this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have"- 'yes, we have heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we are afraid'. Seeking God's face is actually to strive for the unachievable in this life; but it's what we are to do. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

God stressed to the later children of Abraham that since they had a covenant with Him, they were not to make covenants with the people who lived around them in the land- time and again God references His covenant with His people, and in that context tells them not to make covenants with the peoples of the land (Ex. 34:10-12,15,27; Dt. 7:2; Jud. 2:1,2,20). Yet Abraham made covenants with those very people (Gen. 14:13; 21:27,32)- perhaps indicating his lack of appreciation of his covenant relationship with Yahweh?.

Deu 7:3 neither shall you arrange marriages with them; your daughter you shall not give to his son, nor shall you take his daughter for your son-
Israel were in covenant with God, *therefore* they were not to make covenants with the other nations, and marriage is mentioned as an example of this (Ex. 34:10,12). In his repetition of this part of the law in Deuteronomy, Moses gave even more repeated emphasis to the fact that our covenant with God precludes any covenant relationship with anyone else (Dt. 7:2-11). The wonder of our relationship with Yahweh is stated time and again. To marry back into Egypt, the house of bondmen from which we have been redeemed, is to despise the covenant, to reverse the redemptive work which God has wrought with us. In this context of marriage out of the Faith, we read that God will destroy "him that hates Him" (Dt. 7:2-11), and repay him to his face. On the other hand, not marrying Gentiles was part of *loving* God (Josh. 23:12,13).

Deu 7:4 For he will turn away your son from following me to serve other gods; so the

anger of Yahweh would be kindled against you and He would destroy you quickly-
The pronouns often change (in Deuteronomy especially), showing a confusion between the voice of God and that of Moses. Dt. 7:4 is an example: “They will turn away thy son from following me (this is Moses speaking for God)… so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you”. Thus Moses’ comments on God’s words are mixed up with the words of God Himself. There are other examples of this in Dt. 7:11; 29:1,10,14,15 (“I” cp. “us”). Consider especially Dt. 11:13,14: “If ye shall diligently hearken unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord… that I will give you the rain of your land… I will send grass in thy fields”. The “I” here switches at ease between God and Moses. The Moses/God pronouns are also mixed in Rom. 10:19.

Many passages make the connection between marriage out of the covenant, and adopting idolatry: Ex. 34:12-16; Dt. 7:2-9; Jud. 3:6,7; 1 Kings 11:2,3; Mal. 2:11; 2 Cor. 6:14. Dt. 7:4 RV dogmatically predicts that a Gentile man will definitely turn away the heart of his Hebrew son-in-law… So certain is it that marriage to Gentiles leads to accepting their idols that Ezra 9:1,2 reasons that Israel hadn't separated from idols *because* they had married Gentiles. Time and again, those who marry out of the covenant claim that they feel strong enough to cope with it, that marriage is only a human thing, and that their spiritual relationship with God is between them and God, and unaffected by their worldly partner. Yet this is exactly the opposite of what God's word says. It's not true that you can marry into the world and be unaffected in your own spirituality. Solomon thought he could handle it; and apparently, he did- for the first 20 years or so. But his Gentile wives were his spiritual ruin at the end.

If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for he salvation of others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10.11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again- because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

Deu 7:5 But you must deal with them like this: break down their altars and dash their pillars in pieces and cut down their Asherim poles and burn their engraved images with fire-
Israel were told to "throw down", "break in pieces" and "utterly destroy" the idols and altars of Canaan. There were times during their history when they obeyed this command by purging themselves from their apostasy in this. The Hebrew words used scarcely occur elsewhere, except very frequently in the context of how God "broke down", "threw down" and "destroyed" Israel at the hands of their Babylonian and Assyrian invaders as

a result of their not 'breaking down' (etc.) the idols. "Throw down" in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 is the same word in 2 Chron. 36:19; Jer. 4:26; 31:28; 33:4; 39:8; 52:14; Ez. 16:39; Nah. 1:6. "Cut down" in Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 later occurs in Is. 10:33; Jer. 48;25; Lam. 2:3. So Israel faced the choice: either cut down your idols, or you will be cut down in the day of God's judgment. Those who worshipped idols were like unto them. The stone will either fall on us and destroy us, or we must fall on it and become broken men and women (Mt. 21:44). For the man untouched by the concept of living for God's glory, it's a hard choice. God will conquer sin, ultimately. When a man dies, it isn't just a biological, clockwork process. It is God's victory over sin in that individual. Either we must be slain by God; or with His gracious help, we must put sin to death in our members through association with the only One who really did this- and thereby rise to life eternal.

Deu 7:6 For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession above all peoples who are on the face of the earth-

We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they would be His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His “peculiar treasure” by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that “the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people [s.w.]... *that* thou shouldest keep all his commandments” (Dt. 26:18). See what’s happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world” (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel “out of all peoples” (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2).

Deu 7:7 Yahweh didn’t set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all peoples-

The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt

(Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night.

Deu 7:8 but because Yahweh loves you and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, therefore has Yahweh brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt- Israel were not to marry people from the surrounding world because God had chosen them to be His special people, "and because he would keep the oath that he had sworn unto your fathers" (Dt. 7:2,8). Those "fathers" were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. By baptism, we enter into the same covenant as they did; the promises to Abraham are made to us (Gal. 3:27-29). We enter that same Abrahamic covenant which in prospect extended to Israel (although it was only ratified or enabled by the death of Christ). The everlasting, Abrahamic covenant extended to *all* generations of Abraham's seed (Gen. 17:7-9). The fact Israel were forbidden to marry Gentiles was not only a *type* of how the

new Israel should not marry unbelievers; we are in essence in their position. We *are* the Israel of God, not just their antitype. We too have been chosen, we too share the same fathers, and the covenant made to them.

Deu 7:9 Know therefore that Yahweh your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and loving kindness with them who love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations-

"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus. But the truth is that God kept His love and covenant with Israel even when they didn't love Him nor abide in His covenant. The more legal statement here, that God's love is for those who love Him, therefore provides the backdrop for the awesome marvel of the way He often protests His eternal love for Israel, e.g. in Hosea. His love for Israel was eternal, despite their not loving Him.

I discussed on Ex. 20:5 that "unto / upon a thousand generations" uses a word for "generations" that is strangely singular. The idea is therefore 'a generation of a family', as discussed on Ex. 20:5.

Deu 7:10 and repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them; He will not be slack to him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face-

This implies a face to face meeting between God and the sinner in judgment. But this will only happen finally at the last day, when the responsible dead are raised to judgment. For as the Bible often notes, in this life the wicked apparently prosper. Judgment day will be a personal, face to face encounter with God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Deu 7:11 You must therefore keep the commandment, the statutes and the ordinances which I command you this day, to do them-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society

of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 7:12 If you listen to these ordinances and keep and do them, Yahweh your God will keep with you the covenant and the loving kindness which He swore to your fathers-
On one hand, the promises to Abraham and the fathers depended for their realization upon human obedience; even though on the other hand, the covenant of Gen. 15 appears to be a unilateral expression of God's grace and assurance to His people. "If you listen to these ordinances and keep and do them, Yahweh your God will keep with you the covenant and the loving kindness which He swore to your fathers" (Dt. 7:12). That covenant was initially given in terms which omitted direct reference to any conditions for fulfilment. But it would be 'kept' by God if His people 'kept' His ways. The promises that God would multiply the seed of Abraham were conditional also; *if* Israel separated themselves from the peoples of the land, *then* He would "multiply you, as He has sworn unto your fathers" (Dt. 13:17). The strength of God's grace also makes some of His promises 'conditional' in a different sense; thus He had promised Reuben and Manasseh that they could return to their possessions only when the others had possessed the land (Dt. 3:20). This condition never happened- yet they were allowed to return. And our very salvation from death and the consequences of sin is in a sense another example of this kind of thing.

Deu 7:13 He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your livestock and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you-
Analyzing usage of the word "love" in the Pentateuch reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers). Love is indeed the proof of spiritual maturity (Col. 3:14).

Reflection upon the nature of God's covenant relationship reveals His grace. There are no lack of Bible passages which speak of His love and blessing in the covenant as being conditional- *if* the people were obedient, then God would keep His covenant "and he will love you and bless you and multiply you". Yet the record of the history of Israel shows that Israel were not obedient; and yet God still kept His covenant, loved them and multiplied them. It's rather like a parent setting conditions for a child, and yet not abiding by the deal, so great is the love felt for the child. God's covenant is in a sense conditional; and yet in another sense it isn't, because His love has the characteristic of unconditionality about it, simply because we are His children. The whole history of Israel is encouragement in this.

Deu 7:14 You will be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock-
The Law could not give life, but it offered temporal blessings, within the context of the Middle East in the two millennia BC, as a recognition of the principle that God rewards obedience. Thus they were promised long life, fruitful land and wombs (i.e. many children) if they were righteous (Dt. 7:13). But now, long life and fruitful land aren't seen by us as blessings. They were blessings relevant to the context in which they were given; and likewise fertility is to be seen in the same light. And this must be given due weight when we consider issues of fertility, choices to have or not have children, and infertility.

Deu 7:15 Yahweh will take away from you all sickness, and none of the evil diseases of Egypt which you know, will He put on you, but will lay them on all those who hate you-
This is not to be read as meaning that Israel would be free from all sickness; for mortality involves sickness, and that is part of the human condition. And sickness came upon righteous men, we think of Hezekiah, and how the Lord Jesus "bore our sicknesses" as predicted in Is. 53. Israel were smitten with sickness, but the Lord Jesus bore the result of their sins. The sickness here is parallel with the "evil diseases of Egypt", the specific judgments which came upon Egypt at the time of Israel's deliverance from them. This is made specific in Ex. 15:26; Dt. 28:27.

Deu 7:16 You shall consume all the peoples whom Yahweh your God shall deliver up unto you; your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you-
Moses warns them not to " take pity" on false teachers, but to purge them from the community (Dt. 7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12). Not once in the earlier Law does this warning occur. Moses had come to know Israel so well that he could see how they were tempted to fail, and so he warned them forcibly against it. The way the Lord Jesus knows our thought processes, the mechanism of our temptations, is wondrously prefigured here. There are so many other examples of Moses showing his recognition of exactly *how* Israel were likely to be tempted (Dt. 6:11-13; 8:11-20; 9:4; 11:16; 12:13,19,23,30; 13:1-4; 14:27; 15:9,18; 17:11,12 ("will"),14,16,17; 21:18; 22:1-4,18; 23:21; 25:8).

Twice in 1 Timothy, Paul speaks about a snare; the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7), and the snare of wanting wealth (1 Tim. 6:9). The desire for wealth in whatever form is the very epitome of the devil, our inherent sin which we must struggle against. The idea of a snare is that it results in a sudden and *unexpected* destruction. The unexpectedness of the destruction should set us thinking: surely the implication is that those who are materialistic don't realize that in fact this is their besetting sin, and therefore their rejection in the end because of it will be so tragically unexpected. It's rather like pride; if you're proud and you don't know it, then you really are proud. And if we're materialistic

and don't know it, we likewise really have a problem. The idea of riches being a snare connects with copious OT references to idols as Israel's perpetual snare (Ex. 23:33; Dt. 7:16; Jud. 2:3; 8:27; Ps. 106:36; Hos. 5:1). Paul's point is surely that the desire of wealth is the equivalent of OT idolatry.

Despite such great love for Israel, Moses knew them so well that he fully appreciated that they were extremely prone to weakness. This is one of the major themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He did not turn a blind eye to their sins; Deuteronomy is punctuated with reminders of how grievously they had sinned during their journey, and yet at the same time Moses is so positive about them- setting a wonderful pattern for us in how to deal with others. Time and again he comments on how easily they will be tempted to disobey commandments. "Take heed" runs like a refrain throughout Moses' speech. He warns them here not to "take pity" on false teachers, but to purge them from the community (7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12). Not once in the earlier giving of the Law does this warning occur. Moses had come to know Israel so well that he could see how they were tempted to fail, and so he warned them forcibly against it. The way Jesus knows our thought processes, the mechanism of our temptations, is wondrously prefigured here.

Deu 7:17 If you say in your heart, These nations are more than I, how can I dispossess them?-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 7:18 you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what Yahweh your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular- very often in Dt. 7], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

“Let not your heart be troubled... neither let it be afraid” (Jn. 14:1,27) repeats Moses’ final encouragement to Israel “fear not, neither be dismayed” (Dt. 31:8; 1:21,29; 7:18).

Deu 7:19 the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand and the stretched out arm by which Yahweh your God brought you out; so shall Yahweh your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid-
God addresses those who had not been present at the Red Sea and who hadn't seen the plagues on Egypt as if they had personally been there. He speaks of these things "which your eyes saw". The people were to so feel themselves into God's word, into Biblical history, into their membership in the people of God, that it was as if they had seen these things with their own eyes. And in the context, God uses this as the basis to appeal for their trust that He will likewise give them the victory over the Egyptians and crises in *their* lives.

The great works of Yahweh which He showed at the time of their exodus from Egypt (cp. the world) and baptism at the Red Sea were in essence repeated throughout their wilderness journey (Dt. 7:19). Therefore whenever they faced discouragement and an apparent blockage to their way, they were to remember how God had redeemed them at their baptism, and to realize that in fact His work was still ongoing with them (Dt. 20:1). He told them in the desert that He was "Yahweh that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 11:45). Therefore the overcoming of Edom, Moab and the Canaanite tribes is described in language lifted from the Red Sea record (e.g. Ex. 15:15-17). Throughout their history, Israel were reminded that what God had done for them in their Red Sea deliverance He was continuing to do, and therefore all their enemies would likewise perish if they remained God's people (e.g. Is. 43:16).

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched our arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a

new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 7:20 Moreover Yahweh your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left and hide themselves perish from before you-

The fear amongst the Canaanites prior to Israel's approach and the weakness of those nations was due to "the hornet" being sent before Israel (Dt. 7:20; Josh. 24:12); it would seem that this is a reference to the Angels softening up the Canaanite tribes, perhaps through inciting the Egyptians to raid them and ruin the economy. And specifically, the two kings of the Amorites attacking the other Canaanites (Josh. 24:12). "The hornet" could also refer to the Phoenician raiders, who had hornets as totems; they too weakened Canaan before the Israelites arrived, and would have been manipulated to do so by an Angel. In Ex. 23:27 God says He will "send My fear before you, and will destroy all the people to whom you shall come". Jacob likens his guardian Angel to "the God before whom my fathers walked" (Gen. 48:16), who is called "the fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42,53) when Jacob describes the personal presence of God in his life. So the "fear of God" is associated with an Angel; God sent His fear, an Angel, before Israel into Canaan, as promised explicitly in Ex. 23. "The hornet" could have referred to literal hornets, used by God to destroy the nations of Canaan. For they were indeed a problem in the land; "Zorah" in Judah means "place of hornets". But I prefer the idea that the Angel manipulated Gentile nations to soften up the Canaanites before Israel's arrival. The same figure is found in Is. 7:18, where God whistled for the "fly that is in Egypt and the bee that is in Assyria". We note that this was all built in to God's wider plan; for had Israel entered Canaan 40 years before they did, they would've found the Canaanites that much stronger than they were after "the hornet" had weakened them for 40 years. It's as if God recalculated the program according to the great weakness of Israel. They didn't enter when they could have done, and so He used the period of their wilderness wanderings to make their entrance to the land that much easier than it would otherwise have been.

Deu 7:21 You shall not be scared of them, for Yahweh your God is in the midst of you, a great and awesome God-

They were not to repeat the failure of Israel when they first approached Canaan. They allowed their fear of the local tribes to displace their faith in God, and His repeated word of salvation and promise of possession of His Kingdom. Fear is always the antithesis of faith. God is often called an "awesome God" (Dt. 7:21 etc.). The Hebrew word for

"awesome" is that for 'fear' (s.w. Gen. 3:10; 15:1; 18;15 etc.). The idea is that God's people are to be in such fear / awe of Him that they fear / are in awe of nothing else. Hence Dt. 7:21 says that Israel should "not be scared of" their enemies, because their God is "awesome", He is the one to be feared.

Deu 7:22 Yahweh your God will cast out those nations before you by little and little; you may not consume them at once-
Perhaps God's ideal intention for Israel wasn't fulfilled, and therefore according to some later plan of action, He gave Israel the land "at one time" (Josh. 10:42).

Lest the animals of the field increase on you-
Time and again Israel's surrounding, neighbouring enemies are likened to "wild beasts". The list of references is impressive: Hos. 2:12; Ez. 5:17; 14:15; Ps. 80:13; Jer. 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; Dt. 7:22. Job's Sabean (i.e. Arab) invaders are called "the beasts of the earth... the beasts of the field" (Job 5:22,23). It is possible that "beasts" in these passages can be read as an intensive plural - i.e. 'the great beast', which symbolizes all of Israel's various enemies. This equivalence of the multitude of these enemies with a singular beast is seen in Ez.. 34:28, which parallels "the heathen" (enemies of Israel) with "the beast of the land" (singular). Rev. 17 similarly exhibits *the* (singular) beast as comprising a number of nations (heads / horns).

Deu 7:23 But Yahweh your God will deliver them up before you and will confuse them with a great confusion until they are destroyed-
There are no conditions attached to this prediction in the record, and yet we must clearly understand it as meaning 'This is what is potentially possible for you, I have enabled it in my plan, but it depends upon your faith'. And tragically, Israel would not.

Deu 7:24 He will deliver their kings into your hand and you shall make their name perish from under the sky; no man shall be able to stand before you, until you have destroyed them-
Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some

like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

Deu 7:25 You must burn the engraved images of their gods with fire. You must not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourself, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to Yahweh your God-
Materialism is perhaps the direct equivalent of idol worship under the old covenant. They were to not even desire "the silver and gold that is on them... for it is an abomination to the Lord your God... you shall utterly detest it; and y*ou* [like God] shall utterly abhor it" (Dt. 7:25,26). God despises idolatry; and we also must go a step beyond merely avoiding materialism; we must despise it.

Deu 7:26 You must not bring an abomination into your house and become a devoted thing like it. You shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is a devoted thing-
Those who make and worship idols are "like unto them" (Ps. 115:8; 135:18). We become like that which we worship. If we worship Yahweh, then we become devoted to Him; and all else becomes detestable to us. As Israel were to "detest" idols and idolatry as "abomination" (Dt. 7:26), so they were to "abhor" and treat as "abomination" unclean animals (Lev. 11:11,13,43), lest they "make yourselves abominable [s.w. "detestable"] with any creeping thing" (Lev. 20:25). I suggest this is the reason why God designated some animals as 'abominable'; because of their association with idol worship. The idols of Egypt were often in the form of animals, and sex with animals was part of the rites. Just as in primitive societies today. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14); no animal is morally more or less clean than another. The commandments about unclean animals were clearly intended just for Israel living within a culture of idolatry / abomination involving those kinds of animals.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 8

Deu 8:1 You must observe to do all the commandments which I command you this day, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers-
Again we perceive God's grace. They were not obedient, and yet by grace they did go in and possess the Kingdom. We cannot presume upon such grace, but we can note the

deep good pleasure and will of God that His people inherit His Kingdom, despite their weaknesses.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 8:2 You shall remember all the way which Yahweh your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you-
Recollection of our spiritual biography is intended to humble us. And the intention of our wilderness walk is to humble us; for humility is one of the most critical characteristics which God seeks to develop in His children. We must be humbled beneath His mighty hand, that we might be exalted in due time (1 Pet. 5:6). And so life's really a race to the bottom; by the end of our days, the intention is that we have been suitably humbled. So that we might be exalted at the resurrection. It's no surprise, therefore, that life often doesn't work out- so that we are humbled.

We must remember that the 40 years wandering were punishment for sin, it was the experience of condemnation, and serves as the basis for later Biblical pictures of the rejected. Unable to enter the Kingdom they so wanted to enter, wandering until they died. But Moses in Deuteronomy perceives that God wanted to humble them and give them even another chance. For this was why He led them 40 years... "Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers didn't know, that He might humble you and that He might prove you, to do you good at your latter end" (:16). But they didn't want that and perished in the desert.

To prove you, to know what was in your heart-
The original is ambiguous. It was to reveal to God what was the state of their hearts; and

yet God knows the human heart without the need for experimentation. But it can also imply that the experiences were so that they knew what their heart was. Hence LXX "that the things in thine heart might be made manifest". The idea may be that man's self examination is in fact God's examination of that heart; hence Prov. 20:27: "The spirit of man is the candle of Yahweh, searching all the inward parts of the belly". Our wilderness journey is therefore partly intended for us to come to fuller self knowledge, as to whether or not we have a heart for God. At the start of our journey, we may simply hope we have a heart for God; but in maturity, we are intended to know for sure that we do, despite many imperfections.

Alternatively, it could be argued that it was the Angel gave them trials in order to find out what was in their heart. God "knows the secrets of the heart" (Ps. 44:21); "I Yahweh search the heart" (Jer. 17:10), and therefore He does not have to test us in order to know what is in our hearts. But His Angels do. Abraham and Hezekiah are other examples; see on 2 Chron. 32:31. We know that Angels can't sin: and yet they are limited in knowledge (e.g. Mt. 24:36). an Angel commented that now he knew that Abraham feared God, after he had seen his willingness to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:12); Israel's guardian Angel lead them through the wilderness in order to learn about Israel's spirituality (Dt. 8:2,3). God Himself, of course, already knew the hearts of men. The "sons of God", in the context of the book of Job, refer to the Angels (Job 38:7), and Job's 'satan' may have likewise been an Angel testing him to see his response.

Whether you would keep His commandments or not-

The grace of all this is that the forty years wanderings showed what was the heart of Israel- that they were disobedient. But all the same, God brought them in to the promised land.

Deu 8:3 He humbled you-
Perhaps we find ourselves facing a situation that our upbringing and culture never addressed; we are alone, humiliated, before our God. This is what happened to Israel and to the Lord in the wilderness. The tragedy is that so many fail to respond as intended to the humbling hand of God as a loving Father. The Hebrew word there translated "humbled" is so often used about the afflictions of Israel- in Egypt, in the wilderness, at the hands of their invaders. But they wriggled against it, their bitterness driving them deep within themselves rather than to God and His Son. This is the enduring tragedy of Israel, and Jewish history. And it is the same with so many lives today.

And allowed you to suffer hunger-
How God works through sin is revealed in the way that although God always provided food for Israel in the wilderness, He 'suffered them to hunger' for 40 years, in order to try to teach them that man lives not by bread alone, but by God's word (Dt. 8:2,3). The Jews

in the wilderness despised the food God gave them as worthless (Num. 21:3); they went hungry not literally, but in the sense that they despised the manna of God's provision. And He allowed them to have that hunger, in order that He might [try to] teach them about the value of His word. He didn't simply punish them for their ingratitude. He sought to work through it in order to teach them something. Even the process of rejection results in the victims coming to 'know the Lord'.

And fed you with manna-
Israel were to be filled with the manna, so that they would know that "I am Yahweh your God" (Ex. 16:12). This was to be the meaning of the manna. There was a daily manifestation of God's glory along with the manna (Ex. 16:7 cp. 12). The daily sense of living with God's glory is so vital for each of us in our deeply personal spirituality. We know that faith comes from hearing God's word; so our feeding on God's word should lead us to know Yahweh. There was something intensely personal about the teaching of the manna: "He fed thee (singular- not "ye") with manna, that he might make thee know that (every) man (lives spiritually) by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Dt. 8:3 AV).

Which you didn't know, neither did your fathers know-
Part of our humbling process is to be given experiences and situations which neither we nor our fathers knew. On one hand, the essence of all situations and temptations has been experienced before at some point in Biblical history. But on the other, we are tested by experiences which are unique to us, without known precedent; that we might be brought to God in trust and humility.

That He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of Yahweh-
Every gift of manna was the result of a specific Divine word of command being given. And this was to teach the wider lesson- that God's word is to be engaged with by us every day, and by this we shall spiritually live. Whilst the manna appeared the same old, same old thing- it actually was uniquely created by a specific, consciously given word from God. And so it is with our spiritual food, given daily.

The passages quoted by Jesus in the desert to strengthen Himself against His human desires ("the devil") are all from the same part of Deuteronomy, regarding Israel's experience in the wilderness. Jesus clearly saw a parallel between His experiences and theirs. The description of Him as being in the wilderness with beasts and Angels (Mk. 1:13) is another connection with Israel's experience in the wilderness- they were plagued there by "wild beasts" (32:19-24). Jesus was led up of the spirit for forty days in the wilderness, as Israel were led forty years by a Spirit-Angel. The mind of Jesus was likewise proved by the temptations. Jesus overcame by quoting the Scriptures that were in His heart (Ps. 119:11). Jesus also was allowed to hunger, to reinforce His

understanding of the fact that we are to live not by physical food but by the word of God. The reference to Israel being 'chastened' (:5) in the desert recall how God chastened His Son, Jesus (2 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 89: 32). Thus Jesus showed us how to read and study the Word - He thought Himself into the position of Israel in the wilderness, and therefore took the lessons that can be learnt from their experiences to Himself in His wilderness trials.

The fact that God's word is true means that we also ought to be truthful- for we should speak "as oracles of God". Moses surely intended a connection between his words recorded in Dt. 8:3 and Dt. 23:23- for they are the only times he uses a particular Hebrew word translated "proceed" or 'go out', within the same speech uttered the same day: "By every word that *proceeds* out of the mouth of the Lord does man live... that which *goes forth* [s.w. "proceeds"] out of *your* lips / mouth you shall keep and perform". The influence of continually hearing *God's* word should be that *our* words are likewise truthful and trustworthy. The fact that the Bible as God's word is true has implications for our own truthfulness. *Pistos* is listed as a fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5; but the idea it can carry is not so much of faith in the sense of belief, but of faithfulness, loyalty, reliability, utter dependability. If this is how God's words are to us, then this is how we and our words should be to others.

Exactly because the Lord Jesus was human, and yet perfect, He was so exalted. It's perhaps noteworthy that in the wilderness temptation, Jesus was tempted "If you are the Son of *God*..." (Mt. 4:3), and He replies by quoting Dt. 8:3 "*man* shall not live by bread alone"- and the Jonathan Targum has *bar nasha* [son of man] here for "man". If we are correct in understanding those wilderness temptations as the Lord's internal struggles, we see Him tempted to wrongly focus upon His being Son of *God*, forgetting His humanity; and we see Him overcoming this temptation, preferring instead to perceive Himself as Son of *man*. Twice in Mark, Jesus is addressed as "Messiah" but He replies by calling Himself "the Son of man" (Mk. 8:29-31; 14:61,62). If this was His preferred self-perception, should it not be how we perceive Him?

Deu 8:4 Your clothing didn't grow old on you, neither did your foot swell, these forty years-
God has likewise promised to provide us on our wilderness journey with basic clothing and food (Ps. 37:25). We should be content with this, and instead of giving our strength to earn money to tickle our taste buds and buy fine clothing, instead give our lives to serving God.

Apart from the jewellery taken from the Egyptians for the construction of the tabernacle, the total unmaterialism of Israel on Passover night is something to be marvelled at. They only had the clothes they wore, and just the one pair of shoes. This is confirmed by the reminder that these things were miraculously preserved throughout

the wilderness journey (Dt. 8:4). It is also highlighted that they had no food when they left - they just grabbed some dough which later they baked into "unleavened cakes" (Ex. 12:34,39).

We must remember that the 40 years wandering were punishment for sin, it was the experience of condemnation, and serves as the basis for later Biblical pictures of the rejected. Unable to enter the Kingdom they so wanted to enter, wandering until they died. But Moses in Deuteronomy perceives that even for those condemned people, Yahweh provided and they "lacked nothing" by His grace. We see something of God's essence here- that He cares even for the condemned. Such a far cry from the classical picture of "hell".

Deu 8:5 You shall consider in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so Yahweh your God chastens you-
Dt. 8:2-7 describes God leading Israel through the wilderness for 40 years *so that* they could then enter the land. 'Israel' here must refer to the under 20s, Joshua, Caleb and the Levites. It was only they who went through the wilderness for 40 years. It was 'Israel' in this sense with whom God was in love. They considered in their heart, that God was treating them as a father does his son (Dt. 8:5). This has a practical significance to it; the under 20s would have been at variance with their natural parents, who knew they were condemned to death in the wilderness, and who refused to take their covenant with God seriously. That young remnant were led to meditate that God was their Heavenly Father; natural relationships that were not based around a true love of God, paled into insignificance as they spiritually matured. Dt. 8:3 says that they learnt to live by every word of God during those 40 years. This is just not true of rebellious Israel generally. But the under 20s, Levites, Joshua and Caleb all developed into keen lovers of the word during that time. They are classic Biblical examples for young people.

Deu 8:6 You must keep the commandments of Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him-
Whilst there are of course conditions for entry into the Kingdom, it must ever be remembered that it is not right to therefore reason that if we *do* certain things, then we will be in the Kingdom. For this would be justification by works and not by faith. However, because we believe we will be in the Kingdom, we will therefore naturally respond by living according to God's precepts. Moses encouraged Israel to keep the Law exactly because God would surely give them the promised land- not *so that* they would enter the land but because He would give them the land: "For Yahweh your God brings you into a good land" (:7).

Deu 8:7 For Yahweh your God brings you into a good land-

The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

A land of brooks of water, of springs and underground water gushing into valleys and hills-
A land of brooks of water" is precisely the phrase used of a place they stopped at on the way to Canaan (Dt. 10:7). They were constantly given foretastes of the Kingdom before entering it, just as we are on our wilderness journey.

Deu 8:8 a land of wheat and barley, vines, fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and honey-
Rabshakeh alluded to this: "Make an agreement with me... and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree... until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey" (2 Kings 18:31-32). The repetition of the word "land" and the evident allusions to the description of the promised land Israel would have if they were faithful, show that Rabshakeh was offering the Jews a fake kingdom of God. The reference to each man eating his own vine and fig tree is alluding to Mic. 4:4, a prophecy which was uttered during this period, and doubtless repeated by the prophets within Jerusalem: "They shall sit every man under his vine and... fig tree". The world likewise offers us a fake kingdom of God. We have a choice between the kingdoms of men now, and God's true Kingdom.

Deu 8:9 a land in which you shall eat bread without scarcity. You shall not lack anything in it-
There can be little doubt that standing on a mountain looking out over God's Kingdom would have reminded Christ of Moses on Nebo, who for one slip was denied it all. And that must have sobered Him (Dt. 34:1). And having quoted Dt. 8:3 to Himself about living on the bread / word of God, His mind would have gone on to Dt. 8:9 with its

description of eating bread without scarceness in the Kingdom – i.e. feeding fully on spiritual things, in the allegory.

The connection is with how in the wilderness years, they were made to hunger (:3)- so that they might better appreciate the fertility and food of the promised land. We too suffer deficits in our journey, perhaps of fellowship, of acceptance... to prepare us for the fullness of those things in the Kingdom.

But when under judgment for sin, the bread of the land was scarce (Ez. 4:17; Am. 4:6), and they lacked all things (Dt. 28:48,57). This promise is therefore conditional upon their obedience- it was what was potentially possible.

A land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you may dig copper-
They would inherit a land which was blessed with iron, and from whose hills "you *may* dig brass"; and yet they failed to make the effort to dig this out, and therefore they were dominated by the Canaanite tribes who had iron weapons. The Angels had made it potentially possible, but the realization of their potential plans depended upon Israel's freewill effort. But in Judges and 1 Samuel we read several times of how Israel hardly had any iron weapons and were dominated by the Philistines who did. So this was a potential for them- they *could* have had this blessing, but like us so often, they chose to be satisfied with the minimum and didn't realize it for themselves.

The men of Dan quote the words of Dt. 8:9 in Jud. 18:10, but out of context. Those words were true of the entire land promised to Abraham. But the men of Dan didn't drive out the tribes from the land. Instead, they applied these words to a tiny, remote part of it in Laish, and encouraged themselves on the basis of these words to go and massacre a group of unsuspecting people and take their land- with the blessing of Micah's false gods.

Deu 8:10 When you shall eat and be full, then you shall bless Yahweh your God for the good land which He has given you-
Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

"The good land" uses the same words as in the creation account (Gen. 1:10). Their entry into Canaan is being cast as a new creation, a possibility of attaining some form of the Kingdom of God.

Deu 8:11 Beware lest you forget Yahweh your God-
They never literally forgot Yahweh. Indeed they always professed loyalty to Him. But God sees to the essence, and considered they effectively were acting without Him present in their conscience. And He counts that as having forgotten Him. The same warning is in Dt. 6:12; 25:19; Hos. 2:13- to not allow material blessing to lead us to forget Yahweh. Seeing that such blessing clearly leads to forgetting Yahweh, we wonder why ever He gives any of His children such blessing. It is given as a test; or, perhaps it is simply a case of a doting Father giving us what He knows we will like, although it is not good for us. The connection between material blessing and forgetting God is very strong; to seek for material blessing is spiritual suicide.

In not keeping His commandments-
The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

His ordinances and His statutes which I command you this day-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also

Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 8:12 lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and lived therein-
When they had eaten and were full (Dt. 8:10), they were to beware "lest" the prosperity made them forget God (Dt. 8:12,13). This is a profound warning to all afflicted with prosperity in this life. Dt. 31:20 states that when they had "eaten and are full" (s.w.) they would certainly forget Yahweh and turn to other gods; but this prophecy was conditional, for it was by no means bound to happen. For the appeal in Dt. 8:10-13 had been *not* to let this happen. So much of Bible prophecy is not so much prediction as stating conditional situations, with the implicit appeal that in the gap between pronouncement and fulfilment, we can change the outcomes by prayer and changed behaviour.

We note that God promised them to eat and be full, and also to be given houses in Canaan which they didn't build (Dt. 6:11). God foresaw that they would follow the addictive, insatiable path of materialism in then wanting to build additional homes. Materialism is by nature addictive; and it is foolhardy to consider we can dabble in it without becoming addicted.

Deu 8:13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply and your silver and your gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied-
They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, knowing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and failure. We wonder why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He rejoiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

Deu 8:14 then your heart be lifted up-
There is a clear connection between material success and pride, a lifted up heart. Yet humility is clearly of the essence to God. If we accept this, we will not seek material success. We will value humility and covet it.

And you forget Yahweh your God, Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt-
Israel never became atheists, they never formally abrogated Yahweh, never formally rejected Him. But they forgot Him, in that in daily life they forgot the wonder of His grace, especially in His historical salvation of them. And it is day by spiritual mindedness which is of the essence. The exit from Egypt is described as a jail break, from the house of bondage. Their desire to return to it was strong, and so Moses continually stresses the true and awful nature of Egypt / the world. The language echoes that of God to Abraham: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments.

Out of the house of bondage-
They were continually reminded of how awful Egypt was; this phrase is often used (e.g. Ex. 13:3,14; 20:2; Dt. 5:6; 6:12). For there is a strong human tendency to consider the past as halcyon and wonderful. When for the believer, the past is awful, and the best is ahead, in God's Kingdom.

Deu 8:15 Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness-
From the perspective of God's Kingdom, we will look back upon our wilderness journey in this life as having been extremely dangerous. We could have wandered so easily from the pathway or been spiritually consumed. In spiritual terms, our journey right now is intense and very dangerous.

With fiery serpents, scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; Who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint-
The records make it clear enough that the miraculous provision of water was in the same context as God's constant provision of food and protection to the people (Dt. 8:15,16). The rock gave water throughout the wilderness journey (Is. 48:21). This would surely necessitate that the giving of water at Horeb was not a one-off solution to a crisis. There is a word play in the Hebrew text of Is. 48:21: "He led them through the Horebs [AV 'desert places']" by making water flow from the rock. The Horeb experience was repeated for 40 years; as if the rock went on being smitten. Somehow the water from that smitten rock went with them, fresh and bubbling as it was the first moment the rock was smitten, right through the wilderness. It was living, spring water- not lying around in puddles. The water that came from that one rock felt as if God had opened up fresh springs and torrents in the desert (Ps. 74:15 NAS). It always tasted as if it was just gushing out of the spring; and this wonder is commented upon by both David and Isaiah (Ps. 78:15,16,20; 105:41; Is. 48:21). It was as if the rock had just been struck, and the water was flowing out fresh for the first time. In this miracle, God clave the rock and there came out rivers (Hab. 3:9; Ps. 78:16,20; Is. 43:20). Each part of Israel's encampment had the water as it were brought to their door. And so it is in our

experience of Christ, and the blessing enabled by His sacrifice. The blessings that come to us are deeply personal, and directed to us individually. He died once, long ago, and yet the effect of His sacrifice is ever new. In our experience, it's as if He has died and risen for us every time we obtain forgiveness, or any other grace to help in our times of need. We live in newness of life.

Deu 8:16 Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers didn't know, that He might humble you and that He might prove you, to do you good at your latter end-

"Humble you" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing.

The humbling and testing was through testing how deeply they believed that it was God's intention to do His people eternal good in the end- through present suffering.

Deu 8:17 and lest you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand has given me this wealth-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 8:18 But you must remember Yahweh your God, for it is He who gives you power to

get wealth that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as at this day-

"The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand" (Is. 32:8) may suggest that the generous will "stand" in the last day because of their generous spirit. Indeed, being in covenant with God may even depend upon our recognition of the fact that all human wealth is from God. The power to get wealth, be it education, intelligence or hard work (or 'good luck' in a secular sense) is all from God. It is not our "power" (:17) but God's. Moses urges the peoples' faithfulness so that Yahweh might "establish His covenant" with them (Dt. 8:18); and we note that despite their disobedience, He still "established" the covenant with them, by grace alone (Dt. 9:5).

"That He may establish His covenant" could suggest that ultimate, eternal covenant relationship is for those who have been prepared through a correct response to wealth. If we accept that any wealth we have is from God and not our own efforts- then we are ready for Him to establish His covenant with us. That seems to be the force of the unusual language here, although GNB glosses it with "Remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you the power to become rich. He does this because he is still faithful today to the covenant that he made with your ancestors".

Deu 8:19 If you forget Yahweh your God, and walk after other gods and serve them and worship them-

"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God, then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh, throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations

and heart, as revealed in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish-
Always in the OT, “I say unto you this day" was used as a Hebraism to bring home the utter solemnity of some great truth (e.g. Dt. 4:26,39; 8:19). The Lord used this idiom in assuring the thief on the cross that he could solemnly assure him, that he would share His Kingdom with Him. It's worth noting that the comma is placed after 'today' in the Curetonian Syriac version of the New Testament; the Syriac versions would reflect better the original Aramaic in which the Lord likely spoke. Dt. 9:1 is another example of where "this day" doesn't mean "today", but is rather a way of signally a solemn statement.

Deu 8:20 As the nations that Yahweh makes to perish before you, so you too shall perish, because you wouldn’t listen to the voice of Yahweh your God-
Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 9

Deu 9:1 Hear, Israel-
Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" or obey God's words. "*Hear*, O Israel" in Deuteronomy must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "*Hear* [‘be obedient’], O Israel" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuteronomy Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

You are to pass over the Jordan this day-
They did not pass over that day because they mourned for Moses 30 days (Dt. 34:8). It is possible that Moses felt so despised by them that he assumed there would be no period of mourning for him. He could be using "this day" in a general sense of "at this time", but this may also be an example of 'I tell you this day' being a solemn statement, as discussed on Dt. 8:19.

To go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and walled up to the sky-
"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 9:2 a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard say, Who can stand before the sons of Anak?-
This was apparently a proverbial expression of the time, but it caught hold of the minds of the spies who first entered the land, and came to dominate the thinking of the generation who refused to enter the Kingdom and were therefore condemned in the wilderness. We see here the power of words and phrases; the little credos by which men live are often taught by snatches of lyrics from popular songs, or half remembered quotations once seen somewhere online. This is why we are to speak to ourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and not allow our self talk to be donated by the phrases of the secular world (Eph. 5:19). We are to speak also to each other in these terms (Col. 3:16); for our self talk is reflected in our words to others. And this is what happened to that generation who failed to enter the land; it was exactly this repetition of the words "Who can stand before the sons of Anak?", in their hearts and to each other, which led to a generation of Israel being denied the Kingdom which had been prepared for them.

Deu 9:3 Know therefore this day that Yahweh your God is He who goes over before you as a devouring fire-
It was the Angel in the pillar of fire which was to go before Israel. Deborah in Jud. 4:14 quotes the words of Dt. 9:3 concerning the Angel going before Israel to drive out the nations to Barak, to inspire him with courage in fighting them. She recognized that the work the Angels did when they went out many years ago to do all the groundwork necessary for Israel to destroy all the tribes of Canaan was done for all time. It was not too late to make use of that work by making a human endeavour in faith. So with us, the smaller objectives in our lives as well as our main goal of reaching the Kingdom have all been made possible through the work of Christ and the Angels in the past. Deborah's recognition of this is shown in her song- Jud. 5:20: "They (the Angels) fought from Heaven; the stars (Biblical imagery for Angels) in their courses fought against Sisera".

He will destroy them and He will bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out-
The nations in the land being "subdued" or 'brought down' was the outcome of Israel being obedient to the covenant (s.w. Dt. 9:3). We read this word "subdued" used of how the land was at times subdued before Israel (Jud. 3:30; 4:23; 8:28; 11:33). But each time it is clear that the people generally were not obedient to the covenant. One faithful leader was, and the results of his faithfulness were counted to the people. This is what happened with the Lord's death leading to righteousness being imputed to us.

And make them perish quickly, as Yahweh has spoken to you-
See on Josh. 5:13,14; Jud. 1:8. The implications that we should respond 'quickly' to the Gospel surely mean that we should not have any element of indifference in our response to the call of God, and yet the foundations of a true spiritual life cannot be laid hastily. The Father drove out the tribes from Canaan slowly, not immediately- or at least, He potentially enabled this to happen (Jud. 2:23). But Israel were to destroy those tribes "quickly" (Dt. 9:3). Here perhaps we see what is meant- progress is slow but steady in the spiritual life, but there must be a quickness in response to the call of God for action in practice. Compare this with how on one hand, God does not become quickly angry (Ps. 103:8), and yet on the other hand He *does* get angry quickly in the sense that He immediately feels and responds to sin (Ps. 2:12); His anger 'flares up in His face'.

Deu 9:4 Don't say in your heart-
Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a

spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

After Yahweh your God has thrust them out from before you, For my righteousness Yahweh has brought me in to possess this land; because Yahweh drives them out before you because of the wickedness of these nations-
The thrusting out of Israel's enemies from the land was conditional upon Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19). They were disobedient, and yet still God thrust out the tribes and warned them therefore not to think that this was done because of their righteousness (Dt. 9:4). It was by grace alone that they inherited the Kingdom, as with us. But there was always a tendency for Israel to forget that they had been given the Kingdom despite their lack of the required personal righteousness; they became over familiar with living in it under such grace. And so the warning comes down to us.

Deu 9:5 Not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart do you go in to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations Yahweh your God drives them out from before you-
The grace of God guarantees our salvation. Yet we find it so hard to believe- that I, with all my doubts and fears, will really be there. Israel were warned that they were being given the land (cp. salvation) "not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart... for thou art a stiffnecked people" (Dt. 9:5,6). These words are picked up in Tit. 3:5 and applied to the new Israel: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing (baptism) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" - by His grace alone. Moses urges the peoples' faithfulness so that Yahweh might "establish His covenant" with them (Dt. 8:18); but here we note that despite their disobedience, He still "established" the covenant with them, by grace alone (Dt. 9:5).

And that He may establish the word which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob-
We could say that the promises to Abraham which form the basis of the covenant are about grace. Dt. 9 spells out that Israel would not inherit the land sworn to their fathers

because they were righteous- the implication was that it was a gift promised by pure grace.

Deu 9:6 Know therefore that Yahweh your God doesn't give you this good land to possess-
The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people-
Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

Deu 9:7 Remember, don't forget, how you provoked Yahweh your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you went forth out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place you have been rebellious against Yahweh-
We are left to imagine in what tone of voice Moses said that. Israel had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh through disbelief, and therefore couldn't enter Canaan (Dt. 1:26; 9:7,23,24; 31:27; Num. 27:4); they were as the rebellious son who rebelled against his father's commandment (s.w. Dt. 21:18,20). For he himself had rebelled

against the commandment of Yahweh and because of this was also barred from entering Canaan (Num. 20:24; 27:14). One reason for this was that he had called the Israelites "rebels" (Num. 20:10), and no sooner had he done so, than he himself rebelled against Yahweh's commandment just like them, but in a different way.

Deu 9:8 Also in Horeb you provoked Yahweh to wrath and Yahweh was angry with you to destroy you-

God can be provoked to anger (Dt. 9:7; Ezra 5:12), His wrath 'arises' because of sinful behaviour (2 Chron. 36:16). He drove Israel into captivity in anger and fury (Jer. 32:37). The wrath of God 'waxes hot' against sinful men, and Moses begged God to 'turn' from that wrath (Ex. 32:11,12). The whole intercession of Moses with God gives the impression of God changing His mind because of the intercession of a mere man. Admittedly the idea of anger flaring up in God's face and then Him 'turning' from that wrath is some sort of anthropomorphism. The very same words are used about Esau's wrath 'turning away', i.e. being pacified, as are used about the pacification of God's wrath (Gen. 27:45). But all the same, this language must be telling us something. The wrath of God did come upon Israel in the wilderness (Ps. 78:31; Ez. 22:31), but Moses 'turned' God from executing it as He planned (Ps. 106:23). Many times He turned away from the full extent of His wrath (Ps. 78:38). It is by righteous behaviour and repentance that the wrath of God turns away (Dt. 13:17; 2 Chron. 12:12; 29:10; 30:8). Ezra 10:14 speaks of God's wrath turning away because those who had married Gentile women divorced them. God's wrath is also turned away by the death of the sinner- the heads of the sinners in Num. 25:4 were to be 'hung up' before the Lord so that His wrath would turn away. A similar example is to be found in Josh. 7:26. Jeremiah often comments that God's wrath is turned away by the execution of judgment upon the sinner (e.g. Jer. 30:24). In this sense His anger and wrath are poured out or 'accomplished', i.e. they are no more because they have been poured out (Lam. 4:11). The fact that men such as Moses and Jeremiah (Jer. 18:20) turned away God's wrath without these things happening, or simply by prayer (Dan. 9:16) therefore means that God accepted the intercession of those men and counted their righteousness to those from whom His wrath turned away. We shouldn't assume that these righteous men merely waved away God's wrath. That wrath was real, and required immense pleading and personal dedication on their behalf.

Deu 9:9 When I had gone up onto the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which Yahweh made with you. Then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights-

Ex. 24:16 says that Moses was six and a half days on the mountain waiting for the call to meet God, so he was with God for 33 and a half days. This perhaps looks forward to the 33 and a half years ministry of the Lord Jesus.

I neither ate bread nor drank water-
It could be argued that this is not speaking of absolutely not eating nor drinking (it would be hard not to drink for 40 days), but rather that He didn't eat bread nor drink water. The implication is that He had food to eat from God, associated with the word given him, which others weren't aware of. The Lord may allude to this in Jn. 4:32. This is the third period of 40 days which Moses was there, and the Rabbis calculate that he would have therefore returned from the mountain (cp. the Lord's second coming from Heaven) on the Day of Atonement.

Deu 9:10 Yahweh delivered to me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God-
The tables themselves were made by God, and were written on both sides (Ex. 32:15,16). As they were small enough to be carried, we assume they contained the ten commandments and not the rest of the laws given to Moses. They were the tables of the covenant, and so the letter of the law which was to give way to the spirit of the new covenant therefore includes the command about the Sabbath. For that was one of the ten commandments.

And on them were all the words which Yahweh spoke with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly-
Moses graciously doesn't mention that they shied away from Yahweh's appearance at that time and wanted him only to engage with Yahweh. Grace and speaking graciously about others' weaknesses is a sign of spiritual maturity, and we see it in Moses now at the end of his life.

The references to fire, smoke, furnace, earthquake and the descent of Yahweh (Ex. 19:18) is very similar to the language of Divine judgment, especially of Sodom (Gen. 19:28; Rev. 9:2). And we know from the prophets that Israel were considered by God as Sodom. We could read this as His wrath with Israel for breaking His simple commandments about not touching the mountain, and for not having sufficiently sanctified themselves (see on Ex. 19:10,14,18). The argument of Heb. 12 appears to be that the scene here is one of condemnation of sinful man- and we have not been called to that, but to salvation by grace in the new covenant in Christ. But out of that condemnation, God earnestly wished to reach out to His people, with words of covenant salvation.

Deu 9:11 At the end of forty days and forty nights Yahweh gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant-
The tables had the ten commandments written upon them, for this was the old covenant which was made with Israel (Dt. 4:13). We are not now under the old covenant, but under the new. Which means we are not bound to keep the Sabbath,

seeing this was one of the ten commandments. Knowing the apostacy of Israel, God still gave Moses the tokens of the covenant. The implication was that there was grace as the basis of the giving of that covenant.

Deu 9:12 Yahweh said to me Arise, get down quickly from here, for your people whom you have brought out of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made themselves a molten image-

When God told Moses to leave Him alone to destroy them, and go back down to the people immediately (Dt. 9:12), Moses stayed on to plead with God not to destroy them. And God listened (Ex. 32:7-14). He repented of the evil He had thought to do. He changed His mind, because Moses stayed on. There is an element of striving with God in prayer, knowing that His mind is open to change (Rom. 15:30). Jacob is a symbol of us all. He became Israel, he who struggles with God. And this is a key feature of all those who comprise the true Israel. This is what stimulates me to what intensity in prayer I can muster. That God is open to hearing and even changing His holy mind about something. Such is His sensitivity to us. Such is His love, that God changing His mind becomes really feasible as a concept. And such is the scary implication of the total freewill which the Father has afforded us. This is why God could reason with Moses as a man speaks to his friend and vice versa. It was a dynamic, two way relationship in thought and prayer and being.

Deu 9:13 Furthermore Yahweh spoke to me saying, I have seen this people and truly it is a stiff-necked people-

Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6). Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

Deu 9:14 let Me alone-

This reflects the amazingly close relationship between God and Moses. It's as if God is

saying: ‘I know you might persuade Me to change My mind on this one, but please, don’t try, I might give in, when really they do need to be destroyed’. We too can have this level of intimacy with God.

This seems to suggest that God knew both Himself and Moses well enough to know that Moses could well persuade Him to change His mind, against His ideal intention. And Moses doesn't leave God alone, and does persuade Him. We marvel at the humility and humanity of God, and His extreme openness to human intercession.

Think of God's bitter disappointment with Israel when He invites Moses into the mount as their representative, in order to enter into further covenant with them. Down below, they started worshipping other gods. When God says to Moses "Leave me alone..." (Ex. 32:10), He may well refer to the desire for isolation / solitude which a person in extreme grief desires. And of course we are aware of how Moses reasons with God, and asks God to consider His own future and how it might turn out, and how that can be avoided. And God takes Moses seriously, with integrity, and appears to even acquiesce to his arguments. It's amazing. This God is our God.

That I may destroy them and blot out their name from under the sky, and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they-
Moses prayed that *his* name would be ‘blotted out’ instead (Ex. 32:32). To be blotted out of the book God had written may have been understood by Moses as asking for him to be excluded from an inheritance in the promised land; for later, a ‘book’ was written describing the various portions (Josh. 18:9). The connection is made explicit in Ez. 13:9. If Israel were to be blotted out there and then in the wilderness, then Moses wanted to share this experience, such was his identity with his ungrateful people; and yet this peak of devotion is but a dim shadow of the extent of Christ’s love for us. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 *was heard*- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them throughout Deuteronomy to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses’ temporary rashness of speech, he didn't enter the land. And yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter the land. This is why Moses stresses now at the end of his life that he wouldn’t enter the land *for Israel’s sake* (1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It “went badly with him *for their sakes*” (Ps. 106:32).

Despite knowing their weakness and his own righteousness, Moses showed a marvellous softness and humility in that speech recorded in Deuteronomy. When he reminds them how God wanted to reject them because of their idolatry with the golden

calf, he does not mention how fervently he prayed for them, so fervently that God changed His expressed intention (Dt. 9:14); and note deeply, Moses *does not mention how he offered his physical and eternal life for their salvation*. That fine, fine act and desire by Moses went unknown to Israel until the book of Exodus came into circulation. And likewise, the depth of Christ's love for us was unrecognized by us at the time. Moses had such humility in not telling in Israel in so many words how fervently he had loved them. The spiritual culture of the Lord is even greater. See on Ex. 32:32.

There is almost a pattern with God- to devise His purpose, and then in the 'gap' until its fulfillment, be open to the persuasion of His covenant people to change or ammend those plans. This could be what Am. 3:7 is speaking of: "Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets". It's as if He reveals His plans to them so that they can then comment upon them in prayer. And maybe this is why God tells Jeremiah not to pray to Him to change His stated plans against Israel (Jer. 7:16 cp. Jer. 11:14; 14:11; 15:1), and why He asks Moses to 'leave Me alone' and not try to persuade Him to change His mind (Ex. 32:10). He didn't want, in these cases, His stated plans to be interrupted by the appeals of His people to change them. Interestingly, in both these examples, Moses and Jeremiah know God well enough, the relationship is intimate enough, for them to still speak with Him- and change His mind. Those who've prayed to God in cases of terminal illness [and countless other situations] will have sensed this 'battle', this 'struggle' almost, between God and His friends, His covenant people, and the element of 'persuasion' which there is going on both ways in the dialogue between God and ourselves. The simple fact that God really can change- there are over 40 references to His 'repentance' in Scripture- is vital to understand- for this is the basis of the prayer that changes things, that as it were wrestles with God.

Deu 9:15 So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire-

See on Ex. 32:30. Moses in great humility doesn't mention how he persuaded God through intense intercession not to do this. The “pillar of fire” was only “as it were the appearance of fire” (Num. 9:15) but the record elsewhere speaks of it as “fire”, because that’s what it looked like to the Israelites. The Scriptures speak of how a pillar of fire was with Israel in the wilderness (Ps. 105:39). But actually when it first appeared, it was described as “*the appearance* of fire” (Num. 9:15). It wasn’t fire, it appeared as fire. And yet it’s spoken of later simply as “fire”. There’s no inspired footnote reminding us that, well, actually, it wasn’t really fire. Likewise “the mount [of Sinai] burnt with fire” (Dt. 9:15). The mountain didn’t catch fire. But that’s how it looked to the Israelites from a distance; and so that’s how it’s described. And this explains the NT language of demons.

And the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands-
They were not therefore that large, and fitted within the ark, which was also not large. They would not have had space on them for all the law, just the ten commandments.

Deu 9:16 I looked and truly-
This implies Moses had such a high view of Israel and hope or them, that he didn't fully believe what God had told him about their apostacy. Admission of past failings was a sign of his spiritual maturity, speaking now on the last day of his life.

You had sinned against Yahweh your God; you had made yourselves a molten calf; you had turned aside quickly out of the way which Yahweh had commanded you-
"Molten" is literally 'covered'. They had presumably made the calf of the common acacia wood, and covered it with gold- just as the tabernacle furniture was to be constructed in a similar way. Again we see that they were mixing Yahweh worship with idolatry.

As explained on Ex. 32:4-6, they were worshipping an idol in the name of Yahweh worship. They had corrupted or turned aside the glory of God into the form of an ox which eats grass (Ps. 106:20). And this is the abiding temptation for us all. The glory of God was visible to them on Sinai at the time. God's glory was in His invisible leading of them through the Angel (Ex. 32:1). But they changed that into the visible and secular. They were not totally rejecting Yahweh, but making an ox / calf similar to one facet of the cherubim. This is classic apostacy, mixing truth with error.

It appears that Israel identified the golden calf with the Egyptian goddess Hathor. “The Egyptian goddess Hathor came in the form of a cow, a woman with a cow’s head, or a woman with cows horns and / or cows ears. She bore several other titles including The Golden One and Mistress of Music. She was the patron of love, motherhood, drunkenness, fun, dance and music. The worship of Hathor degenerated into immorality and she is depicted in some scenes and statues as a sensual young woman. Hathor was the protector of travellers from Egypt to various areas including Sinai”. So Israel so quickly forgot the lesson so artlessly taught them – that the idols / demons of Egypt were of no power at all, seeing they had all been targetted by the plagues.

The following references to Hathor provide further insight; supporting references are to be found in my book "The Real Devil" section 4-2-3:
Hathor had several forms including, a cow, a women with a cow’s head, or a woman with cows horns and or ears.
Hathor was also known as ‘The Golden One’
Hathor was the protector of travellers from Egypt to various areas including Sinai
Patron of drunkenness
Hathor had the title ‘Mistress of Music’
The worship of Hathor included playing on all kinds of musical instruments together

with dancing
The worship of Hathor was for the joy and pleasure of those who took part
Hathor is also the goddess of love
The worship of Hathor degenerated into immorality.

Deu 9:17 I took hold of the two tablets and cast them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes-
Ex. 32:19 adds: "Moses' anger grew hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, and broke them beneath the mountain". God's anger "burned hot" and so did that of Moses. But Moses asks God not to wax hot in anger (Ex. 32:10,11,19). What are we to make of this? Surely, positively, Moses was totally in tune with the feelings of God. And yet he does himself what he asks God not to do. His anger growing hot was exactly the feeling of God. But unlike God, he immediately broke the symbols of the covenant with Israel. Again, God is revealed as more gracious and patient than man. As Moses had pleaded with Yahweh not to be so angry, so Aaron was to do so with the furiously angry Moses. Aaron in all his weakness therefore becomes as Moses, who was also weak before God's presence.

Deu 9:18 I fell down before Yahweh as at the first, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you sinned, in doing that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh to provoke him to anger-
At the very end of his life, Moses reeled off this great speech of Deuteronomy, knowing full well that he was to die without entering the land. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 was heard- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded- and yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter. Moses' fleeting requests to enter the land must be read as a flagging from the height of devotion he reached, rather like the Lord's request to escape the cross in Gethsemane. But ultimately he did what he intended- he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stresses on the last day of his life that he wouldn't enter the land for Israel's sake (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went ill with him for their sakes" (Ps. 106:32).

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to

which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

True prayer is to be "in secret". There should be an appropriate modesty in speaking about it to others. Consider how Moses spent 40 days in intense intercession for Israel, and succeeded in changing God's mind. But he didn't tell them this for about 37 years, until Moses recounted it to the people at the end of his life in Dt. 9:18. We have no idea how many others are praying for us, or how the Lord in Heaven is praying for us as Moses did on Sinai.

Deu 9:19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which Yahweh was angry against you to destroy you. But Yahweh listened to me that time also-
Israel were certainly representative of us. The *degree* of love shown by Moses to Israel is only a shadow of the degree, the kind of love shown by Christ to us, who hopefully are not rejecting him as Israel did. The power of this point just has to be reflected upon. That Moses could love Israel, to the extent of being willing to give his life and salvation for them, is a fine, fine type of the devotion of Christ. There is another oft emphasized aspect of Moses' love for Israel: the power of his mediation for them. We are told that God " hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instill a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that personal repentance is required for forgiveness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find acceptability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel.

Deu 9:20 Yahweh was very angry with Aaron to destroy him, and I prayed for Aaron also at the same time-
This must be given its full weight. Aaron comes over in Ex. 32:22 as more worried about the wrath of Moses his brother than that of God: "Don’t let the anger of my lord grow hot". And so it can easily be with us. We can forget God's feelings and worry only about our image with our family and brethren.

We can as it were do the work of the Saviour Himself, if we truly live as in Him. In this spirit, *Moses’* faith in keeping the Passover led to *Israel’s* salvation, they left Egypt *by*

him (Heb. 3:16; 11:28); and when Aaron deserved death, he was redeemed by Moses' prayer on his behalf. Sodom's destruction was largely due to Abraham's prayer for his deliverance; without this, it would seem Lot was altogether too unprepared and spiritually insensitive to have responded to the Angels' call in his own strength. The Lord spared Aaron because of Moses' intercession for him; and this is perhaps the basis for James' appeal to pray for one another, that we may be healed, knowing that through our prayer and pastoral work for others, we can save a man from his multitude of sins and his soul from death (James 5:20). The very ability we have to do this for each other should register deeply with us. And in response, we should live lives dedicated to the spiritual welfare and salvation of our brethren.

It was only thanks to Moses' intercession for Aaron that Aaron's life was spared at this point. We see here how intercession even for the impenitent can be effective (for Aaron in Ex. 32:24 was impenitent, claiming the calf had jumped out of the fire ready made). This has huge pastoral implications for our ministry and prayer life, recalling how for the sake of the faith of the friends, the Lord pronounced the paralyzed man forgiven (Mk. 2:5; also James 5:20).

Deu 9:21 I took your sin, the calf which you had made-
"A great sin" (Ex. 32:21) is the phrase used of Jeroboam's golden calf, which was based upon this calf (2 Kings 17:21). Aaron made the calf, but "you made" it. People can be made to sin by others- a sober reminder to watch our behaviour.

The Biblical record highlights the sin of Aaron and the people; the Jewish literature excuses it by blaming it on Satan / "mastema". Time and again, the Jewish apocryphal literature wrongly sought to distance God from doing anything negative in human life. Gen. 22:1 clearly states that it was *God* who put Abraham to the test by asking him to kill his son Isaac; Jubilees retells the story with "Prince Mastema", the Satan figure, telling Abraham to do this (Jub. 17:15-18). Likewise Ex. 4:24 recounts how "the Lord", presumably as an Angel, met Moses and tried to kill him for not circumcising his son; but Jubilees again claims that Mastema / Satan did this (Jub. 48:1-3). Indeed, several times the Hebrew word *mastema* ['hostility, enmity'] occurs, it is in the context of urging Israel to see that *they* and their internal desires to sin are the true *mastema*. Hos. 9:7 is an example: "Because your sins are so many and your hostility [*mastema*] so great".

And burnt it with fire and stamped it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust, and I cast its dust into the brook that descended out of the mountain-
They were forced to drink / eat dust, just as Adam had to; for he was dust and had to eat the fruit of the dust in punishment. His sin was the essence of every man's sin, including Israel's at this time. The reference to their being made naked (Ex. 32:25) is another allusion to Adam. Israel had been an unfaithful wife to Yahweh, and so they were punished as the woman tested for adultery was (Num. 5:24). "Grinding it very small until

it was as fine as dust" would have been necessary for it to float on the surface on the water, as gold is so heavy.

Deu 9:22 (At Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth Hattaavah you provoked Yahweh to wrath-
God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us. Idolatrous Israel never *consciously* tried to provoke Yahweh to anger with their apostasy; the words of the prophets must have seemed to them a gross exaggeration. But this was really how God saw it (2 Chron. 34:25). I have suggested that Deuteronomy was edited, under Divine inspiration, during the exile. This statement has particular relevance to the exiles, who had likewise "provoked Yahweh to wrath" and had therefore been exiled, and were now to return to the land; just as Israel at the end of the 40 year wandering (Ezra 5:12; Zech. 8:14).

Deu 9:23 When Yahweh sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying Go up and possess the land which I have given you, then you rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh your God, and you didn't believe Him, nor listen to His voice-
Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7).

Deu 9:24 You have been rebellious against Yahweh from the day that I knew you)-
They were disobedient from the day God knew them, i.e. Passover night. The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did all Israel eat the Passover? Were many in fact slain. My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that

if they did not properly keep the Passover, “the Destroyer” Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). “The Destroyer” is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer” (olothreutes; this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the ‘Destroyer’ Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of “He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. olothreuo) the firstborn”. Israel were side-tracked from what should have been the central object of their attention: the blood of the lamb.

Deu 9:25 So I fell down before Yahweh the forty days and forty nights because Yahweh had said He would destroy you-
It is likely that this was the first time Israel knew about this. The intensity of those 40 days intercession, after having spent 40 days also in the mountain just days beforehand, was one of the most amazing and intense spiritual achievements of anyone apart from the Lord Jesus. For Moses succeeded in persuading God to change His mind about destroying His sinful people, even without their repentance. But Moses didn't boast of it nor tell anyone about it, until the day of his death. We like Israel can live our lives unaware of the intensity of the Lord's mediation for us over specific issues. For the Lord in Heaven with the Father, from which He will return, was represented by Moses with God at the top of Sinai.

Deu 9:26 I prayed to Yahweh and said Lord Yahweh, don’t destroy Your people and Your inheritance that You have redeemed through Your greatness, that You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand-
"Corrupted" in :12 is s.w. "'destroyed" here. All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew word for "corruption" also means "destruction", for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves.

The might and "greatness" of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Deu 9:27 Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Don’t look at the stubbornness of this people, nor at their wickedness, nor their sin-
"Corrupted" or 'destroyed' in :12 is the same word used of the threatened destruction of everyone in Sodom, which Abraham's intercession avoided (s.w. Gen. 18:28,31). That incident surely motivated Moses to rise up to the same possibility of dialogue with God in order to change His intended purpose. We too are to be motivated by Biblical

examples of intercession. God could have given legitimate answers to each of Moses' objections; for there were indeed times when He did not turn from the fierceness of His wrath (Ex. 32:12)- such as Jer. 4:8; 2 Kings 23:26. He intended to fulfil the promises to Abraham, but through Moses. But such is His sensitivity and pure pity that He accepted Moses' pleas.

Deu 9:28 lest the land You brought us out from say, 'Because Yahweh was not able to bring them into the land which He promised to them and because He hated them He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness'-
Caleb and Joshua perceived that Israel were "well able" to overcome the tribes and inherit the land, seeing that the Angel-hornet had gone ahead and prepared the way; and yet due to Israel's disabling of this possibility at the time, it was in some ways so that God Himself was "not able" to give them the inheritance, because *they* judged that *they* were "not able" to take it (Num. 13:30,31; 14:16).

The way Moses pleaded with God to change His mind and not destroy Israel for the sake of what the surrounding nations would say is indeed inspirational to us all. It surely inspired David to pray likewise- for "wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now there God?" (Ps. 115:2). We see here God's sensitivity to how the Gentiles perceive Him, and this has big implications for how we act before them. For we are God's representatives, and how we represent Him before the world is so significant to Him. For effectively we are Him in this world, and it is our living example far more than our doctrinal explanations which will convert others to Him.

Deu 9:29 Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, which You brought out by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm-
We are God's portion / inheritance (Dt. 4:20; 9:29; Eph. 1:18), and He is our inheritance (Ps. 16:5,6; 73:26; Lam. 3:22-24; Eph. 1:11 RV); we inherit each other. There is a mutuality between God and His people.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 10

Deu 10:1 At that time Yahweh said to me, Cut two tablets of stone like the first and come up to Me onto the mountain and make an ark of wood-
The tables were the "tables of the covenant", which had been broken by the apostacy with the golden calf. God now assures Moses that the covenant relationship has been restored. This must be read in the context of the previous verses, where Moses has doubted whether his intercession for Israel has in fact "worked". He struggles to believe that God can be that gracious as His word had stated. Just like ourselves. And so just as Aaron had used a chisel to fashion the golden calf, Moses is asked to chisel out two stone tablets, upon which the covenant will be reaffirmed by God. At this time, God

asked Moses to also make the ark, into which the tables were to be put. This was to be the sign that His presence was really to abide with His people as promised.

Deu 10:2 I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke, and you shall put them within that ark-
"Which you broke" is emphasized by God. Moses in Ex. 33 had been doubting whether his intercession for Israel had really "worked", even though God assured him that it had. Moses is being reminded that his anger had burned hot just as God's anger had; but it was he and not God who had smashed the symbols of the covenant in that wrath. The idea is that God is kinder and more patient than man- even than a man as patient and loving as Moses.

"Broke" is s.w. in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 12:3 used of breaking covenant relationship with idols. By doing so, Moses had purposefully sought to break Israel's relationship with Yahweh, despite having earlier prayed for it to be restored. When he saw the apostacy with his own eyes, he wanted God to revert to His 'plan A', to destroy Israel. He realizes in Ex. 33 that he was wrong in this and therefore probes God as to whether indeed His relationship with Israel is indeed intact, despite his having broken the symbols of covenant. And God is assuring him that indeed it is.

Deu 10:3 So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut two tablets of stone like the first, and went up onto the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand-
The acacia bush was all they had in the wilderness. It was hardly suitable for making furniture, being brittle and the sticks very thin and hard to weld together. The root translated "shittim" really means a stick or rod, and is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. Acacia was plentiful in the wilderness, but it is little more than brushwood; a surprising choice of material to be used in God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and broken in order to do His work (as also in Ez. 15:2-5).

Ex. 25:10 "They shall make an ark" becomes "I made an ark" in Moses' autobiography (Dt. 10:3), although apparently Bezaleel made the ark (Ex. 37:1). The people were generous when asked, but were not real workers. Perhaps Moses himself had to make

the ark because they didn't get to it. Or maybe his work was counted as theirs, as happens between the Lord Jesus and ourselves.

Deu 10:4 He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which Yahweh spoke to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly, and Yahweh gave them to me-
Although God spoke to Moses alone in the mount, Moses stresses that actually God "spake unto *you* in the mount out of the midst of the fire". The word of God to His scribes really is, to the same gripping, terrifying degree, His direct word to us (Dt. 4:36; 5:45; 10:4). This explains why David repeatedly refers to the miracle at the Red Sea as if this had affected him personally, to the extent that he could ecstatically rejoice because of it.

Deu 10:5 I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets into the ark which I had made, and there they are as Yahweh commanded me-
The ark was not that big, and Moses carried the tablets one in each hand as he descended the mountain. They were therefore quite small, and contained only the ten commandments.

Deu 10:6 (The children of Israel travelled from Beeroth Bene Jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and there he was buried, and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest's office in his place-
"Moserah" means 'place of chastisement / correction'. Aaron and Moses will be in the Kingdom despite their sin, but it needed Aaron's death for them to be corrected. The punishment was therefore their correction, and was not the angry lashing out of an offended Deity. Moses only mentions this place name at the end of his life, indicating how he looked back and perceived that indeed he had been corrected and learned his lesson, even if it cost him his life.

Deu 10:7 From there they travelled to Gudgodah and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water-
"A land of brooks of water" is precisely the phrase used of Canaan (Dt. 8:7). They were constantly given foretastes of the Kingdom before entering it, just as we are on our wilderness journey.

Deu 10:8 At that time Yahweh set apart the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, to stand before Yahweh to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day-
Although the Levites had been set apart for Divine service immediately after God's

meeting with Israel at Sinai, as outlined in Leviticus and Numbers, it seems that not until Aaron died at the end of the 40 years wandering did they actually in practice begin to serve as intended (Dt. 10:8). It could be that the reason was that the Levites were ever slow to accept their responsibilities. And they generally failed in their calling over Israel's history, climaxing in the priests arranging the murder of God's own Son.

Deu 10:9 Therefore Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers; Yahweh is his inheritance according as Yahweh your God spoke to him.)-
The Levites had no material inheritance because "the sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel... are his inheritance... Yahweh God of Israel was their inheritance" (Josh. 13:14,33; Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9; 18:2). Notice how "Yahweh" is put for what is sacrificed to Him. His very existence is an imperative to sacrifice to Him, despising all material advantage in doing so. Job comments that to make gold our hope and wealth our confidence is to deny “the God that is above” (Job 31:24,28). To trust in material wealth is effectively to proclaim ourselves atheists. We are described as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), so all that was true for the Levites becomes true for us. We are not to seek material inheritance. God will provide for us in ways other than our possessing land and leaving an inheritance to our children. The wonder of serving Him is to more than compensate for this.

Deu 10:10 I stayed on the mountain, as at the first time, forty days and forty nights and Yahweh listened to me that time also; Yahweh would not destroy you-
Israel were certainly representative of us. The *degree* of love shown by Moses to Israel is only a shadow of the degree, the kind of love shown by Christ to us, who hopefully are not rejecting him as Israel did. The power of this point just has to be reflected upon. That Moses could love Israel, to the extent of being willing to give his life and salvation for them, is a fine, fine type of the devotion of Christ. There is another oft emphasized aspect of Moses' love for Israel: the power of his mediation for them. We are told that God "hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instill a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that personal repentance is required for forgiveness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find acceptability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel.

"Corrupted" in Ex. 32:7 is s.w. "'destroyed" here. All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew word for "corruption" also means "destruction",

for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves.

Deu 10:11 Yahweh said to me Arise, take your journey before the people, and they shall go in and possess the land, which I swore to their fathers to give to them-
It was only through Moses' leadership that they reached Canaan: "The Lord said unto (Moses), Arise (cp. Christ's resurrection), take thy journey before the people (as Christ, the good shepherd, goes *before* the flock, Jn. 10:3), *that* they may go in and possess the land" (Dt. 10:11).

Moses led God's people to the land, the Kingdom, but couldn't himself take them in there- the Law with which he was associated revealed the Kingdom, but it needed Joshua / Jesus to actually bring them into it.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully. It was God's intention that Moses would go before the people and lead them into the land (Dt. 10:11), but Moses failed, and so it fell to Joshua. But it seems he was nervous, and so God used the ark rather than Joshua personally to 'go before the people' (s.w. Josh. 3:6). All the time we see God setting up potential programs which have to be amended because of human weakness.

The repeated references to the "journeys" of the people in the wilderness had as their basis the description of Abraham taking his journey through the desert to the promised land (Gen. 13:3); the very same two Hebrew words recur in the command to Israel to now 'take their journey' (Dt. 10:11), following in the steps of their father Abraham. As Abraham was commanded to "be perfect" (Gen. 17:1), so Israel were told: "*You* [after the pattern of father Abraham] shall be perfect with the Lord" (Dt. 19:13).

Deu 10:12 Now Israel, what does Yahweh your God require of you, but to fear Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him and to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul-
Alluded to in Mic. 6:8, where walking in God's ways is understood as walking in humility; and 'loving God' is expanded into loving to show justice and mercy. To love [God]" is paralleled with "to love mercy". If we love God, we will be merciful as He is. To know Him in truth is to actively be like Him. We can be tempted to think that we can 'love God' within our own hearts by accepting His existence and reading the Bible. But it has to be more than that; to love God is to love others, to be merciful to the irritating and ungracious (:18). We cannot love God without loving our brethren (1 Jn. 3:17; 4:21). To love God in this way is in the end 'for our own good' (:13). These words are interpreted in Micah 6:8: "*What does Yahweh require of you*, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and *to walk humbly* ['to humble yourself to walk'] with your God?". Walking in God's ways is paralleled with walking in humility, humbling oneself. This, then, is the end result of our obedience to the way of God: a self humbling through regular submission to God's principles, as hour by hour we experience the provocations of our flesh.

Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word ekklesia eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

Deu 10:13 to keep the commandments of Yahweh and His statutes-
The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Which I command you this day for your good?-
Throughout the Law of Moses, the unity of Israel was emphasized. But that unity was not predicated upon any statement of faith, and the history of Israel has no example of the faithful minority removing themselves from association or “fellowship” with the majority, who clearly were unfaithful in both theology and practice. Moses in his last great speech as recorded in Deuteronomy seems to have purposefully confused his use of "you" plural [AV “ye”] and "you" singular [AV “thee”] in addressing them; as if to show that they, the many, were also one body (e.g. Dt. 10:12-22; 11:1,2). He as it were zooms in from the collective to the individual, lest any should think that they were just some nameless individual before God, saved or damned only according to their group affiliation.

We note that the sum total of the commandments were intended to reinforce spirituality, obedience led to more obedience. Hence the whole system would lose its potential power if commandments were added or removed from it. But the law was "holy, just and good" because it was not a burden to man, but intended for his "good".

Deu 10:14 Behold, to Yahweh your God belongs heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is in it-
God's possession of literally all things, the entire cosmos, is cited here as an encouragement to believe that He could therefore so easily give Israel the promised

land. Just as it is not at all difficult for Him to give us His Kingdom. But like Israel, we balk at the promise, as if somehow His ability is somehow limited. The simplest truth is that God loves us and it is His will and pleasure to give us the Kingdom. And seeing He owns all things, to give us a place in His Kingdom is not at all difficult for Him. The choice is only with us.

Deu 10:15 It's just that Yahweh had a delight in your fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all peoples, as it is at this day-
This is a clear statement that love is a choice, not a passing emotion. For the love of God is reflected in His choosing to love His people rather than others. "You did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world" (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel "out of all peoples" (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2).

Deu 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked-
Col. 2:12 presents baptism as the equivalent in our day if we wish to enter the new covenant, which is based upon the same promises to Abraham. But there is more to new covenant relationship than simply the ritual of baptism. Circumcision spoke of a cutting off of the flesh in the most private and intimate place. We always read of circumcision as being done to a person. Water baptism enables us to receive the birth of the Spirit, whereby the Lord will work through the Spirit to change our hearts, to cut off our flesh in the most private and personal recesses of human hearts. Col. 2:11 explains: "In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ". Through baptism, we enter the "in Christ" status, and our flesh is as it were cut off, by status we are in Him and not in the flesh. This is repeated in Paul's argument in Romans 1-8, although there he stresses that our flesh still remains; but from God's perspective, it is cut off. It takes faith to believe this- faith in God's operation, that the circumcision operation was really performed by Him (Col. 2:12). Baptism is the means by which we become "in Christ" and in spiritual terms cease to be uncircumcised (Col. 2:13). If Israel took the initiative in attempting to circumcise their hearts (Dt. 10:16; Jer. 4:4), then God would confirm them in this by doing what man cannot do- operating directly upon the human heart to cut off the flesh from it (Dt. 30:6).

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a

spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 10:17 For Yahweh your God, He is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty and the awesome, who doesn't respect persons nor take reward-
The argument proceeds in :18,19 to appeal for Israel to show justice and grace to the foreigners and poor. God does this because He doesn't respect persons. And so our likely temptation not to do these things is because we effectively do respect persons. We are more likely to give some help to someone whose person we know and respect, on our own broad social or ethnic level; rather than the mass of poor folks whom we are tempted to refer to as "Them... just them...", as if their low status precludes us from having a duty to relieve them.

Deu 10:18 He executes justice for the fatherless and widow and loves the foreigner, in giving him food and clothing-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances" or "justice", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 10:19 Therefore love the foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt-
One of the most repeated themes of Moses in Deuteronomy is the way he keeps on

telling them to "remember" all the great things which God had done for them on their wilderness journey (e.g. Dt. 10:21; 11:3-6), and especially the wonder of how he had redeemed them as children (his audience had been under twenty years old when they went through the Red Sea). Just look up all the times "remember" occurs in Deuteronomy. He really wanted them to overcome the human tendency to forget the greatness of God as manifested earlier in our lives and spiritual experience. Our tendency as the new Israel is just the same- to forget the wonder of baptism, of how God reached out His arm to save us. And the remembrance of our own status in the world, before we were redeemed, is to make us generous to foreigners and oppressed persons in practice.

Deu 10:20 You must fear Yahweh your God; you must serve Him and cling to Him and you shall swear by His name-
The idea of 'cleaving' to God is a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

The Lord's common Upper Room theme of 'abiding' in Him uses the same word as Moses used in the LXX when exhorting his people to 'cleave unto' God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.

Deu 10:21 He is your praise and He is your God, Who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen-
Fear is always the antithesis of faith. God is often called an "awesome God" (Dt. 7:21; 10:21 etc.). The Hebrew word for "awesome" is that for 'fear' (s.w. Gen. 3:10; 15:1; 18;15 etc.). The idea is that God's people are to be in such fear / awe of Him that they fear / are in awe of nothing else. Hence Dt. 7:21 says that Israel should "not be scared of" their enemies, because their God is "awesome", He is the one to be feared.

Deu 10:22 Your fathers went down into Egypt with seventy persons, and now Yahweh your God has made you as the stars of the sky for multitude-
This was an initial, primary fulfilment of the promises to Abraham; we too have some foretastes of the Kingdom life even now. Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw

in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 11

Deu 11:1 Therefore you must love Yahweh your God and keep His instructions, His statutes, His ordinances and His commandments always-
Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

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Deu 11:2 Know this day - for I don't speak with your children who have not known, and who have not seen the chastisement of Yahweh your God - His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm-

The might of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched our arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 11:3 His signs and His works, which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land-

It is stressed that Israel were taken out from the "midst of Egypt" (Dt. 4:34; 1 Kings 8:51). The plagues and wonders were done in "the midst of Egypt" (Ex. 3:20; Dt. 11:3). The midst of Egypt appears to be defined in Ps. 135:9; Is. 19:3; Ez. 29:3 as being Pharaoh and his servants. The narrative therefore stresses so much his response to the plagues. God's especial focus had been upon his conversion, and yet he refused. Israel were taken out right from under his nose, from the very heart of Egypt. Ez. 20:8 reveals what is not recorded in the historical record; that because the Israelites were so devoted to Egyptian idolatry still, His thought had been to destroy them "in the midst of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:8). But God's pole of grace overcame the pole of necessary judgment. He tolerated them and saved them, with enthusiasm, by the grace which comes from love- love taken to its ultimate, saving term. The whole narrative speaks as if the Hebrews were all at one place at one time and left "the midst of Egypt" together. Although unrecorded in the historical narrative, this would have meant that they gathered

together "in the midst of Egypt" with Moses, who was not in Goshen but in the locality and presence of Pharaoh.

Deu 11:4 and what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and to their chariots; how He made the water of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued after you-
But they were cast into the sea by God (Ex. 15:21). We see here how God confirms people in the desires of their heart, for both good and bad.

And how Yahweh has destroyed them to this day-
Although the pursuit of Israel by the Egyptians was a historical act at a specific time, caused by God's direct action upon the hearts of the Egyptians (Ex. 14:8), the pursuit and their destruction is described as ongoing "to this day" (Dt. 11:4). God's word and His actions according to that word are somehow alive to this day. This is the unique nature of Biblical history. All the incidents within it speak to us of later generations. And so in Josh. 24;6 and often, Israel are bidden understand their history as speaking directly to them, to perceive God's grace to them in history, and respond now.

We are to understand each victory and achievement of God as somehow ongoing right down to our own day and our own lives and experience. This is what makes the Bible a *living* word for us. This explains why David repeatedly refers to the miracle at the Red Sea as if this had affected him personally, to the extent that he could ecstatically rejoice because of it. Thus Ps. 114:5,6 RV describes the Red Sea as even now fleeing before God's people. And thus because of the records of God's past activities, we should be motivated in our decisions now.

It is in this sense that the punishment for sin is 'everlasting', in that there will be no end to their death. To remain dead for ever is an everlasting punishment. An example of the Bible using this kind of expression is found in Dt. 11:4. This describes God's one-off destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea as an eternal, on-going destruction in that this actual army never again troubled Israel: "He made the waters of the Red sea overflow them... the Lord has destroyed them to this day".

Deu 11:5 and what He did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place-
The reference may be to the manna, which they received until they came to Canaan; or to the leadership of the Angel in the pillar of fire and cloud.

Deu 11:6 and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households and their tents and every living thing that followed them in the midst of all Israel-
We note the Korah isn't mentioned, although he was the ringleader of the rebellion (Jude

11). The point here is that those who followed wicked men were punished. And that remains the abiding lesson. The earth is likened to a monster swallowing up people. A case could be made that the whole record of Israel's rejection from entering the land of Canaan is framed to adduce a reason for this as the fact they chose to believe that the land was inhabited by an evil dragon who would consume them there. This was a slander of the good land, and the whole point was that if they had believed in the power of God, then *whatever* 'adversary' was in the land, in whatever form, was ultimately of no real power (Num. 13:32; 14:36; Dt. 1:25). And yet it was not God's way to specifically tell the people that there was no such dragon lurking in the land of Canaan – instead He worked with them according to their fears, by making the earth literally open and swallow up the apostate amongst them (Num. 16:30) – emphasizing that by doing this, *He* was doing "a new thing", something that had never been done before – for there was no dragon lurking in any land able to swallow up people. And throughout the prophets it is emphasized that *God* and not any dragon swallowed up people – "The Lord [and not any dragon] was as an enemy; *He* has swallowed up Israel" (Lam. 2:5 and frequently in the prophets). The people of Israel who left Egypt actually failed to inherit Canaan because they believed that it was a land who swallowed up the inhabitants of the land (Num. 13:32), relating this to the presence of giants in the land (Num. 13:33). As Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them, they needed to believe that whatever myths there were going around, God was greater than whatever mythical beast was there. And because they would not believe that, they failed to enter the land, which in type symbolized those who fail to attain that great salvation which God has prepared.

Deu 11:7 Your eyes have seen all the great work of Yahweh which He did-
Because God saved them from Egypt by grace [cp. baptism- 1 Cor. 10:1,2], with they themselves so spiritually weak at the time, still taking idols of Egypt through the Red Sea with them- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 11:7,8). Because God gave them the land of Canaan, a land for which they did not labour, didn't do any 'work' to receive, but were given because "You did a favour unto them" (Ps. 44:3)- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 26:15,16; 29:8,9; Josh. 23:5,6). David said that he loved keeping the law *because* God's testimony to him was so miraculous (Ps. 119:129 Heb.). There is an awesomeness to God's grace in all this. Hence the paradox of Ex. 20:20: "Fear not... that the fear of God may be before your faces". We are not to fear Him, for such perfect love casts out fear... yet it is exactly because of the wonder of all this that we live life in some fear / awe of misusing and abusing that grace.

Deu 11:8 Therefore you must keep all the commandment which I command you this day, that you may be strong and go in and possess the land where you go over to possess it-
See on Dt. 31:9; Josh. 1:6. Joshua [cp. Jesus] is repeatedly made parallel with Israel [cp.

Us]; his victories were theirs; what he achieved is counted to them. In the same way, the people of the Lord Jesus are counted as Him. Joshua was to be strong and possess the land (Josh. 1:6), just as they had been told to do, using the same Hebrew words (Dt. 11:8). Indeed, Israel and Joshua are given parallel charges, to be strong and of good courage to take the land (Dt. 31:6,7). Both Israel and Joshua are given the same charge to keep the words of the covenant, that they might "prosper" (Dt. 29:9; Josh. 1:7).

Deu 11:9 and that you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give to them and to their seed-
For "prolong your days", see on :21.

A land flowing with milk and honey-
Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 11:10 For the land where you go in to possess it isn't as the land of Egypt that you came out from, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot, as a garden of herbs-
Our separation from this world isn't merely negative. We are separated *from* the world ["come out from"] so that we might be separated *unto* the things of God ["you go in"]. These two ideas are found together in the Hebrew word for 'holiness'.

Egypt had little rainfall, and water was supplied from the flooding of the Nile being distributed by a series of foot pumps. But Canaan would have its own rainfall. The Biblical record is consistently credible. Hence the punishment of Judah was to become like a garden of herbs which had no water (Is. 1:30). Unfaithful Israel entered the land, still clutching the idols of Egypt, and received blessings for obedience. This was by grace alone. But they failed to respond to that grace.

Deu 11:11 but the land you go over to possess is a land of hills and valleys which drinks water of the rain of the sky-
The people were often reminded that they were about to "go over [Jordan] to possess" the land, as if they were on the banks of Jordan almost. But a lack of rain was one of the Law's curses for idol worship (Dt. 11:10-12,17). Elijah's response to Israel's idolatry was to tell them there would be no rain (1 Kings 17:1 cp. 16:32,33). Those reflective upon God's Law would have realized the implied criticism which this carried; the more unspiritual would have just cursed Elijah for bringing about a devastating drought.

Deu 11:12 a land which Yahweh your God cares for-
Yahweh cared for / sought after the land and Kingdom He had promised Israel (Dt. 11:12). The same word is used of how His people were to seek Him, to care for the things of His Kingdom above all else (Dt. 12:5). There thus develops a mutuality between God and man.

The eyes of Yahweh your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year-
Under Michael's control (see on Dan. 12:1) there are many other Angels ["the eyes of Yahweh"] similarly dedicated to the affairs of the people of Israel. Does the phrase "Yahweh your God" here refer to the Angel which led them through the wilderness? The Angel Michael? Remember Moses was speaking to the people of Israel at this time, and they very much conceived of the "Yahweh your God" in terms of the Angel of the presence going with them. Thus God was promising that His Angels would physically be present in the land and would be especially sensitive to the events there.

The Biblical record seems to very frequently seek to deconstruct popular ideas about sin and evil. One of the most widespread notions was the "evil eye", whereby it was believed that some people had an "evil eye" which could bring distress into the eyes of those upon whom they looked in jealousy or anger. This concept is alive and well in many areas to this day. The idea entered Judaism very strongly after the Babylonian captivity; the Babylonian Talmud is full of references to it. The sage Rav attributed many illnesses to the evil eye, and the Talmud even claimed that 99 out of 100 people died prematurely from this (Bava Metzia 107b). The Biblical deconstruction of this is through stressing that *God's* eye is all powerful in the destiny of His people (Dt. 11:12; Ps. 33:18); and that "an evil eye" refers to an *internal* attitude of mean spiritedness *within* people- e.g. an "evil eye" is understood as an ungenerous spirit in Dt. 15:9; Mt. 6:23; 20:15; or pure selfishness in Dt. 28:54,56; Prov. 23:6; 28:22. We must remember that the people of Biblical times understood an "evil eye" as an *external* ability to look at someone and bring curses upon them. But the Bible redefines an "evil eye" as a purely *internal* attitude; and cosmic evil, even if it were to exist, need hold no fear for us- seeing the eyes of the only true God are running around the earth *for* us and not against us (2 Chron. 16:9).

Deu 11:13 If you will listen diligently to my commandments which I command you this day, to love Yahweh your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul-
See on Dt. 7:4. As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 13;18; 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses'

commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ. Indeed, the well known prophecy that God would raise up a prophet "like unto" Moses to whom Israel would *listen* (Dt. 18:18) is in the context of Israel saying they did not want to hear God's voice directly. Therefore God said that he would raise up Christ, who would be another Moses in the sense that *he too* would speak forth God's word.

Deu 11:14 I will give the rain of your land in its season, the former rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine and your oil-
But these blessings were given anyway, despite their disobedience; when they were conditional upon their careful obedience to God's laws (:13; Hos. 6:3). We see here God's grace, and overpowering desire to give His people His Kingdom. And in our low moments of faith in His grace we can remember this. Israel were rebuked for failing to thank God for the former and latter rains, which were given despite their spiritual weakness (Jer. 5:24).

Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. Therefore the pronouns often change (in Deuteronomy especially), showing a confusion between the voice of God and that of Moses. Dt. 7:4 is an example: “They will turn away thy son from following me (this is Moses speaking for God)… so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you”. Thus Moses’ comments on God’s words are mixed up with the words of God Himself. There are other examples of this in Dt. 7:11; 29:1,10,14,15 (“I” cp. “us”). Consider especially Dt. 11:13,14: “If ye shall diligently hearken unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord… that I will give you the rain of your land… I will send grass in thy fields”. The “I” here switches at ease between God and Moses. The Moses/God pronouns are also mixed in Rom. 10:19.

Deu 11:15 I will give grass in your fields for your livestock and you shall eat and be full-
Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

Deu 11:16 Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived and you turn aside, and serve other gods and worship them-

There are so many other examples of Moses showing his recognition of exactly *how* Israel were likely to be tempted (Dt. 6:11-13; 8:11-20; 9:4; 11:16; 12:13,19,23,30; 13:1-4; 14:27; 15:9,18; 17:11,12 ("will"),14,16,17; 21:18; 22:1-4,18; 23:21; 25:8). See on Dt. 7:16. We can take comfort in God's sensitivity to us in an age unlike any other and apparently with its own unprecedented temptations.

Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

We note the continual emphasis upon the heart. This was unique amongst contemporary religions, which [as today] were all about external appearance rather than the internal transformation of the spirit / mind. The worship of other gods was rightly defined as a self deception deep within the heart.

Deu 11:17 and the anger of Yahweh be kindled against you-
If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for he salvation of others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10.11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again- because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

And He shut up the sky, so that there shall be no rain, and the land shall not yield its fruit and you perish quickly-
Dt. 11:17 had said that God's people would "perish [s.w. "destroy"] quickly from off the good land". But by grace, that didn't happen "quickly" at all. They were finally destroyed from off it (2 Kings 24:2 and often), but God did not bring that about quickly but after much patient pleading through the prophets. This is one of so many examples of where God simply did not punish His people to the extent He said He would; simply because of His grace and love toward them.

From off the good land which Yahweh gives you-
The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by

insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Deu 11:18 Therefore you must lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them for a sign on your hand and they shall be for memorials between your eyes-

As taught in Dt. 6:6, the essence was that "These words which I command you this day shall be on your heart". The heart refers to the mind, the brain, if you will; and we could understand this as meaning that this was to be externally memorialized by binding them between the eyes. This is how orthodox Judaism understands it. But I suggest that the memorial was essentially in the heart, and this is just another way of speaking about the wholeness of internal and external devotion to God's words. Whatever is done externally with the hand, whatever is thought about in our mind between our eyes, is to be dominated by our awareness of God's laws. We fail to read in later scripture any mention of literally making boxes containing God's law and wearing them. The Passover deliverance was likewise to be a "frontlet" (s.w. "memorial") between the eyes and upon the hand (Ex. 13:16); but not in any literal sense. They were to be ever mentally aware of their great salvation, and live accordingly.

Contemporary ideas about Satan, demons etc. are often alluded to in the Pentateuch, and Israel are given the true understanding. Wearing a phylactery wasn't a new concept; the idea "refers to amulets which were worn in order to protect their wearers against demons". So by giving this command, Israel's God was showing His people that instead of being on the *defensive* against demons, needing good luck charms against them, they should instead replace these by a positive remembrance of God's words in their hearts and actions. Rejoicing in His salvation and constantly remembering it was intended to totally sideline the various false beliefs about demons which were prevalent at the time. It could be argued that God is saying that instead of the literal phylacteries of the pagan Gentile world, they were to have an internal mental awareness of their God.

Deu 11:19 You must teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up-

The latter day repentant remnant will be characterized by talking to each other of

spiritual things (Mal. 3:16 cp. Dan. 12:2), especially of the law (Mal. 3:7). But we are to do this now in our day of opportunity, and not be forced to it by tribulation. The priests were the official teachers of Israel, but it was ever God's intention that all Israel should be priests. All under the new covenant are declared priests (1 Pet. 2:5). All Israel were to be teaching each other (Jer. 31:34), especially their children- not leaving it to others, nor over relying upon a priesthood or spiritual eldership to teach their children. This is a myth inadvertently created by the Sunday School movement, excellent and commendable as that movement is- that a child is sent to "Sunday School" and there learns God's ways. The real teaching is done sitting in the house and walking by the way, and not by specialist teachers. The specific reference to teaching when you lie down and rise up could suggest that God specifically intended His people to teach their children, every morning and every evening. This is the essence of family life in the Lord.

Deu 11:20 Write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates-
Writing God's laws on door posts recalls the daubing of Passover lamb blood on the door posts. Indeed at Passover time, the faithful Israelite would have painted over the laws of Moses with the blood of the Passover lamb. This was looking ahead to how those laws were to be blotted out by the Lord's sacrifice. It was perhaps also to remind them that the blood of the Passover lamb, shed for their salvation, was an imperative to their obedience to God's laws. And again we see contemporary religious ideas deconstructed; for "It was the custom of the ancient Egyptians to inscribe on lintels and door-posts sentences of good omen". Such good luck charms were to be replaced with realistic practical calls for obedience in real life; for this was the basis of Divine blessing, and not good luck charms.

Deu 11:21 that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give them-
Does "prolong your days" mean that long life promised to the obedient Israelite under the Old Covenant? Solomon observed that a just mad perished young and "a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness" (Ecc. 7:15). Ez. 12:22 suggests that faithless Israel cynically observed that "The days are prolonged" and God's prophetic word of condemnation had failed- implying they thought that prolonged days were being experienced by them despite their disobedience. The Hebrew phrase 'to prolong days' is found in Is. 53:10, where it is applied to how Messiah would 'prolong His days' not in this life, but in the resurrection. The repeated promises recorded in Deuteronomy of prolonged days upon the land of Israel would therefore hint at the eternity of the Kingdom rather than this life. Indeed, Dt. 4:40 says they would prolong their days "for ever". For an individual Israelite might be faithful but not prolong his or her days in the land because the whole people were to be carried away captive for their sins and the land given to a Gentile power. The opposite of 'days being prolonged' was 'utter

destruction' (:26)- which would then speak of condemnation in the second death. This is one of many examples of where eternal life was possible under the Old Covenant- there were multiple different possibilities and plans God could have worked by. Israel could have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and not killed Him, and so forth. It seems the closer we probe God's word, the more open He is revealed as being.

As the days of the heavens upon the earth-
This is the essence of the New Testament idea of the "Kingdom of Heaven" [not, the Kingdom *in* Heaven] coming upon earth at Christ's return. But it was precluded by Israel's disobedience.

Deu 11:22 For if you will diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him-
The idea of 'cleaving' to God is a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

The Lord's common Upper Room theme of 'abiding' in Him uses the same word as Moses used in the LXX when exhorting his people to 'cleave unto' God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.

"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus.

Deu 11:23 then will Yahweh drive out all these nations from before you and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves-
Dt. 11:23,24 seem to imply that after God had driven out the seven nations which lived in Canaan, He planned- given Israel's obedience- to drive out yet greater nations from before them. I can only take that as meaning that His intention was to drive out the nations who possessed the rest of the land promised to Abraham, right over to the Euphrates. I see here a promise of ultimate victory against Babylon and Assyria, who controlled the Euphrates area. But the very opposite happened- even though potentially, those nations need never have developed and their empires were intended to be Israel's. These potential victories were to be because all the land Israel trod upon

[Heb. 'to bend the bow against'], they would receive (Dt. 11:25). But they weren't ambitious enough to go much beyond their farmsteads. We too will be given all we tread upon, all we desire to inherit of God's Kingdom, if we go forward in faith. It's all potentially possible, if we bend our bow with ambition, we will receive are furthermost dreams and beyond. This line of thought inevitably connects with the incident where Elisha sees the shooting of arrows as a symbol of how far God would give Israel deliverance from Syria (2 Kings 13:17).

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5

million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night.

Deu 11:24 Every place on which the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours, from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river Euphrates, to the hinder sea shall be your border-

This meant that according to their spiritual ambition, so would be their inheritance of the Kingdom. The temptation for them, as for us, was to consider that once we have our small inheritance, our farmstead and secure land, as it was for them- then we need have no wider vision. For to go onwards from that parochial mentality and tread upon the entire land up to the Euphrates was a vision only worth pursuing if they had a vision of collective inheritance of the Kingdom. To seek to get others there is a call which few really perceive. The entire territory promised to Abraham could've been given to them if they had bothered to go there; but they settled just for the fertile land along the Mediterranean coast. They, like us so often, lacked any sense of spiritual ambition.

Deu 11:25 No man will be able to stand before you. Yahweh your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you on all the land that you will tread on, as He has spoken to you-

The command to subject the animals in Eden [the land promised to Abraham?] corresponds to later commands to subject the tribes living in the land (Gen. 1:28 = Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). The "fear and dread" of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the "fear and dread" which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21;11:25).

Deu 11:26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse-

The blessing and curse are defined in Dt. 28, suggesting that all of Deuteronomy was spoken on "this day"- the last day of Moses' life. The implications of "this day" lead me

to think that this is the reference, although the blessing and cursings were pronounced on Ebal and Gerizim some time later.

Deu 11:27 the blessing, if you will listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you this day-
We can read this as meaning that the blessings of Dt. 28 were conditional upon obedience. Israel were not obedient, from Sinai onwards, as the prophets lament. But many of those blessings were still experienced by Israel. So we conclude that this was by grace alone, and indeed the idea of Abraham's seed being "blessed" is associated in the New Testament with the blessing of grace. Again we note God's passionate desire to by all means give His people His Kingdom. He wants to do this, it is the good pleasure or will of God to give us the Kingdom. He is not indifferent to our salvation, and wants us desperately to be in His Kingdom, as the parable of the marriage supper also indicates. It concludes with pretty much anyone willing to say "yes" being ushered in to the marriage supper.

The blessing of Yahweh would come if His commands were obeyed (Dt. 11:27); but in response, He would command that blessing (s.w. Dt. 28:8). His commandments were therefore effectively a commandment of blessing. They were designed for Israel's good and blessing, and not as a test of mindless obedience.

Deu 11:28 and the curse if you will not listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods which you have not previously known-
"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God, then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh, throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14;

13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations and heart, as revealed in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

Deu 11:29 When Yahweh your God brings you into the land where you go to possess it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal-
God repeated the promise of blessing to Abraham at Shechem (Gen. 12:6), where later Israel had to choose between blessing and cursing (Dt. 11:29,30)- as if they had to make the choice to appropriate the promised blessing to themselves, or not. And yet the covenant in Gen. 15 was one way, unconditional, from God to us. It's as if *His* part in our salvation is so much greater than our response.

Deu 11:30 Aren't they beyond the Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh?-
Dt. 27:2-8 had commanded that "in the day" Israel passed over Jordan, they were to set up plastered stones with the law written upon them [perhaps just the ten commandments], and put them "in mount Ebal". The location was defined as near Gilgal (Dt. 11:30), where they camped after entering the land. Clearly enough, the ceremony of blessing and cursing ought to have been done immediately they entered the land. But they let secular concerns dominate their spiritual obligation to be thankful as God had asked. For when Joshua fulfilled it in Josh. 8:30, this was not "in the day" that Israel passed over Jordan. They had indeed taken stones with them from the Jordan, but had not used them as intended. They didn't plaster them nor write the law upon them. And so perhaps God ammended His intention- which was initially that they would set those stones up in mount Ebal immediately. Instead, He sent the people against Jericho, and then against Ai. Perhaps an instant conquest of Jericho had been originally intended, so that they could proceed to mount Ebal immediately. For later in Joshua we will read of God giving His people unnaturally speedy progress against their enemies, all in the same day. Or maybe His intention was that firstly they ought to have gone to mount Ebal with the plastered stones, and only then attacked Jericho. But they didn't plaster the stones nor wish to proceed immediately to Ebal. And so He arranged the campaign against Jericho and then Ai. We see how God is so eager to accommodate His programs to the weakness of men.

Deu 11:31 For you are to pass over the Jordan to go in to possess the land which Yahweh your God gives you, and you shall possess it, and dwell therein-

As noted above, possessing the land was conditional upon obedience. But they weren't obedient, but by grace they possessed the land. Their response to that grace was therefore to be that they kept the commandments (:32). Such commandments as we have are likewise to be obeyed not in order to be worthy of the Kingdom, but as a channel through which to express our gratitude for having been given the Kingdom in prospect.

Deu 11:32 You shall observe all the statutes and the ordinances which I set before you this day-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 12

Deu 12:1 These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall observe to do in the land which Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess all the days that you live on the earth-
The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society

of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 12:2 You must surely destroy all the places in which the nations that you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree-
Israel were told to "throw down", "break in pieces" and "utterly destroy" the idols and altars of Canaan. There were times during their history when they obeyed this command by purging themselves from their apostasy in this. The Hebrew words used scarcely occur elsewhere, except very frequently in the context of how God "broke down", "threw down" and "destroyed" Israel at the hands of their Babylonian and Assyrian invaders as a result of their not 'breaking down' (etc.) the idols. "Throw down" in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 is the same word in 2 Chron. 36:19; Jer. 4:26; 31:28; 33:4; 39:8; 52:14; Ez. 16:39; Nah. 1:6. "Cut down" in Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 later occurs in Is. 10:33; Jer. 48;25; Lam. 2:3. So Israel faced the choice: either cut down your idols, or you will be cut down in the day of God's judgment. Those who worshipped idols were like unto them. The stone will either fall on us and destroy us, or we must fall on it and become broken men and women (Mt. 21:44). For the man untouched by the concept of living for God's glory, it's a hard choice. God will conquer sin, ultimately. When a man dies, it isn't just a biological, clockwork process. It is God's victory over sin in that individual. Either we must be slain by God; or with His gracious help, we must put sin to death in our members through association with the only One who really did this- and thereby rise to life eternal.

Deu 12:3 and you must break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You must cut down the engraved images of their gods-
The Lord's description of the rejected being cut down and thrown into the fire (Mt. 7:19) is surely referring to these words (cp. 7:5), where the idols of the world were to be hewn down and thrown into the fire. The Lord understood that those who worship idols are like unto them (Ps. 115:8; 135:18). Because all idols [of whatever kind] will be destroyed in the last day, all who worship them will have to share their destruction. And yet we can be hewn down by God's word now (Hos. 6:5) rather than wait for God to do it to us by the condemnation process. We must cut off (s.w. hew down) our flesh *now* (Mt. 5:30; 18:8 cp. 7:19).

And destroy their names out of that place-
But when we read the later historical accounts of the place names in the land, we find many cases of names with idolatrous associations not being renamed. Especially we note the prevalence of the "Baal" prefix. They didn't widely obey this.

Deu 12:4 You shall not do so to Yahweh your God-
Verse 3 has just spoken of the need to destroy the names of the idols which were reflected in the place names in Canaan, and instead they were to recognize that Yahweh had placed *His* Name in the land and especially at the sanctuary (:5). God placed His Name upon places in order to make them suitable places for sacrifice to be offered to Him (Dt. 12:4-7,21; Jer. 7:12). They were to call upon *His* Name alone, and not allow anything else to tempt them to call upon the name of idols. Commonly enough, the New Testament speaks of baptism as a calling upon the Name of the Lord. This must be understood against its Hebrew background- *qara' beshem Yahweh*, which originally referred to approaching God in sacrifice (Gen. 12:7,8; Ps. 116:4,17). Baptism was thus seen as a sacrificial commitment to Yahweh in solemn covenant.

Deu 12:5 But to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there-
Worldly religion is made as convenient as possible for the worshipper to come and participate in; the shrines of the Canaanite gods were everywhere in the land, whereas Yahweh insisted that there was one specific place to where His people should come to worship Him. This was perhaps partly to inspire national unity within the family of God. The pagan shrines were each different; they had no uniformity between them, as archaeologists have demonstrated. But the one true God has principles of worship and service which don't vary geographically and are consistently the same because truth is truth and in that sense doesn't vary from place to place nor context to context.

To His dwelling place you shall seek, and there you shall come-
The judgment will be the time when God 'requires' of us our behaviour. And yet the Hebrew word is used about our enquiring / searching to God in prayer now (Gen. 25:22; Ex. 18:15; Dt. 4:29; 12:5; 1 Kings 22:5), as well as His 'requiring' / searching of us at the last day (Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 1 Sam. 20:16; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8). There is a mutuality between a man and his God.

Yahweh cared for / sought after the land and Kingdom He had promised Israel (Dt. 11:12). The same word is used of how His people were to seek Him, to care for the things of His Kingdom above all else (Dt. 12:5). There thus develops a mutuality between God and man.

Deu 12:6 and bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the wave offering of your hand, your vows, your freewill offerings and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock-
The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2

Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Deu 12:7 There you shall eat before Yahweh your God and you shall rejoice in all that you put your hand to, you and your households, in which Yahweh your God has blessed you-

LXX "And ye shall eat there before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice in all the things on which ye shall lay your hand, ye and your houses". The idea may be that what they laid their hands on was the sacrifices which they offered. For that is the context. They were to rejoice in sacrificing their blessings to God. "God loves a cheerful giver" may refer to this (2 Cor. 9:7). And to this day, the only way to "eat and enjoy the good things that you have worked for" (GNB) is by offering them to Yahweh.

Deu 12:8 You shall not do all the things that we do here this day, every man whatever is right in his own eyes-

This may refer to how the Mosaic laws were often intended for obedience once settled in the land. During the 38 years journey, it seems the people were not particularly obedient to God's laws and had just done whatever was right in their own eyes. The lament of Judges is that Israel in the land continued to do what was right in their own eyes (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). The moral anarchy sadly continued. Prov. 21:2 contrasts doing what is right in our own eyes or mental perception, with God judging the hearts / minds. The fact something may appear morally right to us doesn't mean it is. We may know nothing against ourselves in our own conscience, but this doesn't mean we are thereby justified before God (1 Cor. 4:4). There is one thing which will judge us at the end, and that is the word spoken to us (Jn. 12:48)- not our own native sense of right or wrong. Our conscience will not as it were jump out of us and stand there and judge us in the last day.

Deu 12:9 for you haven't yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which Yahweh your God gives you-

The idea may simply be that in the wilderness, they had not been able to obey all the commandments in the law because they were not yet in the land, "the rest". But there may be a hint here at something deeper. For Joshua didn't in fact lead the people to "the

rest" in ultimate terms (Heb. 4:8). That was to be the work of the Lord Jesus. There is a connection between the ark and God's resting place:
- Num. 10:33 "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them... to search out a resting place"
- 1 Chron. 28:2 "An house of rest for the ark".
However, the real resting place of God's Name is not in the literal ark, but in the hearts of people humble to God's Word. The exiles were told: "Where is the house that you build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest?... to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word" (Is. 66:1,2).

Deu 12:10 But when you go over the Jordan, and dwell in the land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you, so that you dwell in safety-
Several times Moses describes Israel's inheritance of the land as entering "rest", mindful of how God had sworn that they would not enter into that rest, and yet he had pleaded with God to change His mind about that (Ps. 95:11; Heb. 3:11), even though Israel at the time didn't realize the intensity of pleading and self-sacrifice for them which was going on up in the mountain. Just as we don't appreciate the extent of the Lord's mediation for us, that we might enter the final "rest" (Heb. 4:9).

Deu 12:11 then to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, to cause His name to dwell there, you must bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the wave offering of your hand and all your chosen vows which you vow to Yahweh-
The idea of a central place of worship was perhaps to stop the Israelites just doing their own thing in their local areas when it came to Yahweh worship. His desire for unity amongst His people was reflected in this otherwise strange idea that they were to offer all sacrifices in only one place in the land. No other legal code amongst the nations featured this. But Israel didn't do this, and so it seems that He did accept sacrifice in local sanctuaries; we think of acceptable offerings made in other places, by Gideon, Manoah, David and others. We see reflected here God's willingness to accept less than ideal sacrifices, so desirous is He of relationship with His people.

Deu 12:12 Rejoice before Yahweh your God, you and your sons, your daughters, your male servants, your female servants and the Levite who is within your gates, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you-
We see God's desire that male and female, slave and free, should unite together in the joy which arises from acceptable sacrifice. Again we see this as the basis of being a "cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7), for true joy arise not from selfish hoarding but from sacrifice and giving as God intended. If there were to be no local sacrifices, then the Levites

would have had to take their food from the sacrifices offered at the central sanctuary, and transport it home. This would have required them to be in regular contact with the sanctuary. This whole plan would have been unworkable if Israel at this point had inherited as intended up to the Euphrates river; but God had clearly recalculated their inheritance in accordance with their possibilities and spiritual capacities.

Deu 12:13 Be careful not to offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see-
We can't worship God any way we like, thinking that the fact we accept His existence and even worship Him means that we are somehow free to do it as we think. Israel didn't do this, and so it seems that He did accept sacrifice in local sanctuaries; we think of acceptable offerings made in other places, by Gideon, Manoah, David and others. We see reflected here God's willingness to accept less than ideal sacrifices, so desirous is He of relationship with His people.

Deu 12:14 but in the place which Yahweh shall choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you-
It is hard to discern when exactly God named such a place. David and Solomon were confident that God had chosen Zion, but it's unclear whether this was their own preference which they then claimed was God's choice. At any rate, these words of Moses imply God would choose such a place soon after Israel entered Canaan. But there is no record of Him doing so, and the sanctuary moved around to various places. Perhaps that was the idea- that God would choose a place and then move it around, choosing another at a later date. Or perhaps this simply didn't happen; because the people showed themselves not sufficiently spiritual, and so He allowed them to just use local shrines. In this case we see the flexibility of God, and His ability to recalculate and downgrade His expectations of His people. We must note that He alone has the prerogative to do so.

Deu 12:15 Notwithstanding, you may kill and eat flesh within all your gates after all the desire of your soul, according to the blessing of Yahweh your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the hart-
They were allowed to kill animals for food for their own use, and being ritually unclean was no barrier to eating such meat. The gazelle and hart, GNB "deer or antelope", were given as examples of clean animals which could be eaten, perhaps clarifying the question of whether they could eat animals killed in hunting, who died from arrows at a distance from the hunter, and whose blood could only be poured out some time after killing them.

Deu 12:16 Only you must not eat the blood. Pour it out on the earth as water-

The blood was understood as representing life (:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves.

Deu 12:17 You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil-
Perhaps this command was addressed specifically to the Levites.

Or the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, nor any of your vows which you vow, nor your freewill offerings, nor the wave offering of your hand-
The Israelites weren't allowed to eat the firstborn, but rather must offer it to God, and the Levites ate part of it. But :18 speaks of them eating these things before Yahweh along with the Levite. So the idea seems to be that the Levites in each local area were to accompany the offerers to the central sanctuary. This was intended to create a strong social bond between the people and the Levites. But sadly this didn't seem to happen.

Deu 12:18 but you must eat them before Yahweh your God in the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, you and your son, your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God in all that you put your hand on-
Whatever they put their hand on to give to God they were to give with joy; for God *loves* cheerful giving, and hates reluctant or manipulated 'giving' (2 Cor. 9:7). The idea was that all the family were to go to the sanctuary and rejoice together in their giving. See on :17.

Deu 12:19 Take heed to yourself-
Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

That you don't forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land-
The implication is that they would no longer live in the land if they forsook the Levite. But they clearly never really supported the Levites. God's patience with them lasted many centuries. For they were not cast out of the land for a long time.

Deu 12:20 When Yahweh your God enlarges your border, as He has promised you, and you say I want to eat meat, because your soul desires to eat meat, you may eat meat,

after all the desire of your soul-
Vegetarianism is a matter of personal choice, but it certainly isn't commanded by God-indeed, quite the opposite (1 Tim. 4:3). If Israel had been obedient, then "the Lord your God shall enlarge thy border" (Dt. 12:20). Thus "blessed be He that enlarges Gad" (Dt. 33:20). Who knows the height and depth, length and breadth of what could have been for God's people? And the same is true for us today. According to Israel's perception of the land, so it was defined for them.

Deu 12:21 If the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to put His name there is too far from you, then you shall kill of your herd and of your flock which Yahweh has given you, as I have commanded you; you may eat within your gates, after all the desire of your soul-
They were always allowed to kill animals and eat their meat for personal use (:15). So the killing of animals here seems to refer to the possibility of offering the sacrifices in their own "gates", but only once the land was enlarged. We never read of the land being enlarged, indeed their territory was progressively "cut short" (2 Kings 10:32) after Solomon's time and frequently in the time of the Judges, immediately after their entry into the land. There was never any signal from God that He had now enlarged the land (:20) and therefore this change of the law was allowed. We note that the law of Moses was flexible and open to change. That it should later be abrogated is therefore no surprise. The argument that each Mosaic law was eternal is therefore lacking in careful attention to the text of the law itself.

Deu 12:22 As the gazelle and the hart is eaten, so you shall eat of it; the unclean and the clean may eat of it alike-
As explained on :21, the context appears to be here about eating the sacrificed animals at the time when the land had been enlarged, and such animals didn't have to be sacrificed at the sanctuary. So we note that unclean offerers could eat of the sacrifices in this case. It was not allowed for unclean offerers to eat peace offerings (Lev. 7:20), nor could Levites or priests approach to the sacrifices whilst unclean (Lev. 22:3). But there is no statement that the offerer had to be clean, indeed Dt. 12:22 says that some sacrifices could be eaten by the offerer whilst unclean. We see here God's willingness to by all means accept the offerer of sacrifice.

Deu 12:23 Only be sure that you don't eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you shall not eat the life with the flesh-
"The life with the flesh" effectively means "the blood with the flesh", i.e. the blood must be drained out of the meat. One practical consequence of this was that obedience would have meant social separation from the Canaanites; for none of them observed

these positions on blood, indeed eating blood or meat with much blood in it was a delicacy.

Deu 12:24 You must not eat it; pour it out on the earth as water-
We note the triple, laboured emphasis upon not eating blood in :23-25. The blood was understood as representing life (:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves.

Deu 12:25 You must not eat it, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, when you do that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh-
The Lord Jesus specifically alluded to the major Jewish principle of not eating blood-when He taught that unless His blood was drunk, then they had no life in them. This alludes to another reason for not eating blood, given in Lev. 17:11: "I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life". The blood looked ahead to the blood which God would give which would make atonement. The blood of animals couldn't take away sins (Heb. 10:4). So the blood only 'made atonement' because it pointed forward to that of the Lord Jesus. The whole structure of the laws about blood required some blood of atonement which had to be shed in future, a blood sacrifice of a representative human who was not an animal. That blood was to be given to God, and not to man. Hence the stress upon not eating blood.

Deu 12:26 Only your holy things which you have and your vows, you shall take and go to the place which Yahweh shall choose-
The situation in view is hard to imagine; whether this speaks of when the borders were enlarged, or whether this specifically applies to the priests. The Rabbis like to think that this refers to an Israelite outside the land.

Deu 12:27 and you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of Yahweh your God. The blood of your sacrifices must be poured out on the altar of Yahweh your God, and you shall eat the flesh-
For the situation in view, see on :26. It's unclear whether "the flesh" refers to the meat, or to the literal skin of the animal. The blood of hunted animals was to be covered with dust (Lev. 17:13), as if buried in death. So the idea may have been that it drained from the altar onto the dust upon which the altar stood. Or it may be that the altar represented God's facility to accept the offering of life.

Deu 12:28 Observe and hear all these words which I command you-
Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" or obey God's words. "*Hear*, O Israel" in Deuteronomy must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "*Hear* [‘be obedient’], O Israel" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuteronomy Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

That it may go well with you and with your children after you forever-
Things 'going well / good' with Israel is the language of the Kingdom of God in Dt. 8:16 "to do you good / well at your latter end". It is associated with days being prolonged (Dt. 22:7) and the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Dt. 30:5), and Israel and the children somehow existing "forever" (Dt. 12:28). So I deduce in the wish "that it may go well with you" a hint towards the eternal establishment of God's Kingdom based around Israel, what Paul terms "the hope of Israel".

When you do that which is good and right in the eyes of Yahweh your God-
Israel had been told by Moses that their doing what was "good and right" was required for them to possess the land (Dt. 6:18; 12:28). The Gibeonites use the same phrase in appealing for Joshua to do what was "good and right" (Josh. 9:25) in not slaying them but accepting them into covenant relationship with Yahweh. The people generally didn't want to do this (Josh. 9:26). It seems God's providence used Joshua's initial unwisdom in order to give Joshua a chance to do what was "good and right", so that Israel could indeed possess Canaan. We marvel at how God works through human unwisdom and dysfunction, in order to achieve His final purpose of giving His people His Kingdom.

Dt. 12:28 AV "Observe and hear all these words... that it may go well with thee... when thou doest that which is good and right", is as if to say 'When you are obedient, you will be even more obedient'. "You shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall even live in them" (Lev. 18:5) seems to mean that if we seriously try to be obedient, then obedience becomes a way of daily life, and the individual acts of obedience are not so difficult. This was undoubtedly the Lord's source of victory over the flesh. He lived a life that was in harmony with an atmosphere of obedience.

Deu 12:29 When Yahweh your God cuts off the nations from before you, where you go in to dispossess them, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 12:30 take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods saying, How do these nations serve their gods? I will do likewise-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 12:31 You must not do so to Yahweh your God, for every abomination to Yahweh, which He hates, have they done to their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they burn in the fire to their gods-

The sacrifice of children to idols was clearly felt by God to be a particularly great

abomination. Israel's children were His- in that they were to be raised for Him and to live lives devoted to Him. If we do not raise our children as dedicated for Him [whether or not they accept that path is of course their choice], then we have effectively done what we would most recoil at- to offer our children to the gods of wealth, career and secular success.

Deu 12:32 Whatever I command you, you must observe to do. You must not add to it, nor take away from it-
As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 13;18; 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ. Indeed, the well known prophecy that God would raise up a prophet "like unto" Moses to whom Israel would *listen* (Dt. 18:18) is in the context of Israel saying they did not want to hear God's voice directly. Therefore God said that he would raise up Christ, who would be another Moses in the sense that *he too* would speak forth God's word.

Pharaoh had insisted that nothing should be "diminished" from the quota of bricks he had set (Ex. 5:11), and the same word is later used of how Israel were not to "diminish" ["take away"] from obeying Yahweh's commandments (Dt. 4:2; 12:32). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

The Divine intention was that perfect obedience to the law of Moses would lead to a perfect character, which is what we see in the Lord Jesus. The laws were intended to confirm and strengthen the way of obedience. To reduce or expand the corpus of commandments was therefore to take away this self reinforcing nature of the law.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 13

Deu 13:1 If there should arise in the midst of you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder-
"If" could as well be translated "when". Paul seems to allude here: "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:30). Jeremiah feared God had

deceived *him* (Jer. 20:7)- showing he knew such a thing was possible. Dt. 13:1-3 warns Israel not to believe prophets whose prophecies came true although they taught false doctrines, because they may have been raised up to test their obedience. God deceived Israel by telling them about the peace which would come on Jerusalem in the future Kingdom; they didn't consider the other prophecies *which were given at the same time* concerning their imminent judgment, and therefore they thought that God was pleased with them and was about to establish the Messianic Kingdom; when actually the very opposite was about to happen (Jer. 4:10). This is why the Bible is confusing to those who aren't humble to God's word.

Deu 13:2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass of which he spoke to you saying, Let us go after other gods (which you have not previously known) and let us serve them-
The idea is that 'if the miracle appears to happen'. But that is not stated- the argument assumes, for a moment, that the alleged miracle actually happened. The idea is that the false prophet would do fake miracles in order to back up his appeal to serve other gods. Yahweh often makes the point that the signs and wonders He did for His people were far greater than anything ever seen upon earth. Likewise, the sheer magnitude of the Lord's miracles of themselves showed that all belief in demons as sources of power was utterly inappropriate. But the New Testament record assumes, for a moment, that demons had some power. Even though in reality they have no existence. And so here, for a moment, for the sake of argument, it is assumed that the alleged wonders were genuine and not fake.

We observe in this passage how empirical evidence isn't necessarily the basis for faith. Even if it apparently exists in the form of fulfilled prophecy, so it apparently can for others who teach falsely. The classic Biblical explanation of faith is in Hebrews 11:1-3: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, the evidence about invisible things... By faith we understand that the ages have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not been made out of things which appear". Putting meaning into words, this at first blush is circular reasoning. Faith is the evidence. But on what evidence are we to believe? Faith is the evidence. The Hebrew writer was no simplistic fool. He [or she] was surely aware that this is apparently circular reasoning. Faith is the evidence. So, faith is not evidence-based. You believe on the basis of faith. The same kind of apparently circular reasoning is found often in the Bible. Once you are on the look out for it. Take 1 Jn. 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may... believe on the name of the Son of God".

Deu 13:3 you must not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams, for Yahweh your God proves you-
The reasoning here is helpful with respect to the claims made by some to perform

supernatural feats. Even if it seems they might have done so, that isn't a good enough reason to believe them; our loyalty to the one true God must not be swayed by apparently impressive deeds or predictions by those who don't believe in Him.

To know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul- Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 13:4 You must walk after Yahweh your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice-
"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of

the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God, then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh, throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations and heart, as revealed in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

And you must serve Him and cleave to Him-
The idea of 'cleaving' to God is a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

The Lord's common Upper Room theme of 'abiding' in Him uses the same word as Moses used in the LXX when exhorting his people to 'cleave unto' God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.

"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus.

Deu 13:5 That prophet or that dreamer of dreams must be put to death, because he has spoken rebellion against Yahweh your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to draw you aside out of the way which Yahweh your God commanded you to walk in. So you must put away the evil from the midst of you-
Moses' frequent references to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt show the colossal difference there is between us and this world as a result of our Red Sea baptism into Christ (13:5; 15:15; 16:12; 1 Cor. 10:1,2); as our Lord in His time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which He was redeeming us from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4).

Deu 13:6 If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom or your friend, who is as your own soul, entices you secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which you have not known, you nor your fathers-
Moses speaks as if he assumed that surely Israel would love their neighbour as themselves: "Thy brother…or thy friend, which is as thine own soul" almost unconsciously reveals the depth of Moses' positive faith in their obedience, even though on the other hand he clearly understood their future apostacy. So often family loyalties deflect a person from their loyalty to the one true God. The same has always been the case. Our spiritual family should ultimately be more meaningful to us than our natural family; that at least is the ideal, although all families have their dysfunctions, including our spiritual family.

Despite omitting some of the Law's commands in his speech, there are other commands which Moses really emphasizes and repeats within his speech; e.g. the need to destroy idols and false teachers, and to provide cities of refuge to cater for the sins they would commit without intending to (Dt. 7:5; 12:3, 23-25; 13:6-14 = 17:2-7). This surely reflects our Lord's attitude to us; it is his desire that we recognize our sinfulness, our likelihood of failure, our need to separate from things which will lead us away from Him. And yet the Christian community is increasingly blind to this. Moses' frequent references to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt show the same spirit (Dt. 13:5; 15:15; 16:12); as our Lord in his time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which he was redeeming us from this present evil world.

Deu 13:7 of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near to you or far off from you, from the one end of the land to the other end of the land-
In Josh. 12:1,7 we meet “the kings of the earth”, i.e. of the land, and this must surely be the basis of how we are to understand the references to “the kings of the earth” in Revelation. Dt. 13:7 defines “the peoples which are round about you” [Israel] as being “from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth” (RV). Those peoples which bordered with the Israelites were “the earth” / *eretz*.

Deu 13:8 you must not consent to him nor listen to him. Neither shall your eye pity him, neither shall you spare, neither shall you conceal him-
These words are quoted in Jer. 13:14 of how God would not pity nor spare an apostate Israel. They were being asked to adopt His perspective.

Deu 13:9 but you must surely kill him. Your hand shall be first on him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people-
There is stress upon close family members were to be the first to slay apostate members whose apostacy they had reported (Dt. 13:9; 17:7). They were being taught

that they had to love God far more than family, and the Lord Jesus continued this teaching (Mt. 10:37).

Deu 13:10 You must stone him to death with stones because he has sought to draw you away from Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage-

The use of stoning (Dt. 13:10; 17:5; 21:21; 22:21,24) was to show their connection with the death of the apostate. It was to also make them realize that any attempt to deny the saving work of God in bringing them out of Egypt, or attempt to reverse it by returning them to bondage, was worthy of death (Dt. 13:10). We note that false teaching, enticing others to sin, is seen as the most serious kind of sin. The New Testament teaching about church discipline takes a similar approach; moral weakness of individuals was tolerated, although criticized; but those teaching such behaviour were condemned. Stoning resulted in the covering of the body with the dust of the earth, as if recognizing that the death being brought about was also to be the fate of all under the curse in Eden.

Deu 13:11 All Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall not do any more such wickedness as this is in the midst of you-

The group involvement was intended to teach others that such apostacy from Yahweh was unacceptable. We recall a similar judgment of Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament, which lead to "fear" within the church- and then straight after that we have a notice that the church yet again experienced a growth spurt.

Deu 13:12 If you hear concerning one of your cities which Yahweh your God gives you to dwell there saying-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 13:13 Certain bad men have gone out from the midst of you and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying Let us go and serve other gods, which you have not known-

As discussed on :10, the worst level of sin is when people turn others away from God to idolatry. The gods "which you have not known" means effectively 'With whom you

cannot have relationship'. For this is the Hebrew idea of 'knowing'. The idea is not that anything new must be wrong just because they are new. Yahweh was characterized above all as the God who thirsts for personal relationship with His people.

Deu 13:14 then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently. Behold, if it is true and certain that such abomination is done in the midst of you-
Allegations of misbehaviour or wrong teaching within the family of God must be taken seriously and not pushed under the carpet. But they aren't to be acted upon without a very careful investigation, during which the love which believes and hopes all things is paramount. This passage cannot be used as a reason to divide from those who have a slightly different Biblical interpretation of something than we do, whilst believing in and worshipping the same Lord. The situation envisaged is if someone were seeking to draw Yahweh's people away to a totally different god (:13).

Deu 13:15 you must surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly and all that is therein and its livestock, with the edge of the sword-
Striking a city with the edge of the sword and completely destroying all life within it was what Israel did to the cities of Canaan (Josh. 10:32 etc.). But the phrase is that of Dt. 13:15, about what should be done to an apostate Israelite city who turned to idolatry. This explains why the account of Joshua's campaigns list cities like Libnah and Lachish, against which the Assyrians "encamped" and fought against them (2 Chron. 32:1; Is. 37:8 = Josh. 10:31). Israel were judging the Canaanite cities for their idolatry; the fact they committed the same meant that they were more than hypocritical. They had done that which they had judged. And they thereby become a warning for us.

Deu 13:16 You shall gather all its spoil into the midst of its street and shall burn with fire the city and all its spoil, everything, to Yahweh your God, and it shall be a heap forever. It shall not be built again-
The absolute destruction of everything in the apostate city meant that there was no possibility of personal gain for those judging it. This meant that the motivation in considering an accusation of apostacy would be treated without any temptation to consider personal benefit if the city were indeed judged apostate.

Deu 13:17 Nothing of the devoted thing must cling to your hand, that Yahweh may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy and have compassion on you-
Those who wanted to devote themselves to other gods ended up devoted to Yahweh in destruction. There is a powerful logic to devotion. The reasoning seems to be that the false teaching of the city would have spread, and all Israel would have been affected by it- and so God's fierce anger would have come upon them. It is therefore foolish to assume that wrong teaching will not spread; it is attractive by its nature. There is a

strong teaching throughout the Bible about shutting down false teaching, whilst having an open attitude to sinners and misbelievers and those who misunderstand within the congregation.

And multiply you, as He has sworn to your fathers-
The entire promises to Abraham and the fathers depended for their realization upon human obedience: "Hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord your God shall keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto your fathers" (Dt. 7:12). That covenant was initially given in terms which omitted direct reference to any conditions for fulfilment. But it would be 'kept' by God if His people 'kept' His ways. The promises that God would multiply the seed of Abraham were conditional also; *if* Israel separated themselves from the peoples of the land, *then* He would "multiply you, as He has sworn unto your fathers" (Dt. 13:17).

Deu 13:18 when you listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh your God-
On one hand, the promises to Abraham and the fathers depended for their realization upon human obedience; even though on the other hand, the covenant of Gen. 15 appears to be a unilateral expression of God's grace and assurance to His people. "If you listen to these ordinances and keep and do them, Yahweh your God will keep with you the covenant and the loving kindness which He swore to your fathers" (Dt. 7:12). That covenant was initially given in terms which omitted direct reference to any conditions for fulfilment. But it would be 'kept' by God if His people 'kept' His ways. The promises that God would multiply the seed of Abraham were conditional also; *if* Israel separated themselves from the peoples of the land and were obedient, *then* He would "multiply you, as He has sworn unto your fathers" (Dt. 13:17,18). The strength of God's grace also makes some of His promises 'conditional' in a different sense; thus He had promised Reuben and Manasseh that they could return to their possessions only when the others had possessed the land (Dt. 3:20). This condition never happened- yet they were allowed to return. And our very salvation from death and the consequences of sin is in a sense another example of this kind of thing.

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13;

11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 14

Deu 14:1 You are the children of Yahweh your God. You must not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead-
Whilst there is nothing morally wrong with cutting the skin, the idea was that Israel weren't to even appear associated with pagan rituals for the dead. We likewise should naturally not want to even appear like worshippers of any other god (of whatever kind) when Yahweh is our only God. RSV "sons of God" is a phrase used concerning men, especially those who know the true God (Dt. 14:1 (R.S.V.); Hos. 1:10; Lk. 3:38; Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1), and doesn't have to refer to Angels. However the idea may be that "not cut yourselves" refers to not cutting hair; for to shave the head was a sign of mourning. The hair was understood as a person's glory; and this was to be given to the living God and not to the memory of dead men.

The prohibition of doing things "for the dead" doesn't simply refer to not memorializing the dead. Rather was the belief that the living could enter into some kind of covenant with the deceased, who were deemed to be still alive. But the Israelites were to accept death as unconsciousness, and not to accord any power to the supposed spirits of the dead.

Deu 14:2 For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God, and Yahweh has chosen you to be a people for His own possession above all peoples who are on the face of the earth-
We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they would be His "peculiar treasure" (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His "peculiar treasure" by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that "the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people [s.w.]... *that* thou shouldest keep all his commandments" (Dt. 26:18). See what's

happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world” (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel “out of all peoples” (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2).

Deu 14:3 You must not eat any abominable thing-
The word "abominable" has connections with idolatry. The reasons for defining certain animals as clear and others as unclean may be connected to the way in which the unclean animals were used in idol worship, especially by the Egyptians. There is a clear connection between unclean animals and idols in Is. 66:17; Ez. 8:10. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14), every creature is "good" and was made "very good" (1 Tim. 4:4); the differentiations were purely for teaching purposes, and therefore at the Lord's death the differences were collapsed. The unclean animals were only "unclean to you" (Lev. 11:6). Peter struggled to accept this, but was taught that the unclean animals had been intended to represent the Gentiles, the surrounding nations whom Israel were to differ from (:2)- and now they were to be accepted on an equal footing to the Jews, the supposedly "clean" animals. Again we see the temporary nature of the law of Moses; the animals were not of themselves unclean originally, nor were they after the Lord's death.

Deu 14:4 These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat-
"You may eat" [contrasted with "you may *not* eat"] invites us to see this as an echo of the commandment in Eden; God said that they "may eat" of all in Eden, apart from one tree (Gen. 2:16). The implication is that Israel was Eden, and the lesson of Adam and Eve was applicable in every human situation. Failure to make the division between clean and unclean was what led them into sin; they assumed that the unclean could in fact at times be dabbled with and participated in. The division into clean and unclean animals was not because some were intrinsically unclean; for there is nothing unclean of itself, "all things indeed are pure" (Rom. 14:14,20), every creature is "good" and was made "very good" (1 Tim. 4:4). Hence the creatures were only unclean "*unto you"* (see on :10). Neither was the reasoning primarily for hygienic reasons; for otherwise, why would the Lord have repeated these laws by declaring all food clean? In any case, some of the "clean" animals such as the goat are well known for the hygiene problems which easily arise from eating them. Goats are in many ways more unhygienic than pigs. The difference between clean and unclean is seen as applying to the separation between the people of God and those not of God, historically articulated in the division between Hebrews and Gentiles which was removed in the Lord's death. Thus Lev. 20:23-25

explained the need to "put difference between clean and unclean beasts" as being because "I have separated you from other peoples". The idea was not that some animals were intrinsically clean and others likewise not clean; for that would have implied that God's people were intrinsically clean and the Gentile world somehow unclean by nature. The difference was not that, for all are sinners and none are unclean of themselves by reason of being human; rather the difference is that God's people, like the "clean" animals, were chosen / set apart by God, for no particular reason, but purely because of the grace of His sovereign choice. In allusion to this, Isaiah laments that "we are *all* as one who is unclean [w. for "unclean" animals], and all our righteousness is as a polluted garment: and we all fade as a leaf" (Is. 64:6). The difference was in God's sovereign choice, as it was with the choice of some animals to be clean and others unclean. This was the point of the division of the animals; it seems somewhat disproportionate to try to teach the need to 'chew' our spiritual food by arranging for this continual division between clean [cud chewing] and unclean animals. Rather was there something more fundamental being taught- that the essential division is between those whom God chose by grace, and those He didn't. And this was to elicit in the believer a habit of dividing between clean and unclean in his own heart and life. All human thought and living was to reflect that division in moral terms between the light and the darkness.

So by taking away these technical distinctions between clean and unclean foods, the Lord was showing that they had been mere teaching mechanisms and were not ultimately meaningful of themselves. For the separation between clean and unclean was to be made within the human heart, and not in terms of physical separation from unclean persons. The comment that the Lord Jesus "made all foods clean" is made in the context of the record of His teaching that evil comes from the human heart, and not from anything external (Mk. 7:19). If our inner heart is clean, then we cannot be made unclean by external contact with the unclean. Lk 11:41 says as much: "But give for alms those things which are within, and behold, all things are clean to you". All things are therefore pure / clean to those with a clean heart; and all things are unclean to those whose internal worldview is unclean and defiled (Tit. 1:15). And the conscience can be cleansed, made clean, by the work of the spirit of Christ (Heb. 9:9,14; Ez. 36:25 cp. "create in me a clean heart", Ps. 51:10); we are washed by the greatest Priest, and the difference between clean and unclean is simply that some have accepted this cleansing and others haven't ("you are clean; but not all", Jn. 13:10). This has huge and far reaching implications; for so much religion, including the bylaws of the denominations of Christendom, is based around the perceived need to separate from unclean persons. The Lord Jesus lived out this teaching by eating with / breaking His bread with whores and gamblers, the most visibly sinful people. Yet He was personally "separate from sinners"; and that separation was therefore in His heart (Heb. 7:26). This was and is a brave new world for those who had grown up in a society where guilt came by association, and external image was everything. But modern society is no different. It

was this internal separation which the clean / unclean distinction intended to teach. Obedience to the laws was a kind of practice of it in physical terms in everyday life. By having to "put a difference between clean and unclean" in daily life (Lev. 11:47), discerning between them (Ez. 22:26), they were taught the need to do this in their hearts. This is why spiritually mature people like the Lord Jesus and Paul had a very distinct internal separation between clean and unclean within them. They discerned good and evil clearly. Thus the account of the Lord's internal temptations in the wilderness sound as if the unclean thoughts of temptation were totally distinct from Him; and Paul in Rom. 7 speaks of how "I myself" serve God, and his fleshly mind was somehow separate to the real Paul.

Deu 14:5 the hart and the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the chamois-
Comparing the lists of clean and unclean animals in Lev. 11 and Dt. 14, we see the Deuteronomy list tends to be more specific. This is understandable; for the people were now going to enter the land, and there would be specific questions about specific animals.

Deu 14:6 Every animal that has a split hoof-
Lev. 11:3 adds more detail: "Whatever parts the hoof, and is cloven-footed". The sense of the Hebrew is "Whatever parts the hoof, and completely divides it". Some animals part the hoof but don't completely divide it to the end, such as the camel. The lesson would be that there must be clear division between clean and unclean, good and bad, and that division must not be begun and not finished. The line dividing good from evil must run to the end through every part of our lives.

And chews the cud among the animals, you may eat-
The Hebrew means to bring the food up again, to ruminate. The animals which ruminated had at least two stomachs, and processed their food at length. Perhaps this was to represent ruminating upon God's word, rather than eating whatever is presented to us, as it is in this age of instant [apparent] information. Being cloven-footed perhaps speaks of being sure footed and walking stably in life. To chew the cud (ruminate on God's word) but not walk the talk (not having a cloven foot) still makes us unclean. However, it may be that there is little significance in the chewing of the cud of itself, because doing so didn't make the animal unclean of itself- it was just an exercise for Israel to teach them the concept of discernment, self control and obedience to God even when this meant practical inconvenience for them.

Deu 14:7 Nevertheless these you must not eat of those that chew the cud or of those which have a split hoof: the camel, the hare and the rabbit. Because they chew the cud

but don't have a split hoof, they are unclean to you-
Some animals part the hoof but don't completely divide it to the end (see on :6), such as the camel, which has a kind of ball at the back of their foot which means the hoof is not completely divided. The lesson would be that there must be clear division between clean and unclean, good and bad, and that division must not be begun and not finished. The line dividing good from evil must run to the end through every part of our lives.

The hare was apparently thought to be avoided by demons ["jinns"] and so was worshipped; hare bones or skills were used as good luck charms, and still are among some Arab tribes. So the reason for having nothing to do with hares was religious rather than because hares are somehow more intrinsically unclean than other animals.

As with the language of demons in the New Testament, the Bible here speaks of things as they appear. For hares and rock badgers do chew the cud, but their munching movements, the lower jaw moving backward and forward, suggest they are chewers of the cud- but in fact they don't.

Deu 14:8 The pig, because it has a split hoof but doesn't chew the cud, is unclean to you-
Appearing to make a differentiation in our walk, our external life, is no good unless internally we are chewing the cud, masticating our food, ruminating upon God's word on a constant basis (:6). Many people appear to have made a division between themselves and society but this is no evidence that they are spiritual. Spirituality is about constant rumination on the things we are fed spiritually, rather than filling the mind with garbage and biting food in chunks.

Of their flesh you shall not eat and their carcasses you shall not touch-
The basis of the command to us in our age to "touch not the unclean thing" by being separate from sinful things (2 Cor. 6:17).

Deu 14:9 These you may eat of all that are in the waters: whatever has fins and scales may you eat-
All fish have fins and scales, it's just that some aren't evident. We see here how the Bible is written in places from the viewpoint of humans, and according to their understanding of things, even if that understanding is false. And this is why we find mental illness attributed to "demons" in the New Testament, even though demons don't exist.

Deu 14:10 Whatever doesn't have fins and scales you must not eat; it is unclean to you-
The parable of the drag net pictures fishermen sitting down with their catch, throwing away the "bad" fish. These would've been the unclean sea creatures, e.g. crabs, which

had got caught up in the net. This represented the ‘sitting’ of the final judgment at the last day (Mt. 13:48,49). We are to make that same division between good and bad in the choices we make today. Possibly the lack of fins and scales suggests a lack of visible guiding principles in life, living with no sense of clear direction towards the Kingdom.

We note the continual stress that these animals were "unclean unto you" (:7,8,10). There is nothing unclean of itself (see on :4); the animals were only clean or unclean "unto you", in that these laws were a practical exercises in the practice of 'making a separation' between clean and unclean. But the essence of that separation was to be in the human heart. When these laws failed to have the effect of teaching this, they were removed by the Lord Jesus.

Deu 14:11 Of all clean birds you may eat-
LXX makes this a command: "Ye shall eat every clean bird". The reference may specifically be to the birds used in the ritual of the cleansing of the leper; as if this was the only time a bird may be eaten. For the basis upon which clean and unclean animals were divided [chewing the cud, cloven hooves] doesn't apply to birds. It could be that birds were not to be eaten, apart from those sanctified or "made clean" by the rituals which used birds.

Deu 14:12 But these are the ones you must not eat: the eagle, the vulture and the osprey-
These birds all hunt and eat other unclean animals, and many of them were totems of the idols believed in by the nations. Again the idea was to teach God’s people the need to keep away from association with things which resembled sin, which would put ideas in the mind which tended towards sin rather than righteousness. This principle is so relevant today in connection with what we watch or read, for by presenting ourselves continually with sinful associations we are the more likely to ourselves fall into sin.

Deu 14:13 the red kite, the falcon and the kite after its kind-
It is common in primitive societies for tribes and individuals to have totems, an animal or plant which they are associated with. This practice is common today in central Africa. Seeing there are no animals unclean of themselves, as the New Testament makes clear, one reason for the specific designation of some animals as "unclean" may be because they were associated with local tribes or individuals who were to be treated as unclean. The meaning of some of the names of the designated "unclean" animals are suggestive of individuals.

Deu 14:14 every raven after its kind-
We note how Elijah was later to be made to depend upon food brought to him by unclean ravens (1 Kings 17:4-6). This was all part of God's program to educate him against exclusivity. God told Elijah that He had commanded unclean ravens to feed him; and thus He reminded Elijah of a basic fact, that God speaks to even unclean animals (Gen. 1:22)- and they obey him. The ravens not only obeyed Yahweh in going to Elijah, but in not eating the food they were carrying. Elijah likely considered that the fact God spoke to him meant that he must therefore have some automatic superiority over others. But not so. It's the same with us. We can consider that because we have heard God's true voice, we thereby are justified before Him. But He speaks to and uses all, clean and unclean.

Deu 14:15 the ostrich, the owl, the seagull and the hawk after its kind-
The reference to seagulls shows that these laws were intended for Israel in the land, rather than whilst in the wilderness. We continually note the flexible nature of God's law given through Moses.

Deu 14:16 the little owl, the great owl and the horned owl-
The extensive stress upon not eating owls of any kind was because the local tribes considered that owls were the most human-like of all birds. They were therefore worshipped and considered as mediators between the gods and man. There was to be no even going near these birds, because association is the basis of so much downward sliding in spiritual terms.

Deu 14:17 the pelican, the vulture and the cormorant-
Some of the birds forbidden as unclean were thought to be good luck symbols, and their carcasses were used as medicines or potions used in idol worship. The vulture and pelican were amongst these. The take away lesson is that we are to avoid all associations with that which is paganic and anti-God.

Deu 14:18 the stork and the heron after its kind and the hoopoe and the bat-
These animals, the bat especially, were associated with tombs and the dead. They were thought to carry messages to the dead, and to facilitate the passage of the supposed "immortal soul"- a false teaching which the Bible knows nothing of. Is. 7 speaks of the chirping and muttering of the dead, alluding to the sounds made by these animals. Quite simply, Israel were to have nothing to do with these wrong ideas and the animals associated with them. The "hoopoe" is better "lapwing", known as 'the doctor bird' and clearly associated with pagan beliefs about healing.

Deu 14:19 All winged creeping things are unclean to you; they shall not be eaten-
The idea may be that they had the potential to fly, but often preferred to crawl on earth. Refusing to use spiritual potential was seen as a bad thing, and Israel didn't need even the unconscious association with anything which resembled that. This is why so much which passes for entertainment would be better not viewed nor listened to by Christians; there is nothing unclean in itself, but the subliminal associations are what drag us down.

Deu 14:20 Of all clean birds you may eat-
See on :11. But "birds" is not the same Hebrew word as in :11. The idea in the immediate context is "Of all clean winged things you may eat".

Deu 14:21 You must not eat of anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the foreigner living among you who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to Yahweh your God-
Ex. 22:31 says they were to throw such food to the dogs and not eat it. Perhaps "dogs" meant Gentiles. This command wasn't only for hygienic reasons. God wished to encourage His people to have a healthy work ethic, not taking short cuts, but eating animals they had raised themselves for that purpose. We live in a society where laziness and trying to live for free has become almost an art form. We cannot ultimately get around the curse, that we shall eat only as a result of the sweat of our own labour. We have to accept our humanity and our fallen condition, looking for the lifting of the curse in God's future Kingdom.

We note that whilst on the wilderness journey, the people were allowed to eat such carcasses although they would be unclean until evening (Lev. 17:15). We recall how they complained at the boredom of the manna, and longed for meat. It's as if God cut them some slack in allowing them to eat such carcasses, although it would make them unclean. But once settled in the land, they were not to do so at all. God's concession to human weakness is a constant theme in His dealings with man. But we are not to presume upon it, and if we love God we will seek to rise up higher levels rather than having a spirit of minimalism in our relationship with Him.

You must not boil a young goat in its mother's milk-
This was likely a pagan ritual which Israel weren't to follow. It may also be that God's sensitivity to the feelings of animals is coming out here; and He wishes us to live lives regulated by sensitivity to all of creation. See on Dt. 20:19. The laws in the "Book of the Covenant" abruptly end with this, as if it summed up the spirit of all the others (Ex. 23:19; 34:26). Kid goats were thought to be most tasty when boiled in their mother's milk. It seems that God considered this narcissistic and absolutely over indulgent, and

without thought to the feelings of the mother goat; even though goats (rather than sheep) are at times a symbol of sinners and the unclean. The Mosaic law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness and extreme sensitivity to all, even animals. Read like this, it is similar to the prohibitions of killing on the same a cow and a calf, or a ewe and her lamb (Lev. 22:28). It is likely that this was also related to a paganic fertility ritual, performed at harvest time (which is the immediate context of the prohibition); and God didn't want His people to even remotely be associated with that. For He alone was the source of all fertility.

Deu 14:22 You must surely tithe all the increase of your seed which comes forth from the field year by year-
The Levites had their own land on which to grow crops, and the seed was to come from these tithes. It was Israel's refusal to support the Levites which left them without teachers of God's law, and resulted in the Levites having no time to study that law.

Deu 14:23 You shall eat before Yahweh your God, in the place which He shall choose to cause His name to dwell there, the tithe of your grain, of your new wine and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock, that you may learn to respect Yahweh your God always-
LXX "the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to have his name called there", that is, the place which Yahweh chose as the place where men would call upon His Name in worship. And again we note that the commandments were not random tests of obedience; the process of taking time out of life to go that place and eat the tithes there, presumably as part of a peace offering, was "that you may learn". God's law is not a chain, a burdensome leash restraining human behaviour; but rather inculcates a self reinforcing upward spiral of spirituality and closeness to Him.

Deu 14:24 If the way is too long for you, so that when Yahweh your God shall bless you, you are not able to carry it because the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to set His name there is too far from you-
The blessing which would result in their being too far from the sanctuary is defined in Dt. 12:20 as being "When Yahweh your God enlarges your border". We never read of the land being enlarged, indeed their territory was progressively "cut short" (2 Kings 10:32) after Solomon's time and frequently in the time of the Judges, immediately after their entry into the land. There was never any signal from God that He had now enlarged the land and therefore this change of the law was allowed. If Israel had been obedient, then “the Lord your God shall enlarge thy border” (Dt. 12:20). Thus “blessed be He that enlarges Gad” (Dt. 33:20). Who knows the height and depth, length and breadth of what could have been for God’s people? And the same is true for us today. According to Israel’s perception of the land, so it was defined for them.

Deu 14:25 then you must turn it into money and take the money in your hand and go to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose-
The law given in Dt. 12:20-22 about what was to happen when the land was enlarged doesn't feature this provision. We note that the law of Moses was flexible and open to change. That it should later be abrogated is therefore no surprise. The argument that each Mosaic law was eternal is therefore lacking in careful attention to the text of the law itself.

Deu 14:26 and you may spend the money on whatever your soul desires, cattle or sheep, wine or strong drink, or whatever your soul asks of you, and you may eat there before Yahweh your God, and rejoice, you and your household-
There was to be joy in giving to God rather than any sense of resentment; and the families ("your household") were to have this explained to them so that even the children learnt to rejoice in giving rather than being selfish. Again we see God's emphasis on the need for giving to be done cheerfully; He simply *loves* cheerful giving (2 Cor. 9:7).

Deu 14:27 The Levite who is within your gates you must not forsake, for he has no portion or inheritance with you-
God's ideal was that the Levites would live from the tithes given by Israel (Dt. 14:27); but He foresaw that this ideal level wouldn't be reached by them, therefore the Levites were given land on which to grow their own crops for survival. However, it must be noted that by opting to make use of God's concessions to human weakness, real spirituality became harder to achieve. Thus it was harder to accept Yahweh as King if they had a human king demanding their allegiance.

Deu 14:28 At the end of every three years you must bring forth all the tithe of your increase in the same year and store it within your gates-
There were three separate tithes commanded under the Law of Moses. Yet the tithing churches have simply said: 'There's something about tithing in the Old Testament. So, hey, give us 10% of your money!'. The first was the Levitical tithe of 10% on 100% of the produce for the first six years and was destined for the Levites and priests (see too Dt. 12:19). The second tithe was the Festival tithe of 10% on the 90% remaining produce after the Levitical tithe. This tithe had to be eaten in the presence of the Lord and was collected on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th years only. The third tithe was the tithe of the poor to be collected on the 3rd and 6th years only (Dt. 14:22-29; 26:12-15; Am. 4:4-5). No tithe was collected on the 7th year or Sabbatical year. The farmers were to let the land rest in that year. The tithe consisted of fruit, grain, wine and later animals that are treated as

produce from the land. It never consisted of money. Tithes were conducted annually and were based upon one's produce increase for the year. This just isn't talking about putting paper money or cheques on an offering plate each week as demanded by the tithing churches.

Deu 14:29 and the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the foreigner living among you and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates, shall come and shall eat and be satisfied, that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do-
The early church began by having all things common, in imitation of how the priests had "like portions to eat" (Dt. 18:8). Notice the stress on the equality of the priests and the studied irrelevance of their personal wealth (1 Chron. 24:31; 25:8; 26:12). The Law was geared around the assumption that the priests would be so caught up in Yahweh's work that they would never be rich (consider Dt. 14:29), and the wonder of doing His work would compensate for their lack of physical possessions (Num. 18:23). Yet the early church couldn't sustain the intensity of their initial realization of these things.

We came into this world with nothing and can carry nothing out. In Isaiah's image we are as ragged prisoners in dark cells awaiting death, but set free by the light of the Gospel. We are all, in a sense, 'fatherless' and 'widows'. This is why Israel were given specific instruction to take care of such (Dt. 14:29) for in so doing they were to recognize their own needs. Realizing this, knowing it deep within the fiber of our beings, we ought to be able to respond with the simple abandonment and "uncomplicated totality" of the desperate.

Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 15

Deu 15:1 At the end of every seven years you must make a release-
Lk. 6:35 has the year of release in mind, in the idea of lending without expecting anything back. The end of a 'seven' period suggests the end of the creation week. We are to live in the spirit of the Kingdom now, in our attitudes to others.

Deu 15:2 This is the method of the release: every creditor shall release that which he

has lent to his neighbour. He must not demand it of his neighbour and his brother because Yahweh's release has been proclaimed-
The Hebrew for "proclaimed" means 'to call out, to announce', and the idea of proclaiming release / forgiveness [s.w.] of legitimate debt is the idea alluded to in the great commission- we are to call out, to announce to the world, the radical forgiveness of debt.

The final release was in the death of Christ releasing us from all our sins, which are likened to debts in the New Testament. We are therefore not to "demand" recompense for sin from others because of the great release proclaimed. Jesus foresaw the difficulty of doing this, and urges us to pray constantly that we forgive or release our debtors (Mt. 6:12). The year of release was proclaimed on the day of atonement, in the same way as the cross has initiated a time of release from sin. The idea of 'proclaiming' this release or forgiveness is behind the language Luke uses to record the great commission, to proclaim this wonderful news to absolutely everybody- that their debt is cancelled.

Because God released, men were to release. God's release / forgiveness and ours are related. We are to forgive because He forgives, and there seems a suggestion in Mt. 16:19; 18:18 that what we bind and unloose is somehow confirmed by God in Heaven- our forgiveness or lack thereof becomes His. The very fact that *Yahweh* has released others means that we likewise ought to live in a spirit of releasing others from their debts to us: "The creditor shall release that which he hath lent... *because* the Lord's release hath been proclaimed" (Dt. 15:2 RV).

"Demand" or AV "exact" is s.w. to be a taskmaster, used of the Egyptians treating Israel like this (Ex. 3:7; 5:6,10,13,14). Unforgiveness and even demanding of others what we legitimately could, is effectively treating God's people as the Egyptians did. Our experience of deliverance from Egypt should mean that we will never likewise afflict others, but show them the same deliverance by grace which we experienced. The word is more usually translated "oppressor". For a creditor to demand repayment hardly seems like 'oppression', but God's view of our debt to Him, and the depth of His release of us, is such that He considers we have no right to demand back *any* debt. Indeed, to do so is seen by Him as oppression and abuse. In secular life, this seems a foolish and weak position; only those who have personally felt the depth of their own debt to God and gracious release will be motivated to release others. The sense of true release from debt should be so great to us that we simply would never think of demanding back debt from others, in whatever form. The Lord taught the same in the parable of the two debtors; the forgiven man failed to dwell upon the wonder of His release, and therefore demanding debts back from his brother.

The outlook of those who felt their salvation (the penny) was less by grace than the others became bitter: "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Mt. 20:15). In saying this,

the Lord was referring back to Dt. 15:9, which warned Israel not to have an evil eye towards their poverty stricken brother (cp. the unwanted labourer) who asked for a loan near the time of the year of release, when all debts were cancelled. In the year of release, Israel were "to remit every private debt... and not *demand* it of thy brother" (Dt. 15:2 LXX). This is behind Mt. 18:28, where Christ speaks of the man who demands repayment from his brother. The Lord is implying: You should live in the spirit of the year of release all the time, giving without expecting.

Deu 15:3 Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother you must release-
It is perhaps not the foreigner who lived with Israel who is in view, but the foreigner to whom Israel would lend if they were blessed for obedience (:6; Dt. 28:12). Just as God assumed He would enlarge their territory in line with their hoped for obedience (Dt. 14:24), so He legislated in hope that they would be obedient and be accordingly blessed. But His positive attitude was one of hope, for every indication was that this idol-carrying community would not be obedient. We see here therefore His positive spirit in hoping for their obedience and blessing. And to this day, He seeks to save and bless. This Divine hope that He would bless His people for their obedience is continued in :4.

Deu 15:4 However there shall be no poor among you, for Yahweh will surely bless you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it-
See on :3. Moses knew that there would always be poor people in the land, even though if the Law was properly kept this would not be the case (:4,11). Having reminded them that if they were obedient, “there shall be no poor among you; for Yahweh will surely bless you”, Moses goes on to comment that “the poor will never cease out of the land”- and he gives the legislation cognizant of this (:4,11). Moses realized by the time of Deuteronomy that they wouldn’t make it to the blessings which were potentially possible. And yet he speaks so positively of how they would inherit the Kingdom. God recognizes that His people won’t totally make it spiritually nor receive all the blessings they could, and yet this doesn’t mean they won’t be saved. This is a comfort for us in our spiritual incompleteness; and it also means that we shouldn’t expect the community of God’s people to be perfect. Even God doesn’t expect that, and the very structure of His own law foresaw that.

"Save when there shall be no poor..." (AV) could be interpreted as meaning that Israelites could press for the restoration of debts when and if there were no poor within Israel. The implication could also be that by demanding the return of debts, the poor were driven into deeper poverty.

The spirit of not demanding debts and writing them off every seven years would not lead to poverty. And that is why people demand the return of debts- they fear they will become poor otherwise. Here we have a totally counter-instinctive command- to not demand debts to be repaid because there should be no fear of poverty amongst those who are the blessed of the Lord. We may lose the extra we lent- but not descend into poverty. That assurance should be enough.

Deu 15:5 if only you diligently listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe to do all this commandment which I command you this day-
The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 15:6 For Yahweh your God will bless you, as He promised you, and you will lend to many nations but you shall not borrow; and you will rule over many nations but they shall not rule over you-
We see God's utter grace in that this blessing has often come true of Israel, despite their

*dis*obedience. For Israel would lend to others only if they were blessed for obedience (Dt. 28:12). We see here the Divine eagerness for blessing upon His people, and His earnest hope for their loyalty to Him- although every evidence was that they were disloyal, as they still had with them the idols of Egypt.

Deu 15:7 If a poor man, one of your brothers, is with you within any of your gates in your land which Yahweh your God gives you, you must not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother-
Verse 4 has just predicted that if Israel were obedient, there would be no poor person. But as so often in Deuteronomy, there is the realistic acceptance that Israel will not be obedient, and an appropriate mechanism from God in dealing with even that situation. The context suggests therefore that the poor man was poor because of poor decisions and disobedience to God's word- but still there was to be generosity to him, without arguing that his poverty was his own fault. For we have all been saved by utter grace from the eternal consequence of our sins, and each sin was avoidable...

Deu 15:8 but you must surely open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, that which he lacks-
The same word is in Ps. 34:9 "there is no *want* to them that fear the Lord". Again, the point is that his need was perhaps due to his own poor behaviour. The same word is used in Proverbs to describe the need or want that comes to the lazy and unspiritual (Prov. 14:23; 21:5; 24:34). But still that need is to be responded to, as Proverbs also makes clear- the needy are to be helped. "He that gives to the poor [s.w.] shall not lack" (Prov. 28:27). That Proverb would appear a comment upon Dt. 15:8-10.

Deu 15:9 Beware that there is not a wicked thought in your heart saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand, and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing and he cries to Yahweh against you, it is sin to you-
Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our

very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

The Hebrew for 'thought' really means 'word'- the idea is to ensure that you don't have a self-talk that says... that because the year of release was coming up soon, therefore you would not lend your brother anything, knowing that you had to forgive him the debt in the year of release. Here we have the OT equivalent of the New Testament 'devil'. We *can* control our self-talk, but we must be aware that it takes place. Moses is basically saying: 'Beware of your own self talk; see how you speak to yourself in unfinished sentences like "The year of release is at hand...", resulting in you 'finishing the sentence' by unkind deeds'.

The Biblical record seems to very frequently seek to deconstruct popular ideas about sin and evil. One of the most widespread notions was the "evil eye", whereby it was believed that some people had an "evil eye" which could bring distress into the eyes of those upon whom they looked in jealousy or anger. This concept is alive and well in many areas to this day. The idea entered Judaism very strongly after the Babylonian captivity; the Babylonian Talmud is full of references to it. The sage Rav attributed many illnesses to the evil eye, and the Talmud even claimed that 99 out of 100 people died prematurely from this (Bava Metzia 107b). The Biblical deconstruction of this is through stressing that *God's* eye is all powerful in the destiny of His people (Dt. 11:12; Ps. 33:18); and that "an evil eye" refers to an *internal* attitude of mean spiritedness *within* people- e.g. an "evil eye" is understood as an ungenerous spirit in Dt. 15:9; Mt. 6:23; 20:15; or pure selfishness in Dt. 28:54,56; Prov. 23:6; 28:22. We must remember that the people of Biblical times understood an "evil eye" as an *external* ability to look at someone and bring curses upon them. But the Bible redefines an "evil eye" as a purely *internal* attitude; and cosmic evil, even if it were to exist, need hold no fear for us- seeing the eyes of the only true God are running around the earth *for* us and not against us (2 Chron. 16:9).

Speaking in the context of serving *either* God *or* mammon, the Lord uttered some difficult words: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... the light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness... how great is that darkness!" (Mt. 6:19-22). All this is in the context of not being materialistic. The Lord is drawing on the OT usage of "an evil eye"- and consistently, this idiom means someone who is selfishly materialistic (Prov. 22:9; 23:7; 28:22; Dt. 15:9). The NIV renders some of these idioms as "stingy" or "mean". A single eye refers to a generous spirit (1 Chron. 29:17 LXX), and a related Greek word occurs in 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13 with the sense of "generous". So surely

the Lord is saying that our attitude to wealth controls our whole spirituality. Whether we have a mean or generous spirit will affect our whole life- an evil [stingy] eye means our whole body is full of darkness. Just let this sink in. If we are materialistic, our whole life will be filled with darkness, whatever our external pretensions may be, and there is a definite link to be made here with the " darkness" of rejection.

To not lend to one's poor brother will be counted to us as sin; a classic example of a sin of omission.

Deu 15:10 You must surely give to him, and your heart must not be grieved when you give to him, because for this Yahweh your God will bless you in all your work-
The Hebrew for "be grieved" is usually translated 'evil'. To feel mean towards helping someone who is in a fault of their own making [according to the rest of Old Covenant teaching about 'need' and 'poverty'] is a great evil, but we will only perceive that if we perceive our own poverty before God and His grace toward us- see :15.

And in all that you put your hand to-
Note the connection with the usage of 'hand' in :8. If you open your hand wide, then whatever you put your hand to will be blessed. There is here the implication of an upward spiral- if we open our hand to others, in not demanding of them that which we could and being generous to the need [not only financial] of our poor brother, then the work of our hand will be blessed yet more.

Deu 15:11 For the poor will never cease out of the land, therefore I command you, saying, You must surely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and to your poor, in your land-
They are "your" poor and "your" needy. Their issues and needs are *yours*. There's amazing psychological penetration here into the thought processes we have when we encounter need and poverty, in whatever sense. We so easily assume that firstly, it is 'their fault', and secondly, that someone else will respond- perhaps God directly. But the needs and poverty are *ours*. These two reasons are likely the most common reasons for our lack of response to others' need.

Dt. 15:7 foresaw that when confronted by the poor, there would be a tendency to "harden your heart and close your hand to your poor brother"; there was no mechanism suggested for determining his genuineness, but rather a command to respond. Indeed Israel were warned not to have "a thought in your wicked heart" and devise how not to be generous to the poor (Dt. 15:9); they were to "open your hand wide" to the poor who approached them (Dt. 15:11). Lest we think this was merely for Old Testament times- these verses are applied to us, by way of allusion, in 1 Jn. 3:17: "But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and *closes his heart* against him, how

does the love of God abide in him?". In Hebrew thought, "the hand" referred to power and ability. No matter how materially poor, we each have a "hand"- even if it's not a financial one. And we are to "open" it- the Hebrew word carrying the idea of unloosing, as in untying a sack. It's as if we're all tied and twisted up inside ourselves, and it's this which stops us responding. The most extrovert of persons is like this too- for to reach out to assist another's poverty involves our opening of ourselves and releasing the potential to help which we've each been given. And that is totally independent of our personality type. We are all Christ's servants, and we've each been given talents to trade. It's one of capitalism's worst myths that if you have no money, you're no use to anyone.

Deu 15:12 If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you must let him go free from you-
The language of letting the servant go free, sending him away, but not letting him go empty but giving him of your good things- is all the language of the Egyptians sending the Israelites out of Egypt, but not "empty". And this is made explicit in :15. We are to treat others as we were treated by God when He redeemed us from Egypt. There are times and contexts in which we are effectively Egypt to others, having power over them- the power to forgive, for example.

Slaves could be bought out of slavery by others or by themselves somehow raising the required amount. Often they went into slavery in order to pay a debt. But six years was the maximum they could serve- that was enough to pay any debt. They could not be then forced to still pay some debt. This total freedom from debt may look forward to the intended "rest" of the Kingdom at the end of the 6 days / 6000 years of Biblical human history.

These commands repeat those of Ex. 21:2-8, which were the *mishpat* with which the law of Moses opened. The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 15:13 When you let him go free from you, you must not let him go empty-
The same word for "empty-handed" is used of how Israel didn't leave slavery in Egypt empty-handed (Ex. 3:21); and of how Jacob likewise did not return to his land from his slavery "empty-handed" but wealthy (Gen. 31:42). Constantly they were bidden see how they were being dealt with as their God had previously treated their fathers. And they were to remember this by not sending any slave away from them "empty-handed". Always they were to live life under the deep impression of how they had been redeemed themselves, and were to reflect that grace to others in every context and situation of their lives. And the new Israel likewise.

Deu 15:14 You must furnish him generously out of your flock, out of your threshing floor and out of your winepress; as Yahweh your God has blessed you, you shall give to him-
As noted on :13, this abundant provision was to reflect the huge wealth they had on leaving Israel, laden down with jewels.

Deu 15:15 You must remember that you were a bondservant in the land of Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you, therefore I command you this today-
Moses' frequent references in Deuteronomy to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt shows his concern that they were slipping back to Egypt / the world in their hearts (Dt. 13:5; 15:15; 16:12); as our Lord in his time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which he was redeeming us from this present evil world. See on :13.

One of the most repeated themes of Moses in Deuteronomy is the way he keeps on telling them to "remember" all the great things which God had done for them on their wilderness journey, and especially the wonder of how He had redeemed them as children (his audience had been under twenty years old when they went through the Red Sea). Moses really wanted them to overcome the human tendency to forget the greatness of God as manifested earlier in our lives and spiritual experience. Our tendency as the new Israel is just the same- to forget the wonder of baptism, of how God reached out His arm to save us.

Deu 15:16 If he tells you I will not go out from you because he loves you and your house, because he is well with you-
Ex. 21:5 says: "But if the servant shall plainly say, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children. I will not go out free'". The servant could retain his wife and children if he devoted himself to his master's house for the rest of his life. The situation was set up in order to make the servant pay a price for his wife and children. He made a free choice to marry whilst a servant; and he was to make that choice aware of the huge long term price he was going to have to pay for it. That was in order to help him understand the

long term commitment required from a man in marrying and having children. It was a resignation of his personal freedom (Ex. 21:5), and the man had to knowingly make that choice. We can deduce that the marriage was completely his choice; if it were forced upon him by the master, then this would be the kind of personal manipulation and robbing of personal freedom which the law of Moses outlaws. And that is the take away lesson from this- all the more relevant in our age of casual relationships, married men refusing to resign personal freedom and fathering of children without taking personal responsibility.

The Lord's crucifixion was likened to His ear (His hearing of the master's word) being nailed to an upright piece of wood (cp. the cross; Ex. 21:6 = Ps. 40:6-8 = Heb. 10:5-12). That was the sign of His total dedication to the house of Yahweh, but it was motivated by His love for us, and commitment to entering an eternal relationship with us His family. His relationship with us is described as "I and the children whom God has given me" (Heb. 2:13). This would allude to this situation, where the servant was 'given' a wife and thence children by the master, God (Ex. 21:4). The children were given to Him by God, the master, because He plainly declared His love for us, His wife and children. And that plain declaration was surely on the cross.

Deu 15:17 then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise-
The servant was saying that he was now permanently attached to the household, symbolized by his ear being physically attached to it. The ear was chosen because this was a symbol of obedience to the master's word. R.E. Clements notes that this alludes to the ancient pagan practice whereby "a household god would have been kept by the threshold of a house to guard it" (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 133). Moses is attacking this idea- by saying that God, Israel's God, is the One there- and not the household gods which those around Israel believed were there. See on Ex. 12:7.

This custom is alluded to in Ps. 40:6, and applied to Christ in Heb. 10:5-10. For love of us, the wife whom He was given by God His “master” (:16), Christ chose to stay in the Father’s house for ever. The nailing of the ear to a piece of wood is understood in Hebrews 10 as prophetic of Christ’s nailing to the cross. The ear represented obedient listening to the Master’s word. Christ on the cross was ultimately obedient to God’s word- for our sakes. That we are seen as His wife should inspire us to the utmost faithfulness and support of His cause in this world.

The question is whether this apparently lifelong commitment was undone by the provisions for the release of slaves at the year of Jubilee. The nature of the language used here would suggest that the freedom of the year of Jubilee didn't apply in this case.

So we again see how the law of Moses, like any legal code, had internal contradictions, and times when one law must take precedence over another. These features of the law of Moses were in order to elicit thoughtful obedience to it, rather than blind obedience of a perfectly consistent legal code. For the law was to inculcate thoughtful relationships, both with God and man.

Deu 15:18 It must not seem hard to you-
We continually notice the extreme attention paid by God to mental attitudes. No other legal code has ever featured anything like this. It is a reflection of the degree to which God judges the heart, and mental attitudes are supremely important to Him.

When you let him go free from you, for he was worth double the hire of a hireling; he has served you six years; and Yahweh your God will bless you in all that you do-
The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the scapegoat into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins- all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

Deu 15:19 All the firstborn males that are born of your herd and of your flock you must sanctify to Yahweh your God; you must do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock-
It was God's initial intention that all the firstborn males should be sanctified to His service, from whatever tribe (Ex. 13:2). But this plan didn't work, and so He called one tribe (Levi) to be His sanctified priests. And they also didn't really do their ministry, and so under the new covenant, all are priests. But the command to still give the firstborn of their animals was a reminder of God's ideal intentions. Ex. 13:2 also implied that the sacrificial animals would be provided by the firstborn of every animal. But this plan also didn't work.

Deu 15:20 You must eat it before Yahweh your God year by year in the place which Yahweh shall choose, you and your household-
The idea was that every family in Israel came up at least once per year to the sanctuary. The firstborn animals were to be kept and then brought up to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was intended to be a point of national focus, and this reflects God's great interest in unity amongst His people. But God never stated that He had chosen a place in Israel, at least not [arguably] until the time of David. Israel were simply not responsive

enough to enable all His intended plans to come about, and therefore so much of the law was not possible of complete fulfilment as intended.

Deu 15:21 If it has any blemish, is lame or blind or has any defect whatever, you must not sacrifice it to Yahweh your God-
A person who feels they are somehow a nice guy and worthy of invitation will be the one who tends to consider others as unworthy of invitation to the Kingdom. He or she who perceives their own desperation will eagerly invite even those they consider to be in the very pits of human society. The lame, blind etc. were not allowed to serve God under the law (Lev. 21:18), nor be offered as sacrifices (Dt. 15:21), nor come within the holy city (2 Sam. 5:6-8). The Lord purposefully healed multitudes of lame and blind (Mt. 15:30), and allowed them to come to Him in the temple (Mt. 21:14). His acted out message was clearly that those who were despised as unfit for God's service were now being welcomed by Him into that service. The lame and blind were despised because they couldn't work. They had to rely on the grace of others. Here again is a crucial teaching: those called are those who can't do the works, but depend upon grace.

Deu 15:22 You must eat it within your gates. The unclean and the clean shall eat it alike, as the gazelle and as the hart-
They were allowed to kill animals for food for their own use, and being ritually unclean was no barrier to eating such meat. The gazelle and hart, GNB "deer or antelope", were given as examples of clean animals which could be eaten, perhaps clarifying the question of whether they could eat animals killed in hunting, who died from arrows at a distance from the hunter, and whose blood could only be poured out some time after killing them.

Deu 15:23 Only you must not eat its blood. You must pour it out on the ground as water-
The blood was understood as representing life (:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 16

Deu 16:1 Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to Yahweh your God, for in the month of Abib Yahweh your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night-
Israel both kept Passover and went through the Red Sea at night. Indeed, it is stressed six times in Ex. 12 that it was "night", and hence Dt. 16:1 reminds them to carefully keep the Passover (i.e. at night), "for... your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night". Other

latter day prophecies speak of the events of the second coming being at "night": Lot left Sodom in the very early hours of the morning; and it was "at midnight (that) there was a cry made" informing the virgins of their Lord's return (Mt. 25:6).

Deu 16:2 You must sacrifice the Passover to Yahweh your God from the flock and the herd, in the place which Yahweh shall choose to cause His name to dwell there-
This seems to imply that now, in the 'second law' Moses was giving in Deuteronomy, the Passover sacrifice didn't necessarily have to be a lamb, and it could be boiled not just roasted (:7). See on Dt. 20:14. So eager is God for our fellowship that He is prepared to make concessions to our human situations; and we should have that spirit in dealing with others.

The softness of Moses, the earnestness of his desire for their obedience, his eagerness to work with them in their humanity, is shown by the concessions to human weakness which he makes in Deuteronomy (with God's confirmation, of course). When they attacked a foreign city, OK, Moses says, you can take the women for yourselves- even though this is contrary to the spirit of earlier commands (Dt. 20:14; 21:11). Likewise with the provisions for having a human king (Dt. 17:17) and divorce (Dt. 24:1-4). He knew the hardness of Israel's hearts, their likelihood to give way to temptation, and so he made concessions contrary to the principles behind other parts of the Law (Mt. 19:8). And Dt. 16:2 seems to imply that now, the Passover sacrifice didn't necessarily have to be a lamb, it could be any animal from the flock or herd, and it could be boiled not just roasted (see on :7).

Deu 16:3 You must eat no leavened bread with it. You must eat unleavened bread with it seven days, the bread of affliction, for you came forth out of the land of Egypt in haste, that you may remember the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life-
"Therefore let us keep the feast (the breaking of bread, the new Passover), not with old leaven... of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8). This is echoing Moses' command to keep the Passover feast without leaven (Ex. 12:15; Dt. 16:3). Paul saw himself as Moses in trying to save a generally unresponsive and ungrateful Israel.

Similarly in Dt. 16:3 the unleavened bread is called the " bread of affliction", whilst in 1 Cor. 5:8 it is called the "unleavened bread of sincerity and Truth", as if being sincere and true and not having malice and bitterness in our hearts is a result of much mental affliction and exercising of the mind.

Passover was intended as a personal looking back to their beginnings, both as a nation and individually . It was to remind them of the day they came out of Egypt, all their lives

(Dt. 16:3). This was written in the 40th year of their wanderings, as they were about to enter Canaan. Those who had literally come out of Egypt were largely dead; this verse is a general command to Jews of all generations. So God wanted them to see that in a sense they personally came out of Egypt at that time, even though they were not then born. So with us, while we were yet sinners, before we were born, Christ died for us. On the cross all God's people were as it were taken out of Egypt, in prospect delivered from sin.

Deu 16:4 No yeast shall be seen with you in all your borders seven days, neither shall any of the flesh, which you sacrifice the first day at evening, remain all night until the morning-

Our open approach to table fellowship doesn't mean we can't tell right from wrong. Light has no fellowship with darkness. However, our responsibility for working this out in practice is very personal. Each individual Israelite had to ensure that there was no leaven in his or her immediate area on Passover night. "Your borders" is 'you' singular. The Israelite could only be responsible for their local area / home. We must not slip into a mindset which is endlessly concerned with the supposed weaknesses of others next door.

Deu 16:5 You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which Yahweh your God gives you-

The first Passover was kept in their homes; but the commandments given about the first Passover were not applicable to the Passover generally. For now it is solemnly stressed that the Passover is not to be kept in homes as it was the first time it was kept, but only at the sanctuary (:6). Likewise the command to not eat the first Passover with Gentiles is often misused by "closed table" advocates; but they overlook the clear difference with the later Passover regulations, where Gentiles were welcome to eat it.

Deu 16:6 but at the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell in, there you must sacrifice the Passover at evening, at the going down of the sun, at the time that you came forth out of Egypt-

Although the first Passover differed in some ways from the later feast (see on :5), it was to be slain in the evening, as the first Passover lamb was (Ex. 12:6). But Israel left Egypt some hours later, at night. But here the slaying of the sacrifice and Israel's 'going forth' from Egypt are equated. And this looks ahead to the effect of the death of the Lord Jesus as the Passover lamb. We thereby were freed from Egypt, and should in response to His sacrifice move on out of this world, which is represented by Egypt .

Deu 16:7 You must roast and eat it in the place which Yahweh your God shall choose; and you shall turn in the morning and go to your tents-

See on :2. Israel were told specifically that the Passover lamb must be roasted and not boiled (Ex. 12:9 uses two distinct words for 'boiled' and 'roasted'.). But the word used in Ex. 12:9 for "boiled" is that used in Dt. 16:7 of how the Passover could be boiled, although many Bible versions misleadingly translate the word there as "roast". The translators need not have feared such contradiction. For it is the contradiction of grace. Moses in Dt. 16:2,7 was allowing a less strict observation of the Passover than originally intended, typical of the way Deuteronomy, 'the second law', seems to make concessions to Israel's weaknesses. Or it could be that here we have another example of where the Passover regulations given in Exodus were specific only to that time at the exodus. Thus a foreigner was not allowed to eat of that sacrifice, but foreigners were welcome to eat of the Passover later.

At the first Passover, which they were re-living, they left Egypt at night and in the morning went into the promised land. They were to imagine their homes as in a sense the promised land; there the principles of the Kingdom were to be upheld so that the home became a small imitation of the Kingdom. That principle applies to us too.

Ex. 12:10 implies they spent the whole night eating the meal as zealously as possible, because the aim was not to have any left by the morning. So we must make the maximum possible use of the spiritual help and forgiveness given in Christ, before the morning of His coming is here and it is too late to gain help. Dt. 16:7 also indicates the whole night was spent eating: " Thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the lord shall chose; and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents" . On this first occasion, they literally left Egypt that same night. The sense of urgency and intensity is hard to miss, yet so difficult to replicate in our own experience.

Deu 16:8 For six days you must eat unleavened bread. On the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to Yahweh your God; you shall do no work-
The leaven or yeast in our context is to be understood as the leaven of malice and wickedness (1 Cor. 5:8). The search for leaven at the time of the Passover would therefore look ahead to our self examination at the breaking of bread. The equivalent legislation in Ex. 12:15,16; 13:7,8 stresses that they were to have no leaven in their homes. But now in the maturity of Deuteronomy, Moses stresses "you shall do no work". To be technically obedient to regulations about yeast was easier than to learn the lesson of salvation by grace rather than works.

"Solemn assembly" is LXX *ekklesia*. This is the word rendered "church" in the New Testament. We could reason from this therefore that "church" specifically refers to a gathering of God's people. At that time and during those moments, they are a church. When the entire community of believers is referred to as "church", this is how God views them- as if they are all gathered together at a gathering or convocation before Him. The word in its Biblical usage therefore doesn't refer to what we might call a denomination or fellowship.

Deu 16:9 You must count for yourselves seven weeks: from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain you shall begin to number seven weeks-
These are the 50 days of Lev. 23:16, which led to the Greek term "Pentecost". The putting of the sickle to the barley harvest was therefore at Passover (Ex. 9:31). The wheat harvest was seven weeks after this. The Lord's death at Passover was as the barley harvest, and we recall that barley was the food of the poor. He died on 13 / 14 Nissan, and resurrected on 16/17 Nissan, which was when the 50 days to Pentecost began to be counted from; for that was the time when the sickle was put to the grain and the firstfruits harvested (Lev. 23:15). But at the feast of Pentecost 50 days later, there were the baptisms of 3000 people. This was as it were the wheat harvest, of which the Lord's resurrection was a foretaste and firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20,23). That great multitude represented all who would afterwards believe, and be finally harvested at the last day.

Deu 16:10 You must keep the feast of weeks to Yahweh your God with a tribute of a freewill offering, which you shall give according as Yahweh your God blesses you-
The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Deu 16:11 You shall rejoice before Yahweh your God, you, your son, your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates and the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, who are among you, in the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there-
The idea was that every family in Israel came up at least once per year to the sanctuary. The firstborn animals were to be kept and then brought up to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was intended to be a point of national focus, and this reflects God's great interest in unity amongst His people. But God never stated that He had chosen a place in Israel, at least not [arguably] until the time of David. Israel were simply not responsive enough to enable all His intended plans to come about, and therefore so much of the law was not possible of complete fulfilment as intended.

Deu 16:12 You must remember that you were a bondservant in Egypt, and you shall

observe and do these statutes-
Moses' frequent references in Deuteronomy to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt shows his concern that they were slipping back to Egypt / the world in their hearts (Dt. 13:5; 15:15; 16:12); as our Lord in his time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which he was redeeming us from this present evil world. We too are to ever remember our status before baptism, which was our equivalent to the Red Sea crossing.

Deu 16:13 You must keep the feast of tents seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and from your winepress-
There are connections between the various sections of Revelation and the Jewish feasts. Here's a summary:

Revelation 5 Passover Rev. 5:6,9 = Ex. 12:13

Revelation 7 Tabernacles Rev. 7:9,15,16 RV = Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Zech. 14:16-20

Revelation 8,9 Day Of Atonement Lev. 16:31; more detailed links in Harry Whittaker, *Revelation: A Biblical Approach* pp. 104,105.

Revelation 11 Dedication & Purim The Torah readings for these feasts were Num. 7 and Zech. 2- 4 about the dedication of the temple; Rev. 11:10 = Esther 9:19,22. The period from Tabernacles to Purim is exactly 5 months- as mentioned in Rev. 9:5

Revelation 12 Pentecost & Passover The Jews traditionally ask: "On this Sabbath, shall I reap?"

Revelation 14 Tabernacles

Revelation 15 + 16 Atonement & Passover Lev. 16; Ps. 118 the Hallel Psalm

Revelation 19 Passover Ps. 113,114 Passover Psalms

Revelation 21,22 Tabernacles

Laying out the material chronologically, we have:
Chapter 5: Passover
6 months
Chapter 7: Tabernacles
Chapters 8 & 9: Atonement and Tabernacles

1 year
Chapter 11: Dedication 5 months (Rev 9:5)
Chapter 11: Purim
Chapter 12: Passover and Pentecost
Chapter 14: Tabernacles
1 year
Chapter 15: Atonement
Chapter 16 & 19: Passover
Chapter 21 & 22: Tabernacles
1 year
The conclusion would therefore be that we have in the book of Revelation a literal account of the three and a half years tribulation, with the Jewish feasts being the key marker points. And it would appear there will be an especial period of five months tribulation as described between Revelation chapters 9 and 11.

Deu 16:14 and you shall rejoice in your feast, you, your son and your daughter, your male servant, your female servant and the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates-
The feasts were intended as a time of fellowship between male and female, bond and free, and Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:27-29). They looked ahead to the spirit of the breaking of bread meeting. We note that the feasts were open to children and to the foreigner; there was an open table policy.

Deu 16:15 You must keep a feast to Yahweh your God seven days in the place which Yahweh shall choose. Because Yahweh your God will bless you in all your increase and in all the work of your hands, you shall be altogether joyful-
See on Ps. 90:3. Moses was this confident of them, that God would give them the blessings for obedience, just as Paul was confident of the obedience of the Corinthians despite it seeming humanly unlikely (2 Cor. 10:6). It's far easier to have a negative attitude about people than a positive one; but God's grace and imputing of righteousness to us personally should help us be positive about others.

Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is constantly thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up

to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. “The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands”, even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Moses sounds as if his prayer of Ps. 90:17 has been answered: "Let the grace of the Lord our God be upon us; establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands". God was willing to hearken to Moses as he prayed so, so earnestly, He was willing to change His expressed purpose in respect to destroying Israel (perhaps Ps. 90 is the transcript of this prayer- Ps. 90:3 in Hebrew asks God not to destroy the children of men, and to repent concerning His servants in:13-17). It should also be noted that Moses as a type of Christ was not the High Priest. He mediated for Israel on a voluntary basis; not because he was under any duty to offer up their prayers. Indeed, they didn't make any prayers for him to offer up. He pleaded with God for them on his own initiative, rather than being asked by them to do so. And this is the basis of Christ's mediation for us; he pleads for us even when we know not what to pray for, even when we don't realize the need to beseech the Father. Moses' mediation, not so much Aaron's offerings, are the prototype which the New Testament uses to explain the Lord's present work. In the Apocryphal Assumption of Moses (1:14), Moses is made to say of God: "He designed and devised me and he prepared me before the foundation of the world, that I should be the mediator". These words are alluded to in a number of NT passages. Clearly we are intended to see Moses' mediation as typical of the Lord's. His freewill mediation was the basis of Israel's salvation (Hos. 12:13). Likewise the intensity of his prayers and the supremacy of his willingness to sacrifice himself for them was tragically unknown to them at the time. It's almost sad that these things have to be typical of the Lord's preservation and redemption of us his thick-skinned and unknowing people.

Deu 16:16 Three times in a year must all your males appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, in the feast of weeks and in the feast of tents-

"Appear" translates a Hebrew word elsewhere translated approve, discern, gaze upon, take heed, look upon oneself, perceive, shew oneself. His very presence before the Lord would have this effect: he would be revealed openly to God, and he would see himself as he was. This was the intention; and yet Yahweh went on to warn them not to appear before Him “empty", vainly, ‘to no effect’. Behold the intense relevance to our appearing before the Lord at our Passover: we can *so easily* present ourselves there ‘to no effect’, when the intention is that we should be manifesting ourselves to ourselves and to God. The familiar order of service, the well known hymns, the presence of familiar and often

family faces…these factors (not wrong in themselves) all encourage us to 'appear' there to no effect.

They must not appear before Yahweh empty-
"Empty" may mean that they were to not attend without bringing a sacrifice, with empty hands. But "empty" is s.w. "without cause", "in vain". Attendance at the feasts was not to be mere ritual, appearing before Yahweh for no purpose. The meaning of the feasts was to be allowed to have the spiritual results intended. And this is a challenge to all whose Christian lives involve regular attendance at meetings. We can so easily slip into a rut of ritual observance, just going through motions "without cause".

Material giving to the Lord's cause was associated with the breaking of bread in the early church (Acts 2:42-46; 1 Cor. 16:1,2), after the pattern of how every male was not to appear empty before Yahweh (Heb. 'to appear for no cause') at the Jewish feasts (Dt. 16:16). We cannot celebrate His grace / giving to us without response.

Deu 16:17 every man shall give as he is able-
The Mosaic Law countered the idea that only the rich can be generous. They all had to tithe. And it's possible to argue that they had to give around 27%, not just 10% (10% to the Levites, 10% of the rest to support the feasts; and 10% of the rest for the poor). The purification after childbirth and the cleansing of the leper allowed a lower grade of offering to be made by the very poor- to underline that *no one* is exempted from giving to the Lord, no matter how poor they are. Consider the emphasis: "Every man shall give *as he is able*… he shall offer *even such as he is able to get*… then the disciples (consciously motivated by these principles?) *every man according to his ability*, determined to send relief… let *every one of you* lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (Dt. 16:17; Lev. 14:30,31; Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2). God reckons a man's generosity according to what he has; if there is the desire to give, a generous spirit, then this is seen as generosity. This is exemplified by the Lord's high estimation of the widow's giving. The amount was not as important as the spirit behind it. "The Lord blesseth a cheerful giver, and will supply the deficiency of his works" (Prov. 22:8 LXX; although not in the Hebrew text, this passage is quoted in the NT as inspired).

According to the blessing of Yahweh your God which He has given you-
Notice the past tense. Moses often speaks of the "blessing" which God would give them for obedience; but he here speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it. The blessings of the Kingdom were already obtained for us on the cross. It's for us to as it were claim them.

Despite being fully aware of how weak Israel were, Moses often speaks of the "blessing" which God would give them for obedience; he even speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it:

"Every man shall give as he is able (once he is settled in the land), according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he *hath* given thee" (Dt. 16:17). Moses speaks with confidence of how God would grant them the blessing of the land and victory over their enemies, even though these things were conditional upon their obedience (Dt. 19:1; 20:13), and even though Moses clearly knew that most of them would disobey. The conclusion from this is that Moses thought so much of that minority who would obey his covenant, who would grasp the spirit of his life and the speech he was now making. And our Lord likewise- in his feelings for us, we trust.

The Mosaic command to give, every man according to the blessing with which God had blessed him (Dt. 16:17), is purposely similar in phrasing to the command to eat of the Passover lamb, every man according to his need; and to partake of the manna (cp. the Lord Jesus), every man according to his need (Ex. 12:4; 16:6,16). According to the desperation of our need, so we partake of Christ; and in response, according to our blessing, we give, in response to the grace of His giving.

Deu 16:18 You shall make judges and officers in all your gates which Yahweh your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment-

This was specifically obeyed in 2 Chron. 19:7, because the previous system had been open to "respect of persons" and bribes. This was in distinction to how the judgment was done as in most primitive societies, by the heads of families. But that was bound to be open to "respect of persons" and bribes. Therefore nepotism was to e outlawed by the appointment of a judiciary.

Deu 16:19 You must not twist justice, you must not respect persons, neither must you take a bribe; for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society

of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 16:20 You must follow that which is altogether just-
Heb. "justice, justice". In the days before underlining or italic print, emphasis was achieved by repeating a word twice- e.g. "Justice, justice" (Dt. 16:20); "Comfort, comfort" (Is. 40:1). It has been pointed out that only one of the ten commandments is repeated twice: "You shall not covet". This sober emphasis upon not coveting was surely a reflection of how God perceived the huge danger of His people seeking to 'possess' things as theirs.

That you may live, and inherit the land which Yahweh your God gives you-
The Pharisees had the “key of knowledge” that enabled men to reach the Kingdom (Lk. 11:52); but they took it away from men, and thus stopped them entering (Mt. 23:13). Likewise if the elders / judges of Israel had been wise, the entire people would have entered the land.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess / inherit". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 16:21 You must not plant for yourselves an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of Yahweh your God, which you shall make for yourselves-
Moses adds a whole series of apparently 'minor' commands which were designed to make obedience easier to the others already given. Thus he tells them in Deuteronomy not to plant a grove of trees near the altar of God - because he knew this would provoke the possibility of mixing Yahweh worship with that of the surrounding world (Dt. 16:21). There was to be no possibility of worshipping idols in the name of Yahweh worship; there was not even to be the possibility of some subliminal suggestion of it arising from

having a grove of trees near an altar. Likewise he commands any future king not to send God's people to Egypt to buy horses because he could see that this would tempt them to go back to Egypt permanently (Dt. 17:16). There are many other example of this kind of thing (Dt. 14:24; 15:18; 17:17-19; 18:9; 20:7,8). The point is that Moses had thought long and hard about the ways in which Israel would be tempted to sin, and his words and innermost desire were devoted to helping them overcome. Glorious ditto for the Lord Jesus.

We note that Gideon's father had the Asherah grove by the altar (Jud. 16:25). This was studied disobedience to Dt. 16:21: "You must not plant for yourselves an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of Yahweh your God, which you shall make for yourselves". His repentance, apparently overnight, is therefore the more remarkable. We also see how Yahweh worship had become mixed with paganic worship. "The altar" in view was that of Yahweh, but it had become the altar of Baal because of the mixing of truth and error, of Yahweh and paganic worship. This worship of the flesh in the appearance of Yahweh worship is in fact our abiding temptation, as it was for Israel. They never abrogated Yahweh worship, but worshipped idols in the name of Yahweh worship. We, e.g., may gossip in the name of "truth" or "love"; purchase luxury items or property in the name of worshipping God or serving Him.

Deu 16:22 Neither shall you set yourself up a pillar, which Yahweh your God hates-
Again, there was not even to be the possibility of some subliminal suggestion toward idol worship. The setting up of pillars as memorials was done even by Jacob, but clearly there was a hint of idolatry in them, and now they were forbidden. We likewise need to avoid all subliminal suggestions toward sin from our lives.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 17

Deu 17:1 You must not sacrifice to Yahweh your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish or anything imperfect, for that is an abomination to Yahweh your God-
This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:7). The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David

frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Deu 17:2 If there is found in the midst of you, within any of your gates which Yahweh your God gives you, a man or woman who does that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh your God in transgressing His covenant-
Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 17:3 and has gone and served other gods and worshipped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the army of the sky, which I have not commanded-
Moses told Israel this when they had carried the star of Remphan and the tabernacle of Moloch through the wilderness, and had taken the idols of Egypt with them (Ez. 20:7,8). Joshua had to appeal to that generation to put away their idols. We see here how Moses was talking on one level, but the people were completely on another.

Deu 17:4 and it is told you and you have heard of it, then you must inquire diligently-
Reports of wrong doing cannot all, therefore, be shrugged off as gossip which we don't want to hear. That can be a lazy response. The far harder response is to do as asked here, to "inquire diligently" and establish facts.

Behold, if it is true and certain that such abomination is done in Israel-
Moses knew that such idolatry was ongoing in Israel as he spoke. But it is left an open question as to why he did nothing further than lament it at the end of Deuteronomy. Perhaps he reflected God's great enthusiasm for Israel at this time, for He did not behold iniquity in Jacob (Num. 23:21), and presents Himself in Jeremiah as having fallen totally in love with Israel in the wilderness, wishing not to see their unfaithfulness.

Deu 17:5 then you must bring forth that man or that woman who has done this evil thing to your gates, even the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death with stones-
The use of stoning (Dt. 13:10; 17:5; 21:21; 22:21,24) was to show their connection with the death of the apostate. It was to also make them realize that any attempt to deny the saving work of God in bringing them out of Egypt, or attempt to reverse it by returning them to bondage, was worthy of death (Dt. 13:10). We note that false teaching, enticing

others to sin, is seen as the most serious kind of sin. The New Testament teaching about church discipline takes a similar approach; moral weakness of individuals was tolerated, although criticized; but those teaching such behaviour were condemned. Stoning resulted in the covering of the body with the dust of the earth, as if recognizing that the death being brought about was also to be the fate of all under the curse in Eden.

Deu 17:6 At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he who is to die be put to death. At the mouth of one witness he must not be put to death-
Insisting on more than one witness before accepting the truth of an allegation meant that gossip and slander were limited; and Jesus applies this principle to dealing with disputes within His church (Mt. 18:16). Although His teaching about not condemning our brethren meant that He didn't advocate as it were 'putting to death', but rather stern rebuke and damage limitation. Those who served other gods had to die on the testimony of two or three witnesses. This idea is twice alluded to in the New Testament in the context of making the decision to cease fellowship with someone (Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). The implication is that death under the Old Covenant pointed forward to first century church discipline under the New Covenant. But we must note that the reason for this was serving other gods and wilful departing from covenant relationship with the Lord- not minor reasons.

Deu 17:7 The hand of the witnesses must be first on him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you-
There is stress upon close family members were to be the first to slay apostate members whose apostacy they had reported (Dt. 13:9; 17:7). They were being taught that they had to love God far more than family, and the Lord Jesus continued this teaching (Mt. 10:37).

Deu 17:8 If there arises a matter too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within your gates, then go up to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose-
Judging between "blood and blood" may refer to judging whether between murder and manslaughter. The sanctuary was intended to be a point of national focus, and this reflects God's great interest in unity amongst His people. But God never stated that He had chosen a place in Israel, at least not [arguably] until the time of David. Israel were simply not responsive enough to enable all His intended plans to come about, and therefore so much of the law was not possible of complete fulfilment as intended.

Deu 17:9 and come to the priests the Levites and to the judge who shall be in those days and ask. They shall show you the sentence of judgment-

David and Solomon appear to have concentrated all judgment in themselves, setting themselves up effectively as both king and priest, for the "judge" was to be a priest. Jehoshaphat reformed this by placing the power of judgment in the hands of a group of Levites, priests and heads of families as the higher court in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 19:5-8). But still Jehoshaphat didn't appoint a singular senior judge, as required in Dt. 17:9. We note from Dt. 19:17 that this singular priestly supreme judge is called "Yahweh", because he was to be Yahweh's supreme representative when it came to judgment. But it seems even the best kings of Judah preferred to keep that office in their own power.

Deu 17:10 You must do according to the sentence which they shall show you from that place which Yahweh shall choose, and you must observe to do according to all that they shall teach you-

LXX "And thou shalt act according to the thing which they shall report to thee out of the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, and thou shalt observe to do all whatsoever shall have been by law appointed to thee". The idea may be that their judgment was based upon God's law, but they would ask Him for wisdom as to how to interpret it, and they in turn would "report" that in making judgments. And yet it seems that the priesthood failed to be just judges, as the prophets very often lament the corrupt judiciary in the same context as complaining of a corrupt priesthood. They didn't judge according to God's revealed word, nor seek His guidance; but judged according to their own vested interests. Just as we can today.

Deu 17:11 according to the law which they shall teach you and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, that you shall do. You must not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you-

The system of judges proposed by Jethro didn't really work, because Moses again felt the burden was too great for him (see on Num. 11:11), and so the 70 Spirit filled elders were appointed (Num. 11:16). But this too didn't really work; because in Dt. 17:11; 21:5 we seem to read of the priests effectively being the judges, under the direct control of Moses and Aaron. The simple truth was that there was hardly a wise man amongst them.

To the right hand or to the left-

The wall of water on their right hand and left when they crossed the Red Sea is twice emphasized (Ex. 14:22,29). It is alluded to later, when they are urged to not depart from God's way, not to the right hand nor left (Dt. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14). We passed through the Red Sea when we were baptized (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were set upon a path which is

walled up to keep us within it. And we are to remain in that path upon which we were set. To turn aside from it would be as foolish as Israel turning away from their path and trying to walk into the walls of water.

Deu 17:12 The man who does presumptuously in not listening to the priest who stands to minister there before Yahweh your God, or to the judge, that man shall die, and you must put away the evil from Israel-
"The evil one" in the Old Testament was always "the evil man in Israel" (Dt. 17:12; 19:19; 22:21–24 cp. 1 Cor. 5:13) – never a superhuman being, not any personal, superhuman Satan.

Deu 17:13 All the people shall hear and fear and do no more presumptuously-
David however did act presumptuously, and yet lived- by grace. 2 Sam. 12:9 says that he "despised the word of Yahweh". Indeed, David "despised the commandment (word) of the Lord... you despised me" (2 Sam. 12:9,10). David learnt that his attitude to God's word was his attitude to God- for the word of God, in that sense, was and is God. The fact that he is condemned for having "despised the commandment of the Lord" in his sin with Bathsheba indicates that David knew all along what God's will really was. The fact that the flesh took over does not in any way mitigate his responsibility in this. This is a direct quote from the Law's definition of the sin of presumption: "The soul that does anything presumptuously... because he has despised the word of the Lord... that soul shall utterly be cut off" (Num. 15:30,31). Knowing David's emotional nature and also the fact that he did not completely turn away from God afterwards, we would have expected a quicker repentance if it had been a passing sin of passion. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that the sin was of presumption rather than passion. In his prosperity he had said "I shall never be moved" and he was determined that he couldn't be (Ps. 30:6). Hearing those words from Nathan must have struck real fear into David- he was being incriminated for the supreme sin of presumption, for which there was no provision of sacrifice or repentance. It is a mark of his faith and knowledge of God as the God of love, that He is willing to go on to confess his sin, in the hope of forgiveness. "You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it" (Ps. 51:16) was spoken by David more concerning this sin of presumption for which there was no sacrifice prescribed, rather than about the actual sin of adultery. However, we must not get the impression that David was a hard, callous man. Everything we know about him points to him be a big hearted, warm softie. David's sin with Bathsheba was in that sense out of character. Yet such is the stranglehold of sin that even he was forced to act with such uncharacteristic callousness and indifference to both God and man in order to try to cover his sin.

Deu 17:14 When you have come to the land which Yahweh your God gives you and shall

possess it, and dwell therein and say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me-
Moses often reminds them that he knows they will turn away from the Covenant he had given them (e.g. Dt. 30:1; 31:29). Here he shows that he knew that one day they would want a king, even though God was their king. He had such sensitivity to their weakness and likely failures, and in some areas he makes concessions to them.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 17:15 you must surely set him king over yourselves whom Yahweh your God shall choose; one from among your brothers you shall set king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother-
It was God's wish that Israel would not have a human king; hence His sorrow when they did (1 Sam. 10:19-21). Yet in the Law, God foresaw that they would want a human king, and so He gave commandments concerning how he should behave (Dt. 17:14,15). These passages speak of how Israel would choose to set a King over themselves, and would do so. Yet God worked through this system of human kings; hence the Queen of Sheba speaks of how *God* had set Solomon over Israel as King, and how he was king on God's behalf (2 Chron. 9:8). Israel set a king over themselves; but God worked with this, so that in a sense He set the King over them.

Deu 17:16 Only he must not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, so that he may multiply horses, because Yahweh has said to you, You shall not go back that way again-
See on Dt. 16:21. Moses commands any future king not to send God's people to Egypt to buy horses because he could see that this would tempt them to go back to Egypt permanently. There are many other example of this kind of thing (Dt. 14:24; 15:18;

17:17-19; 18:9; 20:7,8). The point is that Moses had thought long and hard about the ways in which Israel would be tempted to sin, and his words and innermost desire were devoted to helping them overcome. Glorious ditto for the Lord Jesus whom he typified (Dt. 18:18). Note that the king was warned not to get horses for himself from Egypt because the very act of sending Israelites back into Egypt might tempt them to return there; we are to be sensitive to the spiritual effect our actions may have upon others.

Israel were told three times that Saul would have many chariots (1 Sam. 8:11,12). If they were spiritually aware, they would have realized that by multiplying horses and chariots, he was going to be a King who ruled in studied disobedience to the Mosaic Law (Dt. 17:16-21). They were given the spiritual potential to grasp this. But they were already hard bitten in their rebellion, and this potential spiritual help went unheeded (although God still gave it to them potentially, even at a time when it seemed pointless. He is so ever willing to coax His people back!).

The degree to which God wanted Israel to conceive of Him in terms of Angels is shown by carefully considering the command for Israel not to have chariots (Dt. 17:16 cp. Is. 2:7). As this form of transport became increasingly popular, it must have seemed as crazy as Christians being told not to possess motor cars. There must have therefore been a highly significant teaching behind it. Was the purpose of it to make Israel look to the Angel-cherubim chariots of God? The word for 'cherubim' carries the idea of a chariot; the notion of horsemen corresponds with the Angel horse riders of Zechariah and Revelation.

Ex. 14:13 could appear to be prophecy: “The Egyptians... you shall see them again no more for ever”. But it is understood as a command not to return to Egypt in Dt. 17:16- and because of Israel turning back to Egypt in their hearts, they would be taken there again (Dt. 28:68). So we must be prepared to accept that what may appear to be prophecy is in fact commandment, which we have the freewill to obey or disobey. Ez. 43:7 likewise is more command than prediction: “The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name” (RV). It isn’t saying ‘this is a prophecy that they will not do this’- for they did. Rather is it a plea, a command, that they are not to do this any more.

Moses adds a whole series of apparently 'minor' commands which were designed to make obedience easier to the others already given. Thus he tells them in Deuteronomy not to plant a grove of trees near the altar of God - because he knew this would provoke the possibility of mixing Yahweh worship with that of the surrounding world (Dt. 16:21). Likewise he commands any future king not to send God's people to Egypt to buy horses because he could see that this would tempt them to go back to Egypt permanently (Dt. 17:16). There are many other example of this kind of thing (Dt. 14:24; 15:18; 17:17-19; 18:9; 20:7,8). The point is that Moses had thought long and hard about the ways in which Israel would be tempted to sin, and his words and innermost desire were devoted to helping them overcome. Glorious ditto for the Lord Jesus.

Deu 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, so that his heart will not turn away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold-
See on Dt. 20:14. This has strong relevance to Solomon. He did multiply silver, gold, horses and wives; his heart *was* turned away (:16,17= 2 Chron. 9:20). Yet this passage says that if he studied the Law all his life, this would *not* happen, and also his heart would not be "lifted up above his brethren" (:20). Solomon's whipping of the people and sense of spiritual and material superiority (2 Chron. 10:11; Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9) shows how his heart *was* lifted up. Yet Solomon knew the Law, despite his explicit disobedience to the commands concerning wives, horses etc. But his knowledge of the word didn't bring forth the true humility which it was intended to. Solomon *assumed* he wasn't proud; he *assumed* God's word was having its intended effect upon him, when it wasn't. Such spiritual assumption is a temptation for every child of God. God's intention that the king of Israel should personally copy out all the commandments of the Law was "to the end that his heart will not *be raised up* above his brothers"- i.e. reflecting upon the many requirements of the Law would've convicted the King of his own failure to have been fully obedient, and therefore his heart would be humbled. And soon after this statement, we are hearing Moses reminding Israel that Messiah, the prophet like unto Moses, was to *be raised up* (Dt. 18:18). Human failure, and recognition of it, prepares us to accept Christ.

They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, knowing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and failure. We wonder why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He rejoiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

Deu 17:18 When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he must write for himself a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites-
LXX "And when he shall be established in his government, then shall he write for himself this repetition of the law into a book by the hands of the priests the Levites". 'Writing for himself by the hands of the priests' could mean that as the kings were illiterate, the priests were to guide their hands in copying out the law. Perhaps "this law" refers specifically to the laws in this section warning the king. Solomon must have copied out these laws, and yet right from the time he wrote them out, he specifically disobeyed

them all. Solomon was a classic example of where knowledge of God's law alone will not save anyone, unless it enters into the heart.

Deu 17:19 It shall be with him and he must read from it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 17:20 Thus his heart will not be raised up above his brothers, and he will not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, so that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel-

The victory of the Lord Jesus is described as Him 'prolonging his days' (Is. 53:10), in allusion back to the way Dt. 17:20 teaches that the King of Israel must study the word all the days of his life, with the result that he would "prolong his days". The almost unbelievable victory of the man Christ Jesus against every aspect of the flesh was due to His saturation with the spirit of God's word.

God’s intention that the king of Israel should personally copy out all the commandments of the Law was so that “his heart be not lifted up above his brethren” (Dt. 17:20)- i.e. reflecting upon the many requirements of the Law would’ve convicted the King of his own failure to have been fully obedient, and therefore his heart would be humbled. And soon after this statement, we are hearing Moses reminding Israel that Messiah, the prophet like unto Moses, was to be raised up (Dt. 18:18). Human failure, and recognition of it, prepares us to accept Christ. To this end, God worked through

Israel's weakness, time and again. He even used it as a path towards His provision of Messiah. God wanted to speak to them directly, but in their weakness they asked that He not do this. Instead of giving up with them, as a Father whose children say they don't want to hear His voice... instead God goes on to tell Moses: "They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren [a prophecy applied to Christ in the New Testament]... and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Dt. 18:17,18).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 18

Deu 18:1 The priests the Levites, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they will eat the offerings of Yahweh made by fire as their inheritance-
There is a word play here, for "eat" is s.w. "burn up", used of fire consuming sacrifice; and "the offerings of Yahweh made by fire" is an attempt to translate just two words in Hebrew, "Yahweh's fire". The Levites' consumption of the food offered was accepted by Yahweh as if the fire of the altar had burnt it up. They were therefore as it were associated with the altar, Yahweh's representatives.

The Levites had no land nor great material wealth to leave to their children; but they had this unique relationship with God to pass on. Jeremiah in depression, having lost all he had, concludes that God is his portion (Lam. 3:24), clearly alluding to this verse. Even if materially we lose all we have- our relationship with God is our true portion and inheritance, which we will eternally receive in the Kingdom. The writers of the Psalms, some of whom like David weren't Levites, could use the same Hebrew word to describe how God was their "portion" and inheritance (Ps. 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; 142:5). This should be our self-perception, whether or not we leave any material inheritance to anyone or not. Not for us the obsession with building up ownership of property, under the excuse we want to leave something to our children. Our service of God and His people is our inheritance, which we shall eternally receive back at the resurrection and the time of the Kingdom of God on earth. The priests and Levites were provided with enough to eat, but no great wealth. So it should be for all full time servants in God's house. By contrast, the priests of the surrounding tribes were generally more wealthy than the other people, and owned land, which was seen as especially holy (see Gen. 47:22).

Deu 18:2 They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; Yahweh is their inheritance, as He has spoken to them-
The Levites had no material inheritance because "the sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel... are his inheritance... Yahweh God of Israel was their inheritance" (Josh. 13:14,33; Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9; 18:2). Notice how "Yahweh" is put for what is sacrificed to Him. His very existence is an imperative to sacrifice to Him, despising all material

advantage in doing so. Job comments that to make gold our hope and wealth our confidence is to deny “the God that is above” (Job 31:24,28). To trust in material wealth is effectively to proclaim ourselves atheists. We are described as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), so all that was true for the Levites becomes true for us. We are not to seek material inheritance. God will provide for us in ways other than our possessing land and leaving an inheritance to our children. The wonder of serving Him is to more than compensate for this.

Deu 18:3 This shall be the priest’s due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether ox or sheep. They shall give to the priest the shoulder, the two cheeks and the stomach-
The idea is "the front leg, the two jaw-bones, and the rough stomach of ruminants, in which the digestion is completed". These were thought to be the best parts of an animal; and remember that a leg and the breast of the offering were also to be given to the priest if it was a peace offering (Lev. 7:32; Num. 18:11).

Deu 18:4 The first fruits of your grain, your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep you shall give him-
There is no mention in Num. 18:12,13 of the first fleece being given to the priests. But it is mentioned here in Dt. 18:4, and is an example of where Deuteronomy, 'the second law', is in places more demanding and in others more understanding.

Deu 18:5 For Yahweh your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of Yahweh, him and his sons forever-
The original intention was that all Israel should be a nation of priests, but God continually seems to recalculate His plans according to His people's responsiveness (Ex. 19:5,6). And so the Levites were chosen, and special material provision was arranged for them; although there are continually hints that all Israel were to live in the spirit of priesthood. And under the new covenant, we are all the priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). God is likewise open to such ammendment and recalculation of intention in the way that He works with us as individuals.

Deu 18:6 If a Levite comes from any of your gates out of all Israel, where he lives as a foreigner, and comes with all the desire of his soul to the place which Yahweh shall choose-
God encourages us to make special devotions to Him. Thus the Levites could choose to leave their areas in the provinces and go and serve at the sanctuary. We must ask what special devotion we could make in response to His grace. The structure of the law of

Moses seemed to almost encourage the idea of serving God on different levels. After much study of it, the Rabbis concluded that there was within it “a distinction between holy and holy just as much as there is between holy and profane”. The Levites could choose to go and serve at Jerusalem [or wherever the sanctuary was], and therefore sell their possession of land which they had in the local area (Dt. 18:6-8). By doing this, a number of principles were broken, in order that the highest level- serving Yahweh in the temple- might be achieved.

Deu 18:7 then he shall minister in the name of Yahweh his God as all his brothers the Levites do, who stand there before Yahweh-
There was to be always the possibility for Levites from the provinces to come and live at the sanctuary and serve "before Yahweh", i.e. before the ark of His presence. The Levites lived in the provinces as "foreigners" (:6). This is the language of Abraham and his seed living as foreigners. They were therefore to consider the sanctuary as their home, and being away from it meant living as it were in another land. The appeal to us to live as foreigners and pilgrims is therefore partly based upon this; for we are all the spiritual priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5).

Deu 18:8 They shall have similar portions to eat, besides that which comes from his father’s inheritance-
The word for "share" in 1 Sam. 30:24 is that used here in Dt. 18:8, where the Levites were to have the same "portions" or "share". All David's men were to have the same "share". His language choice was setting up his men to see themselves as a new priesthood. The sale of a family inheritance may not refer to property, for the Levites were not to hold property. This however may be one of many tacit acceptances in Deuteronomy that things would not be as they ought to be; perhaps the idea is that if a man repented of how his father had held property, then he was to sell it, and could then move to the live permanently near the sanctuary.

The early church began by having all things common, in imitation of how the priests had "like portions to eat" (Dt. 18:8). Notice the stress on the equality of the priests and the studied irrelevance of their personal wealth (1 Chron. 24:31; 25:8; 26:12). We also have an example of Barnabas selling his illegally held property and giving it to the church, which may be what is in view here with the reference to the Levite selling his father's inheritance and moving to live near the sanctuary. The Law was geared around the assumption that the priests would be so caught up in Yahweh's work that they would never be rich (consider Dt. 14:29), and the wonder of doing His work would compensate for their lack of physical possessions (Num. 18:23). Yet the early church couldn't sustain the intensity of their initial realization of these things.

Deu 18:9 When you have come into the land which Yahweh your God gives you, you must not learn to do according to the abominations of those nations-
The Canaanites were to be driven out of the land for doing these abominations (:12). The reality is that the Canaanites were not driven out for those abominations, because Israel didn't drive them out. And yet it was because of their abominations that Israel were supposed to drive them out (:10,12). We can conclude that Israel didn't dispossess the Canaanites because they didn't hate their abominations but rather participated in them.

Deu 18:10 There must not be found with you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices sorcery or an enchanter, a sorcerer-
Acts 7:43 says that they carried the tabernacle of Moloch with them through the wilderness, and Moloch was associated with child sacrifice. Moses is therefore telling them that they were not to worship Moloch once in the land. It all seems an incredibly 'soft' approach to them, rather than challenging them about their idolatry. Perhaps it reflected God's great enthusiasm for Israel at this time, for He did not behold iniquity in Jacob (Num. 23:21), and presents Himself in Jeremiah as having fallen totally in love with Israel in the wilderness, wishing not to see their unfaithfulness.

Deu 18:11 a charmer, a consulter with a familiar spirit, a wizard or a necromancer-
These people were thought to be able to tell and control the future, and to bring about healing and blessing. Yet these were all the roles of Yahweh. He had predicted a blessed future for Israel, conditional upon their obedience. But they wanted to seek to bypass this by trying to influence their future and blessing through other means. By seeking to these people they were effectively denying their relationship with God, through attempting to merely bypass Yahweh. The huge stress upon Yahweh as the source of a blessed future meant that all these classes of wizards were therefore at best redundant; and to use them was to effectively resign from relationship with Yahweh. And we must consider how we too may be tempted to effectively bypass God, seeking blessing and a [supposedly] assured future by secular means.

Deu 18:12 For whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh, and because of these abominations Yahweh your God drives them out from before you-
See on :10. "Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of

Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 18:13 You should be without blame before Yahweh your God-
The repeated references to the "journeys" of the people in the wilderness had as their basis the description of Abraham taking his journey through the desert to the promised land (Gen. 13:3); the very same two Hebrew words recur in the command to Israel to now 'take their journey' (Dt. 10:11), following in the steps of their father Abraham. As Abraham was commanded to "be perfect" (Gen. 17:1), so Israel were told: "*You* [after the pattern of father Abraham] shall be perfect with the Lord" (Dt. 19:13). The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

"Without blame" is the term used multiple times in the law of Moses about the state of sacrificial animals. But it is never used in Deuteronomy. Perhaps this reflects Moses' maturer understanding that no animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Deu 18:14 For these nations that you shall dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery and to diviners; but as for you, Yahweh your God has not allowed you to do so-
See on :10. The fact those nations were dispossessed was surely evidence that their various magicians were powerless. Yet Israel wanted to trust those same powerless people, just as they would later worship the gods of the nations who defeated them.

Deu 18:15 Yahweh your God will raise up to you a prophet like me, from the midst of you, of your brothers. You are to listen to him-
The promise of a future prophet (who was to be Messiah) is in the context of the prohibition upon using those who claimed to foretell the future, and bring blessing and healing. Trying to achieve future blessing through them was a way of bypassing Yahweh, who had clearly offered a blessed future predicated upon obedience to the covenant. But a blessed future, that of the Kingdom of God, was to be possible through this prophet who was yet to be raised up. Possibly Joshua or some other figure could have fulfilled this prophecy, but the potential wasn't realized. And therefore it was reapplied and rescheduled to the Lord Jesus.

Deu 18:16 This is according to all that you desired of Yahweh your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly saying, Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, so that I do not die-
The tragedy was that to hear the personal voice of their God was intended to build their faith, and was the most wonderful empirical, experiential evidence that He was real (Dt. 4:32,33). But faced with it, they hurriedly turned away. And this is true in essence of so many people. Israel complained that no other nation had ever been asked to hear the voice of their God in a personal way; they feared that hearing this voice meant their condemnation (Dt. 5:26). But God meant it so positively; the fact they had heard God's voice was a sign of His amazing grace (Dt. 4:32,33). Yet Israel turned the display of that grace into a reason to fear condemnation. They were far happier not being confronted by such radical grace, and the personal engagement of God with them. And so they desperately sought to use mere religion to shield them from this, asking Moses to go through with this engagement with God and then give them a few rules to obey, which didn't too deeply interrupt their lives. This is the abiding tendency of men of all ages; to flee from grace to the structures of mere religion.

It had been God's intention that they came nearer to Him and heard Him directly. But they wanted mere religion to stand between Him and them, they shied away from personal encounter with Him, and wanted Moses to speak with God and relay to them His will. But God positively interpreted their words as a request for Messiah, the word made flesh, and would answer them in the provision of the Lord Jesus (see on :18). But this would be more than a prophet; He would effectively engage them with Yahweh, as His supreme manifestation, although having human nature. And they would need to respond deeply to that engagement.

Deu 18:17 Yahweh said to me, They have well said that which they have spoken-
God’s intention that the king of Israel should personally copy out all the

commandments of the Law was so that "his heart be not lifted up above his brethren" (Dt. 17:20)- i.e. reflecting upon the many requirements of the Law would've convicted the King of his own failure to have been fully obedient, and therefore his heart would be humbled. And soon after this statement, we are hearing Moses reminding Israel that Messiah, the prophet like unto Moses, was to be raised up (Dt. 18:18). Human failure, and recognition of it, prepares us to accept Christ. To this end, God worked through Israel's weakness, time and again. He even used it as a path towards His provision of Messiah. God wanted to speak to them directly, but in their weakness they asked that He not do this. Instead of giving up with them, as a Father whose children say they don't want to hear His voice... instead God goes on to tell Moses: "They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren [a prophecy applied to Christ in the New Testament]... and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Dt. 18:17,18).

Deu 18:18 I will raise them up a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him-
The Messianic prophecy of Dt. 18:18 had a potential Messianic and primary fulfillment in Joshua: "I will raise them up [God 'rose up' Joshua- s.w. Josh. 1:2; 7:10,13; 8:1,3] a prophet from among their brethren, like unto you [Joshua's life was framed to be like that of Moses- e.g. he too was told to remove his shoe when on holy ground, also held his hands up whilst Israel fought their enemies]; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him [Joshua is constantly presented as telling Israel what God commanded him- Josh. 4:8,10,17; 6:10; 8:8: "according to the commandment of the Lord shall ye do. See, I have commanded you"; Josh. 8:27]. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him". The 'likeness' between Moses and the prophet like unto him was in that the prophet would also speak God's words in a similar way. Josh. 11:15 therefore significantly comments: "As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua: and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses". Joshua was a potential Messiah.

By the time he uttered Deuteronomy, Moses would probably have been the oldest person any of the congregation had ever known. Many of the earlier generation had been cut down in the wilderness. He was nearly twice the age of Joshua. He had dominated their lives from birth, had stuck with them, with their fathers and even grandparents. Just as the Lord Jesus is to be the central figure in the new Israel. Moses was also a representative of his people, just as the Lord Jesus is in a sense 'Israel'- the suffering servant refers to both Israel and their Messiah. Moses was "adopted by an imperial parent, punished for his rashness, sentenced to wander forty years in the wilderness, forgiven, restored, hand-selected for an impossible task, accompanied by the overwhelming presence of God at every step...", just as his beloved people. In the same

way as Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, so Christ was of the new. Christ was the prophet like unto Moses (Dt. 18:18). Moses was the shepherd of the flock of Israel, leading them on God's behalf through the wilderness towards the promised land (Is. 63:12), as Christ leads us after baptism to the Kingdom.

Moses' persecution by Pharaoh enabled him to enter into the feelings of Israel in the slave camps; and as they fled from Pharaoh towards the Red Sea, Moses would have recalled his own flight from Pharaoh to Midian. The whole epistle to the Hebrews is shot through with allusions to Moses. "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17) is alluding to Dt. 18:18: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee (Moses)". The brethren of Christ are here paralleled with Moses; as if Moses really is representative of not only natural Israel, but spiritual too- as well as Moses being a type of Christ. For this reason he is such a clear pattern for us, and we are invited so often to identify ourselves with him by copying his example. Moses was made like his brethren through his similar experiences, as Christ was progressively made like us by his life of temptation.

The miracle of the loaves and fishes made men see the similarity between Christ and Moses, whom they perceived to have provided the manna (Jn. 6:32). Therefore they thought that Jesus must be the prophet like Moses, of whom Moses wrote (Jn. 6:14). But Jesus said that He was greater than Moses, because Moses' bread only gave them temporal life, whereas if a man ate of Him, he would live for ever; His words would give spiritual life which was part of that "eternal life" of the Father (Jn. 6:49,50). The Jews thought that the prophet like Moses of Dt. 18:18 was a prophet equal or inferior to Moses. John's Gospel records how Christ was showing that the prophet would be greater than Moses. Martha understood that when she said that "the Christ... which should come into the world" (i.e. the prophet of Dt. 18:18) was "the Son of God", and therefore Jesus of Nazareth (Jn. 11:27).

“The prophet” (Jn. 7:40,52 RV) is clearly a reference to “the prophet” like Moses, i.e. Messiah. There are many other allusions by John’s record to the Dt. 18:18 passage: “I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him”. References to the Son only speaking what the Father commanded Him are to be found in Jn. 4:25; 8:28; 12:49.

Christ was the prophet like unto Moses (Acts 3:22). Moses was the shepherd of the flock of Israel, leading them on God's behalf through the wilderness towards the promised land (Is. 63:12), as Christ leads us after baptism to the Kingdom. It was only through Moses' leadership that they reached Canaan (10:11). As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and Dt. 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love

of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ.

Deu 18:19 Whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him-
As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 13:18; 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ. Indeed, the well known prophecy that God would raise up a prophet "like unto" Moses to whom Israel would *listen* (Dt. 18:18) is in the context of Israel saying they did not want to hear God's voice directly. Therefore God said that he would raise up Christ, who would be another Moses in the sense that *he too* would speak forth God's word.

Deu 18:20 But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die-
Falsification of Yahweh's word, speaking falsely in His Name, was the ultimate taking of His Name in vain. Especially when they spoke the supposed words of "other gods" as if Yahweh's words. In illiterate society, the words of the prophets were absolutely vital in order for the people to hear God's words. If they were falsified, then so many people would suffer. And making others stumble out of God's way is seen as the worst kind of sin. This is the sin of false teaching; the sin is not that of genuinely misunderstanding Biblical theology, but of teaching others that sin is righteousness.

Yahweh repeatedly forbad His people to mention the name of other gods. In the Ancient Near East, all conflict between peoples and nations was seen as conflict between gods. The role of prophets or priests on either side was to bring curses upon the other gods. And so they repeated the names of the other gods in incantations supposed to bring curses upon those gods. This however is forbidden to God's people. They instead were to focus upon the Name of their God Yahweh. And we see in this a pattern for ourselves; to focus upon the ultimate truth and truths of the one true God, and not be caught up in wishing cursing upon those who believe otherwise. To focus upon the positive, which is the source of all victory, rather than going on the defensive against other views by cursing them.

Deu 18:21 If you say in your heart, How shall we know the word which Yahweh has not spoken?-
Again, Moses seems to foresee how badly things would go with Israel. He has just

warned of the false prophet who speaks falsely in the Name of Yahweh. And he seems to accept this is going to happen, and so he now gives a way of testing whether words claiming to be Yahweh's are true or not. Moses also perceives that this question will be raised in the heart of the thoughtful, faithful ones.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 18:22 When a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh, if the thing doesn't follow or happen, that is the thing which Yahweh has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you shall not be afraid of him-
This is why the prophecies of Christ and of the last days all had some limited fulfilment in the lifetimes of the prophets who gave the prophecies. If the prophet failed to produce such signs, then "you shall not be afraid of him". But the commandment about false prophets in :20 was that they must be killed. Moses seems to foresee a situation where there would be false prophets, and the thoughtful, faithful few would ponder the truth of their words in their hearts (not openly; :21), and would not be able to have the false prophets executed. But, they were not personally to fear their words.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 19

Deu 19:1 When Yahweh your God shall cut off the nations whose land Yahweh your God gives you, and you succeed them and dwell in their cities and in their houses-
"Succeed" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the

Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Despite being fully aware of how weak Israel were, Moses often speaks of the " blessing" which God would give them for obedience; he even speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it: "Every man shall give as he is able (once he is settled in the land), according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He *has* given you" (Dt. 16:17). Moses speaks with confidence of how God would grant them the blessing of the land and victory over their enemies, even though these things were conditional upon their obedience (Dt. 19:1; 20:13), and even though Moses clearly knew that most of them would disobey. The conclusion from this is that Moses thought so much of that minority who would obey his covenant, who would grasp the spirit of his life and the speech he was now making. And our Lord likewise- in His feelings for us.

Deu 19:2 you must set apart three cities for you in the midst of your land, which Yahweh your God gives you to possess-
The person who committed something worthy of death but didn't as it were willfully do it represents each of us. The language of the city of refuge therefore becomes applicable to Christ, our refuge from the results of our sin (Heb. 6:18).

Deu 19:3 You shall prepare the way, and divide the borders of your land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, into three parts, that any manslayer may flee there-
John the Baptist's ideas of fleeing wrath and preparing a way are surely based upon the Law's command in Dt. 19:3 that a way or road should be prepared to the city of refuge (symbolic of Christ- Heb. 6:18), along which the person under the death sentence for manslaughter could flee for refuge. John was preparing that way or road to Christ, and urging ordinary people to flee along it. They didn't like to think they were under a death sentence for murder. They were just ordinary folk like the soldiers who grumbled about

their wages, and the publicans who were a bit less than honest at work. But they had to flee.

The command to prepare a way along which to flee to the cities of refuge (Dt. 19:3) is expressed with the very same words used about God through the Angels preparing a way for Israel to flee along, out of Egypt to the promised land (Ex. 23:20). This was obviously done purely at God's initiative. But now, Israel were asked to do the same- to prepare a way for their and others' salvation. When we reflect upon our own way of escape from this world, it's clear enough that it was by grace. By God's sole initiative we came into contact with the Gospel, or were born into such a family at such a time as enabled us to hear it. Our response to that grace must be like Israel's- to prepare a way for others to flee, when they like us find themselves in a situation that is spiritually against them, although not of their conscious choice.

Deu 19:4 This is the case of the manslayer that shall flee there and live. Whoever kills his neighbour unawares and didn't hate him in time past-
We are all in the position of the man who unintentionally committed manslaughter and must therefore die. We are under sentence of death by reason of being human, as well as for our actual sins. The avenger of blood could be seen as God, for it is He alone who has the right to execute judgment for sin. And we must note that the word *ga'al* translated "avenger" is also that translated "redeemer" or 'ransomer'. The cities of refuge are therefore understood in Heb. 6:18 as looking ahead to refuge in the Lord Jesus: "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us". The allusion is to how the person who found they had committed a sin worthy of death, yet without as it were wishing to have done so, could flee to a city of refuge and be saved there by the death of the high priest. The curse upon Levi was that the members of this tribe were to be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7). However, this resulted in the cities of the Levites being scattered throughout the land, thus providing accessible cities of refuge to all who wished to escape the consequences of sin. Those cities were evidently symbolic of the refuge we have in Christ. Again and again, the curses and consequences of human sin are used by the Father to mediate blessing. It is the sure hope before us which is our refuge. "Hope", *elpis*, is a confident knowledge of a future reality, rather than a hoping for the best. We should be confident in our salvation. The 'guilty' person was made free totally through the death of the High Priest, clearly looking forward to the significance of the death of the Lord Jesus.

Deu 19:5 as when a man goes into the forest with his neighbour to chop wood, and his hand fetches a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and hits his neighbour so that he dies; he shall flee to one of these cities and live-

A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

Deu 19:6 lest the avenger of blood pursue the manslayer while his heart is hot and overtake him because the way is long, and strike him mortally, whereas he was not worthy of death because he didn't hate him in time past-

We note that hatred of a neighbour was to be the reason for death. John appears to have this in mind when he reasons that hatred of our brother is effectively a living death sentence (1 Jn. 2:11; 4:20). It was to be that "whoever hates his brother is a murderer", not a manslaughterer (1 Jn. 3:15). And that hatred can be in someone's heart, even if they have not killed the object of their hatred. This is the principle which is taught here.

But Israel were not to avenge (Lev. 19:18). But they *could* avenge, and provisions were made for their human desire to do so in some cases (see too Num. 35:12). These provisions must also be seen as a modification of the command not to murder. The highest level was *not* to avenge; but for the harshness of men's hearts, a concession was made *in some cases*, and on *God's* prerogative. *We* have no right to assume that prerogative. Rather than continually make use of God's many concessions to human weakness, we should seek to live on a higher level.

Deu 19:7 Therefore I command you, saying, You must set apart three cities for yourselves-

The emphasis was very much upon *them* making the cities of refuge, and defining the paths which led to them from all settlements in the land (Dt. 19:3): "I command you, saying, You must set apart three cities for yourselves" (Dt. 19:7). Yet the record in Joshua 18-20 shows that Israel didn't do this, because they didn't even capture all the cities which were to be cities of refuge.

Deu 19:8 If Yahweh your God enlarges your border as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give to your fathers-

If Israel had been obedient, then “the Lord your God shall enlarge thy border” (Dt. 12:20). Thus “blessed be He that enlarges Gad” (Dt. 33:20). Who knows the height and depth, length and breadth of what could have been for God’s people? And the same is true for us today. According to Israel’s perception of the land, so it was defined for them. God was clearly willing to still work with Israel even if He redefined the promised land to a scaled down version of what had been promised to Abraham. He is ever open to recalculation of His intentions in order to by all means remain in relationship with His wayward people.

Deu 19:9 if you keep all this commandment to do what I command you this day, to love Yahweh your God and walk always in His ways, then you shall add three cities more for yourselves besides these three-
Those cities of refuge could have been increased in number, thereby making salvation that much 'easier' or accessible; but there is no evidence Israel availed themselves of this. Israel would be provided with more cities of refuge if they were obedient; the way of escape from sin would become easier, as it does for us the more we are obedient to God’s principles.

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word ekklesia eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

Deu 19:10 so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, and so guilt for blood be upon you-
If Israel were indifferent to preparing the way for others’ salvation, then innocent blood would be shed and they would be responsible for it (Dt. 19:10). This is powerful stuff. Indifference to providing others with a way of escape from their sin and death means we are actually guilty of their lack of salvation. And yet we tend to think that committed sin is all we have to worry about / avoid. The lesson here, however, bites far more

caustically and insistently into our comfort zone. If we are indifferent to marking out the way of escape for others, their blood will be upon our heads. Our chief excuses for not witnessing enthusiastically basically amount to laziness, indifference, not getting our act together because we don't see we have to... when actually, there is an intense urgency about our task.

Deu 19:11 But if any man hates his neighbour, and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him mortally so that he dies, and he flees into one of these cities-

There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them.

Deu 19:12 then the elders of his city must send and bring him from there, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood that he may die-

The slayer of innocent blood was to be slain without pity: "you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you" (Dt. 19:13). But David seems to have stepped up to a higher level when he told the woman of Tekoah that he would protect her son from revenge murder, after he had slain another man (2 Sam. 14:8-10). The woman pointed out that if her son was slain, the inheritance would be lost in her husband's name. Here was a case where two principles seemed to be at variance: the need to slay the guilty, and the need to preserve the inheritance. The higher level was to forgive the slayer of innocent blood, even though the Law categorically stated that he should be slain.

Deu 19:13 Your eye shall not pity him, but you must put away the innocent blood from Israel-

We would rather expect that guilty blood must be put away. AV has "the guilt of innocent blood", LXX "so shalt thou purge innocent blood". The idea was that the guilt for innocent blood must be purged by blood. The Lord's blood was the ultimate innocent blood, and so Israel were being prepared to accept that blood was to be shed for His blood. And thus it happened (Mt. 27:25; Acts 5:28).

That it may go well with you-

Things 'going well / good' with Israel is the language of the Kingdom of God in Dt. 8:16 "to do you good / well at your latter end". It is associated with days being prolonged (Dt. 22:7) and the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Dt. 30:5), and Israel and the children somehow existing "forever" (Dt. 12:28). So I deduce in the wish "that it may go well with you" a hint towards the eternal establishment of God's Kingdom based around

Israel, what Paul terms "the hope of Israel".

Deu 19:14 You must not remove your neighbour's landmark, which those of old time have set, in your inheritance which you shall inherit, in the land that Yahweh your God gives you to possess it-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units. This was "The inheritance of fathers", "your possession" (Lev. 25:27,28; Num. 36:7,8). God had given specific inheritances to His people, that this was not to be sold or traded. The division by lot in Josh. 15:1 presumably meant that the tribal areas were defined and then distributed by lot. And then within those areas, each family was given a specific inheritance.

Deu 19:15 One witness must not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin that he commits. At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses shall a matter be established-

Insisting on more than one witness before accepting the truth of an allegation meant that gossip and slander were limited; and Jesus applies this principle to dealing with disputes within His church (Mt. 18:16). Although His teaching about not condemning our brethren meant that He didn't advocate as it were 'putting to death', but rather stern rebuke and damage limitation. Those who served other gods had to die on the testimony of two or three witnesses. This idea is twice alluded to in the New Testament in the context of making the decision to cease fellowship with someone (Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). The implication is that death under the Old Covenant pointed forward to first century church discipline under the New Covenant. But we must note that the reason for this was serving other gods and wilful departing from covenant relationship with the Lord- not minor reasons. And yet the Lord appears to go a step beyond this; for I detect in Mt. 18:16 a reference to this law, but He goes on to suggest that the higher level in interpersonal offences is not to apply this but to simply forgive.

Deu 19:16 If an unrighteous witness rises up against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing-

We have just read in :15 that the testimony of one man was not to be accepted. So this foresees a case when more than one man makes false testimony. What is in view here is a supporting witness who lives, and this will then result in the two individuals accusing each other coming "before Yahweh" (:17). In other words, the testimony of one man plus

one supporting witness still wasn't enough. In this case, the matter must come before Yahweh (:17). There is here a strong sense of "innocent until proven guilty", and an awareness that a supporting witness might also be telling untruth.

Deu 19:17 then both the men in the controversy shall stand before Yahweh, before the priests and the judges who shall be in those days-
David and Solomon appear to have concentrated all judgment in themselves, setting themselves up effectively as both king and priest, for the "judge" was to be a priest. Jehoshaphat reformed this by placing the power of judgment in the hands of a group of Levites, priests and heads of families as the higher court in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 19:5-8). But still Jehoshaphat didn't appoint a singular senior judge, as required in Dt. 17:9. We note from Dt. 19:17 that this singular priestly supreme judge is called "Yahweh", because he was to be Yahweh's supreme representative when it came to judgment. But it seems even the best kings of Judah preferred to keep that office in their own power.

Proverbs stresses that the man who loves wisdom will be able to judge wisely (Prov. 2:9; 31:9). Yet it was the priests who were the judges of Israel (Dt. 19:17), they were the ones to whom hard cases were brought. Yet Proverbs implies all could act as priests. "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable (a word elsewhere used concerning the priests' service, Dt. 21:5) than (the offering of) sacrifice" (Prov. 21:5). Loving wisdom would give the ordinary Israelite a crown on his head (Prov. 4:9), alluding to the High Priestly crown (Ex. 29:6; Zech. 6:11).

Deu 19:18 The judges shall make diligent inquisition, and if the witness is a false witness and has testified falsely against his brother-
I suggested on :16 that the case in view is when a false witness even has a false supporting witness. The "diligent inquisition" therefore required that one witness plus a supporting witness was not to enough to support a conviction. Further investigation and gathering of evidence was required. Again we note a strong sense of "innocent until proven guilty", and an awareness that a supporting witness might also be telling untruth.

Deu 19:19 then you must do to him as he had thought to do to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from the midst of you-
“The evil one” in the Old Testament was always “the evil man in Israel” (Dt. 17:12; 19:19; 22:21–24 cp. 1 Cor. 5:13) – never a superhuman being, not any personal, superhuman Satan. The evil was to be put away by judgment appropriate to what the false accuser had intended to be done to the falsely accused. As innocent blood was to be purged by guilty blood (:13). But for us, all such judgment has been met in the suffering and death

of the Lord Jesus. Therefore the "eye for an eye" judgment of :21 is now to be replaced by our forgiveness of our slanderers, rather than seeking judgment and justice upon them.

Deu 19:20 Those who remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil in the midst of you-
There is repeated emphasis that false accusation is an "evil" which must be removed. Pastoral leadership must take very seriously the practice of false accusation in church communities. And yet churches divide over and over because of this very issue of false accusation which isn't dealt with. The "eye for an eye" judgment hits home hard in this context- for typically the false accusation within churches is with a view to getting the falsely accused removed from the church. And on this basis, removal from the body of Christ is the judgment for those who do such things. Although it is not for us to seek to see that done; it is for us to forgive (see on :19).

Deu 19:21 Your eyes must not pity; life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot-
See on :19. When the Lord Jesus gave His commandments as an elaboration of Moses' Law, that Law was still in force. He didn't say 'When I'm dead, this is how you should behave...'. He was showing us a higher level; but in the interim period until the Law was taken out of the way, He was opening up the *choice* of taking that higher level, even though making use of the concessions which Moses offered would not have been a sin during that period. Thus He spoke of not insisting on "an eye for an eye"; even though in certain cases the Law did allow for this. He was saying: 'You can keep Moses' Law, and take an eye for an eye. But there is a higher level: to simply forgive'.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 20

Deu 20:1 When you go forth to battle against your enemies and see horses, chariots and a people more than you, you must not be afraid of them-
The implication is that Israel would repeatedly be the smaller force in their battles. But this must be squared with Ex. 12:37. Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resoluble using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families

amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night.

For Yahweh your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt-
The great works of Yahweh which He showed at the time of their exodus from Egypt (cp. the world) and baptism at the Red Sea were in essence repeated throughout their wilderness journey (Dt. 7:19). Therefore whenever they faced discouragement and an apparent blockage to their way, they were to remember how God had redeemed them at their baptism, and to realize that in fact His work was still ongoing with them (Dt. 20:1). He told them in the desert that He was "Yahweh that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 11:45). Therefore the overcoming of Edom, Moab and the Canaanite tribes is described in language lifted from the Red Sea record (e.g. Ex. 15:15-17). Throughout their history, Israel were reminded that what God had done for them in their Red Sea deliverance He was continuing to do, and therefore all their enemies would likewise perish if they remained God's people (e.g. Is. 43:16).

Deuteronomy speaks time and again of how Israel's Red Sea baptism [cp. ours] was to be the basis for their daily living; the fact they had been redeemed from the world by 'baptism' was to inspire them in every aspect of spiritual endeavour. Because they had been brought out of Egypt, *therefore* they were to keep the Sabbath, not worship idols, be obedient, witness to the surrounding nations, disfellowship false teachers who

would take them back to Egypt, and especially, it was to motivate them to the faith that they could overcome all obstacles in their path to the promised land (Dt. 20:1). For those raised Christian, this sense of deliverance from the world and entering the body of Christ through baptism must be hard. But it is nonetheless true for you as it is for the hardest living worldling.

Deu 20:2 When you draw near to the battle, the priest shall approach and speak to the people-
He foresaw how they would see horses and chariots and get frightened; such was Moses' sensitivity to his people. There is a parallel between the people drawing near to battle, and the priest drawing near to the people. As their fears approached, so the comfort of God was to approach them.

Deu 20:3 and tell them, Hear, Israel, you draw near this day to battle against your enemies; don't let your heart faint; don't be afraid or tremble, neither be scared of them-
The Lord applies these words to us (Jn. 14:1,2). Fear is always the antithesis of faith. God is often called an "awesome God" (Dt. 7:21 etc.). The Hebrew word for "awesome" is that for 'fear' (s.w. Gen. 3:10; 15:1; 18;15 etc.). The idea is that God's people are to be in such fear / awe of Him that they fear / are in awe of nothing else. Hence Dt. 7:21 says that Israel should "not be scared of" their enemies, because their God is "awesome", He is the one to be feared.

Deu 20:4 for Yahweh your God goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you-
Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 20:5 The officers must speak to the people saying, Any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it, let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it-
Dt. 20:5-7 commanded that in time of battle, those who had just recently married, bought a new house or planted a new vineyard- should not go to the battle. But these are the very kind of reasons which the Lord Jesus alludes to in Lk. 14 as the reasons given by some for not going and working for Him. This connection not only shows that

He is in a sense far more demanding than the Old Covenant was. But what the Old Covenant considered a legitimate excuse for not going to battle- He does not. And even appears to condemn those who take such ways out. Truly He is a demanding Lord. All must be for Him, and any earlier ways of legitimizing or making respectable anything less than total commitment to Him must be rejected. In this He was indeed the demanding Lord- although He had and has every right to be.

Deu 20:6 Any man who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten its fruit, let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat its fruit-
The Lord likened His preachers to men reaping a harvest. He speaks of how they fulfilled the proverb that one sows and another reaps (Jn. 4:37,38). Yet this 'proverb' has no direct Biblical source. What we *do* find in the Old Testament is the repeated idea that if someone sows but another reaps, this is a sign that they are suffering God's judgment for their sins (Dt. 20:6; 28:30; Job 31:8; Mic. 6:15). But the Lord turns around the 'proverb' concerning Israel's condemnation; He makes it apply to the way that the preacher / reaper who doesn't sow is the one who harvests others in converting them to Him. Surely His implication was that His preacher-reapers were those who had known condemnation for their sins, but on that basis were His humbled harvesters in the mission field.

Deu 20:7 Any man who has pledged to be married to a wife and has not taken her, let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her-
Often the parables of the Lord Jesus warn that those who think He will understand their weakness, those who are too familiar with His softer side. The parable of the great supper records men explaining to Christ why they can't *immediately* respond to Him, although they want to when it's more convenient: "I have bought a piece of ground, *and must needs* go and see it... I have married a wife, therefore *I* cannot come" (Lk. 14:18-20). The implication is that they assumed that the servant calling them to the wedding (i.e. Christ) would understand that their excuses were quite reasonable; the man who pleaded marriage as his excuse would have been alluding to the Law's provision to have time off from the Lord's duties on account of marriage (Dt. 20:7; 24:5). All these reasons were assumed to be quite reasonable, and the men sound as if they were confident that *of course* Christ would understand. But His demands are in fact higher than those made under the old covenant.

Deu 20:8 The officers shall speak further to the people and say, Any man who is fearful and fainthearted, let him go and return to his house, lest his brother's heart melt as his heart-
Mental attitudes spread so easily. Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their

heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 20:9 When the officers have made an end of speaking to the people, they shall appoint captains of armies at the head of the people-
The implication from :2,3 could be that this was to be done last minute, as the troops approached the enemy, when those who were fearful had returned home. The captains were therefore not to be a standing office, as in most armies, but were appointed at the last minute for each specific battle. In all Israel's Biblical victories, the military strategies were always in absolute defiance of secular military wisdom. For the victory was to be solely credited to God.

Deu 20:10 When you draw near to a city to fight against it, proclaim peace to it-
Is. 9:6 states that the Lord Jesus personally is "called" or "proclaimed" as peace. This is the same Hebrew word as in Dt. 20:10- Israel were to "proclaim peace" to cities they attacked, demanding either their submission or destruction. And yet *we* are the ones who "proclaim [the] peace" of Christ to men (Is. 52:7). Insofar as we represent Him in our witness, our hearers are faced with a radical choice- to submit to Him or eternally perish. It's easy to forget that this is how God sees it, as we witness to people. We're so used to the rejection of our message that we perhaps fail to see the eternal importance of the choice we lay before people; and this should impart a verve and urgency of appeal to our preaching, rather than an indifferent inviting of people to meetings, discussion, etc.

But the Israelites did this to the few remaining Benjamites *after* they had massacred most of them (Jud 21:13 s.w.). This was typical of how Israel at this time were taking fragments of God's law and applying them, but absolutely out of context. Whilst they

disregarded the majority of the Law, both in letter and spirit. And we see this in the wider Christian movement. Bits and pieces of Divine principle are used in a misplaced way, when the majority of God's revelation and will is ignored.

Deu 20:11 If it makes you an answer of peace and opens to you, then all the people who are found therein shall become tributary to you and shall serve you-
Although :15 implies this legislation was only relevant to nations "far" from Israel, I discuss on Josh. 7 how that even Jericho was given the opportunity to repent and enter covenant peace with Yahweh. The conquest of Canaan was therefore only so bloody because they had refused these offers of peace. The agreement with the Gibeonites in Josh. 9 could then be read as acceptable within the spirit of this teaching here.

Deu 20:12 If it will make no peace with you but wishes to make war against you, then you shall besiege it-
Again we must observe that the conquest of Canaan was so bloody because the Canaanites therefore wished to make way with Israel; although this legislation applies to nations "far" from Israel (:15).

Deu 20:13 When Yahweh your God delivers it into your hand, you must strike every male of it with the edge of the sword-
"When..." suggests that victory was absolutely assured. Despite being fully aware of how weak Israel were, Moses often speaks of the "blessing" which God would give them for obedience; he even speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it: "Every man shall give as he is able (once he is settled in the land), according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He *has* given you" (Dt. 16:17). Moses speaks with confidence of how God would grant them the blessing of the land and victory over their enemies, even though these things were conditional upon their obedience (Dt. 19:1; 20:13), and even though Moses clearly knew that most of them would disobey. The conclusion from this is that Moses thought so much of that minority who would obey his covenant, who would grasp the spirit of his life and the speech he was now making. And our Lord likewise- in His feelings for us.

Deu 20:14 but the women and the little ones, the livestock and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take for a prey to yourself, and you shall eat the spoil of your enemies, which Yahweh your God has given you-
The softness of Moses, the earnestness of his desire for their obedience, his eagerness to work with them in their humanity, is shown by the concessions to human weakness which he makes in Deuteronomy (with God's confirmation, of course). When they attacked a foreign city, OK, Moses says, you can take the women for yourselves- even

though this is contrary to the spirit of earlier commands (Dt. 20:14; 21:11). Likewise with the provisions for having a human king (Dt. 17:17) and divorce (24:1-4). He knew the hardness of Israel's hearts, their likelihood to give way to temptation, and so he made concessions contrary to the principles behind other parts of the Law (Mt. 19:8). And Dt. 16:2 seems to imply that now, the Passover sacrifice didn't necessarily have to be a lamb, and it could be boiled not just roasted (:7).

God told Israel to totally destroy the spoil from the cities they attacked. But when they failed to do this with Jericho, God told them that with Ai, the next city on the agenda, they were allowed to keep the spoil (Josh. 8:2); even though Dt. 20:14-16 said that this was how they should treat their distant enemies, but *not* cities like Ai which were part of their inheritance. This was an undoubted concession to human weakness. The same concession to human weakness applied to other cities apart from Ai; it became a general policy that "all the spoil of these cities... the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves"; and yet following straight on from this we are told that Joshua "left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses" (Josh. 11:14,15). God accepted those concessions to human weakness, this living on a lower level, as total obedience. The grace of all this is marvellous.

Deu 20:15 Thus you must do to all the cities which are very far off from you, which are not of the cities of nearby nations-
Nations "far off" surely still referred to nations within the land promised to Abraham. God had spoken of the time when He would "enlarge" the land up to that limit (Ex. 34:24; Dt. 12:20; 19:8). He presumably envisaged a 'stage two' of the conquest of that territory, but stage two was to be more lenient. The assumption was that all idolatry would be stamped out from Canaan, and Israel would be totally faithful to Yahweh. But this didn't happen, and so the planned "stage two" never happened. We see how God sets up potentials in great detail, but they may never happen because they depend upon human freewill. The fact that in one sense He knows the future... reflects His utter integrity in His dealings. He sets up potentials in great detail, even if He foresees that they will not be realized. The detailed descriptions of the temple to be built by the exiles in Ez. 40-48 is another example; this never happened as planned and as detailed, and never will do- for Israel would not. And the same is true in countless human lives.

Deu 20:16 But of the cities of these peoples that Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, you must save alive nothing that breathes-
See on :15. The destruction of all the breathes suggests a new creation. As the flood destroyed all that breathed within the *eretz* promised to Abraham, so Israel were to do in Canaan.

Deu 20:17 you must utterly destroy them: the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as Yahweh your God has commanded you-
Rahab was aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and not make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18). When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (Josh. 2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "Your terror is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word for "terror" is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "fainting" in fear- quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "faint" (AV "melt away") because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the impossible- that she would be the exception, that with her a covenant would be made. When she says that "we have heard" about the Exodus (Josh. 2:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people shall hear and be afraid". In this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have"- 'yes, we have heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we are afraid'. Seeking God's face is actually to strive for the unachievable in this life; but it's what we are to do. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

Deu 20:18 so that they do not teach you to do after all their abominations, which they have done to their gods; so would you sin against Yahweh your God-
The total destruction of the Canaanites was because they would present a temptation to the Israelites which God foreknew they would not be able to handle. We see His sensitivity to the spiritual limits of everyone, and that is so to this day, leading up to the wonderful promise of 1 Cor. 10:13 that we will never be tested beyond our capability. This is a comfort when passing through apparently overwhelming tests and temptations. As discussed on :15, God envisaged a 'stage two' of the conquest of the territory promised to Abraham, but stage two was to be more lenient, allowing the conquered people to live. The assumption was that all idolatry would be stamped out from Canaan, and Israel would be totally faithful to Yahweh before they embarked upon this second stage. And therefore absolutely all remnants of Canaanites and their culture must be destroyed.

Deu 20:19 When you besiege a city a long time in making war against it to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them, for you may eat of them, and you shall not cut them down. Is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you?-
The Law of Moses sought to inculcate a culture of care and sensitivity to others, and this

spirit was fulfilled ultimately in the life and death of the Lord. The continued stress on not cooking a kid in its mothers milk was surely to teach sensitivity to the feelings of the mother goat- to encourage the Israelite to feel for others, even if they are animals, and seek to enter something of their feelings. And the sensitivity and thoughtfulness of God extends even to His plant creation; a tree was to be considered for who and what it was, and not treated as an enemy. And how much *more* sensitive is the Father to humankind!

Deu 20:20 Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you shall destroy; cut them down. And you shall build bulwarks against the city that makes war with you until it falls-

The implication may be that the bulwarks should be built from non fruit bearing trees, presumably those more evidently under the curse of Eden than others. Whatever the precise intention, clearly the soldiers were to be restrained from creating wanton havoc. There was to be a restraint of blood lust and a desire to destroy which can become obsessive in wartime. For the whole military operation, as any human enterprise, was to be of God and not man.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 21

Deu 21:1 If anyone is found slain in the land which Yahweh your God gives you to possess, lying in the field and it isn't known who has struck him-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 21:2 then your elders and your judges must come forth and measure to the cities

which are around him who is slain-
We note that the judges were to be involved in the physical work of measuring. Any in a decision making position need to get their hands dirty with the actual cases they are dealing with, understanding the situation on the ground. Through this process, the judges would have seen the body, or at least its location, and become very familiar with the territory around it.

Deu 21:3 The elders of the city which is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer of the herd, which hasn't been worked with and which has not drawn the yoke-
The Lord's crucifixion "near to the city" (Jn. 19:20) connected with Jerusalem thereby being guilty of His blood (Dt. 21:3). Heifers were used for work (Jud. 14:18; Hos. 10:11; Jer. 50:11), so this was a heifer especially reared for use in such sacrificial rituals.

Deu 21:4 and the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer to a valley with running water, which is neither ploughed nor sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley-
The idea was that the flowing water in the river would as it were bear away the guilt of the sin. But although the Bible teaches that there is no immortal soul nor conscious survival of death, such wrong ideas were likely clearly in the thoughts of paganic Israel. There was an idea that departed spirits congregated in dry places (Lk. 11:24) but feared water, just as ghosts in the old England were thought to never cross bridges. And so the association of this flowing water with the corpse and heifer's blood, the symbol of the man's life, was in part a concession to their weakness of faith and understanding. The idea was that he was now carried away and was not there any more.

Deu 21:5 The priests the sons of Levi must come near, for them Yahweh your God has chosen to minister to Him and to bless in the name of Yahweh, and according to their word shall every controversy be decided-
The system of judges proposed by Jethro didn't really work, because Moses again felt the burden was too great for him (see on Num. 11:11), and so the 70 Spirit filled elders were appointed (Num. 11:16). But this too didn't really work; because in Dt. 17:11; 21:5 we seem to read of the priests effectively being the judges, under the direct control of Moses and Aaron. The simple truth was that there was hardly a wise man amongst them.

Although the Levites had been set apart for Divine service immediately after God's meeting with Israel at Sinai, as outlined in Leviticus and Numbers, it seems that not until Aaron died at the end of the 40 years wandering did they actually in practice begin to serve as intended (Dt. 10:8). It could be that the reason was that the Levites were ever

slow to accept their responsibilities. And they generally failed in their calling over Israel's history, climaxing in the priests arranging the murder of God's own Son.

Proverbs stresses that the man who loves wisdom will be able to judge wisely (Prov. 2:9; 31:9). Yet it was the priests who were the judges of Israel (Dt. 19:17), they were the ones to whom hard cases were brought. Yet Proverbs implies all could act as priests. "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable (a word elsewhere used concerning the priests' service, Dt. 21:5) than (the offering of) sacrifice" (Prov. 21:5). Loving wisdom would give the ordinary Israelite a crown on his head (Prov. 4:9), alluding to the High Priestly crown (Ex. 29:6; Zech. 6:11).

Deu 21:6 All the elders of that city who are nearest to the slain man must wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley-
Washing hands was a protestation of innocence (Ps. 26:6; Mt. 27:24). The comment that "*t*he guilt of blood shall be forgiven them" (:8) seems to suggest that they were somehow guilty until they protested their innocence. This runs quite contrary to the spirit of 'innocent until proven guilty' which we have observed elsewhere in the law of Moses. But the idea seems to be that clearly a sin had been committed, which the community had collective guilt and responsibility for. But God was eager to forgive this, and from then on, the community need no longer worry about any lingering sense of guilt or curse, of the kind which primitive communities tended to have. So this procedure was in some ways a concession to the weakness of Israel in having these pagan ideas and fears of guilt for unresolved murder.

Deu 21:7 and they shall say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it-
GNB "We did not murder this one, and we do not know who did it".

Deu 21:8 Forgive, Yahweh, your people Israel whom You have redeemed, and don't allow innocent blood to be among Your people Israel. The guilt of blood shall be forgiven them-
See on :6. The red heifer is called a sin offering (Num. 19:9), but we note that here it was not burnt neither was it offered upon an altar. It seems to look ahead specifically to the work of the Lord Jesus. As defined in more detail in Num. 19, the ashes of the red heifer purified the impure / unclean, but defiled the clean. This is an intentional paradox, and is meant to highlight how the Lord's work can only benefit those who recognize their uncleanness. He is a doctor, and cannot heal those who consider they need no doctor.

Deu 21:9 So you shall put away the innocent blood from the midst of you, when you do

that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh-
We must read in an ellipsis here: "put away [the guilt of] innocent blood". We could read this as meaning that the community was guilty for having allowed a culture to develop in which murder happened. This is not the same as guilt by association, but the idea is that all of a society is responsible in some way if murder is committed. This sounds strange to the individualistic mindset of many modern people, but was appropriate to the collective mindset of people of the time. And indeed it seems God does recognize this as real guilt which needed some cleansing. Hence the guilt would be put away when and if they did what was right as a community; the ritual of itself would not cleanse, but it worked together, as it were, with a community which followed the culture of kindness inculcated by the law of Moses.

Deu 21:10 When you go forth to battle against your enemies and Yahweh your God delivers them into your hands and you carry them away captive-
This presumably refers to the conquest of lands "far" from Israel, in the rest of the land promised to Abraham, beyond the borders of Canaan. For here it is envisaged that captives would be taken. Whereas the legislation of Dt. 20:15,19 was to the effect that this would only happen in the areas "far" from Canaan, and all within Canaan was to be destroyed. God had spoken of the time when He would "enlarge" the land up to that limit (Ex. 34:24; Dt. 12:20; 19:8). He presumably envisaged a 'stage two' of the conquest of that territory, but stage two was to be more lenient. The assumption was that all idolatry would be stamped out from Canaan, and Israel would be totally faithful to Yahweh. But this didn't happen, and so the planned "stage two" never happened. We see how God sets up potentials in great detail, but they may never happen because they depend upon human freewill. This is discussed more on Dt. 20:15,19.

Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

Deu 21:11 and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you have a desire to her and would take her to you as a wife-
Throughout the Old Covenant there is the repeated stress that Israel were not to marry Gentiles. This was so far from the Biblical ideal of marriage. But then there is a concession to their likely weakness in Dt. 21:11-15: If they saw a beautiful woman among their enemies whom they liked, they had to put her through certain rituals, and then they could marry her. See on Dt. 20:14. The legislation in :11-14 is unique amongst the surrounding nations, where women were seen as objects of booty and were treated with far less sensitivity than this and usually raped in this situation. Likewise the law of :18-21 teaches equal reverence for *both* parents and not just the father.

Deu 21:12 then you shall bring her home to your house. She must shave her head and pare her nails-
The only provision for marrying a Gentile involved her going through a process of separation from her parents, reconciling herself to the fact she would never see them again, and making her realize that because she was outside the covenant, she was to be treated like a leper or defiled person (Dt. 21:11,12 = Num. 6:9; Lev. 14:9). Only once she had learnt this lesson could she enter into covenant with God's people and be married. The woman was to remove all her cosmetic beauty, so that she were married for who she was as a person and not because of any surface level attraction.

Deu 21:13 and put off the clothing of her captivity and remain in your house and bewail her father and her mother a full month. After that you shall go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife-
This was so radically different to the surrounding ideas of victory and spoil, whereby women were grabbed as trophies and slept with immediately as a sign of dominance. The value and meaning of the human person is powerfully reflected throughout the Mosaic law.

Deu 21:14 If you have no delight in her, then you must let her go where she will, but you must not sell her at all for money. Since you have humbled her, you must not deal with her as a slave-
Again, as noted on :13, this breathes the need for deep respect of the personhood of the woman. This was quite contrary to surrounding ideas of taking spoil, where the whole idea was to "humble" those conquered. "Humbled her" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict

people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing.

Deu 21:15 If a man has two wives, the one beloved and the other hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the firstborn son be hers who was hated-
This legislation was only operable if the man recognized that he hated [possibly meaning 'to love less'] one of his wives. Husbands would likely claim that this was not the case. The law of Moses is unique amongst legal codes in that it judges the attitudes of the heart, and legislation such as this requires total internal honesty in order to function.

Deu 21:16 then in the day that he causes his sons to inherit that which he has, he must not make the son of the beloved the firstborn before the son of the hated, who is the firstborn-
This implies that a father could "cause his sons to inherit" before his death, and we see this reflected in the parable of the prodigal son in Lk. 15. We marvel at the internal corroboration within the Biblical record. But in :18-20 we then notice another allusion to this section of scripture by the Lord in His parable. We wonder whether the two sons of the parable refer to the two sons envisaged here, the first male children born by each of his two wives. And again we can no more than wonder whether there is some reference to Jacob and Esau, Jacob being beloved by God whereas Esau was hated or loved less (Rom. 9:13). One point of the parable's allusions to this section is to show that God, the Father, doesn't keep His own law because His grace and passionate love takes Him beyond mere legalism.

Deu 21:17 He shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the hated, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his-
This means that in a situation where there were two sons, the younger son's share was one third. In the parable of the prodigal son, the younger son is given *half* – such was the Father's love for him. This element of unreality in the parable is to signpost the amazing level of love the Father has for us; even when He knows that we will waste what He gives, still He gives, and gives generously.

At the very end, Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons as the firstborn is seen as an act of faith (Gen. 48:5; Heb. 11:21). Yet on another level, Jacob was taking the blessings away from the firstborn who was the son of the wife he disliked, and giving those blessings to

the son of his favourite wife, who was not the firstborn. This was quite contrary to the will of God as expressed in Dt. 21:17. At best we can say that God allowed one principle to be broken to keep another (although what other?). At worst, Jacob was simply showing rank favouritism, and yet at the same time he foresaw in faith the Messianic suggestions in Joseph's experience, and therefore made Joseph's sons the firstborn. God saw the good in Jacob at this time, and counted this to him, and recognized and worked with Joseph's decision to make "the son of the hated" the firstborn (1 Chron. 5:1), even though this may have been contrary to God's highest intentions.

Deu 21:18 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father nor the voice of his mother and, though they chasten him, will not listen to them-
We are left to imagine in what tone of voice Moses said that. Israel had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh through disbelief, and therefore couldn't enter Canaan (Dt. 1:26; 9:7,23,24; 31:27; Num. 27:4); they were as the rebellious son who rebelled against his father's commandment (s.w. Dt. 21:18,20). For he himself had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and because of this was also barred from entering Canaan (Num. 20:24; 27:14). One reason for this was that he had called the Israelites "rebels" (Num. 20:10), and no sooner had he done so, than he himself rebelled against Yahweh's commandment just like them, but in a different way. I will explain on :21 that the judgment of stoning implied false teaching. The terms "stubborn" and "rebellious" are associated with idolatry, and so it seems to me that the disobedience was more than simple disobedience to domestic commands, but rather an intentional, conscious desire to teach idolatry and rebel against the covenant.

Deu 21:19 then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out to the elders of his city and to the gate of his town-
See on :20. "Then shall..." need not be read as absolute command; for the parable of the prodigal son features the Father running beyond the gate of the town in order to escort his wayward son home, rather than allowing him to fall into the hands of the elders of the city as he passed through the gates. We cannot just disregard Divine commandment, but it is also so that the way of grace is above legalism and literalism.

Deu 21:20 They shall tell the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard-
This is exactly how the prodigal son is described. And we have noted many points of contact between that parable and this section of the law. One point of the parable's allusions to this section is to show that God, the Father, doesn't keep His own law because His grace and passionate love takes Him beyond mere legalism. For instead of reporting the son to the elders and having him stoned, the Father showers him with grace and acceptance. The older brother is presented as the one who wished to follow

this law to the letter, and he thereby remains outside the Father's fellowship- by his own choice.

Deu 21:21 All the men of his city must stone him to death with stones. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you, and all Israel shall hear and fear-
The use of stoning (Dt. 13:10; 17:5; 21:21; 22:21,24) was to show their connection with the death of the apostate. It was to also make them realize that any attempt to deny the saving work of God in bringing them out of Egypt, or attempt to reverse it by returning them to bondage, was worthy of death (Dt. 13:10). We note that false teaching, enticing others to sin, is seen as the most serious kind of sin. I suggest therefore that the rebellious son in view was more than simply disobedient to his father's voice. As noted on :18, the rebellion in view may well have been in rebelling against the covenant and enticing others to worship other gods. The New Testament teaching about church discipline takes a similar approach; moral weakness of individuals was tolerated, although criticized; but those teaching such behaviour were condemned. Stoning resulted in the covering of the body with the dust of the earth, as if recognizing that the death being brought about was also to be the fate of all under the curse in Eden.

Deu 21:22 If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and is put to death and you hang him on a tree-
These words (and :23) have been misunderstood as meaning that the Lord as a living being was under one of the Law's curses of condemnation, and "worthy of death". This cannot be. It must be remembered that crucifixion was a Roman, not Jewish method. The Deuteronomy passage was not written with reference to crucifixion, but rather to the custom of displaying the already dead body of a sinner on a pole as a witness and warning (cp. the display of Saul's body). Sin brought the curse; and so every sinful person who died for their sin was bearing the curse of God. They were to be buried quickly as a sign of God taking no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The Lord died the death of a sinner; He bore our sins, and therefore our curse (Gal. 3:13,14). Every condemned sinner whose body had been displayed had been a type of the sinless Son of God. He was exhibited there for one or two hours (until Joseph got the permission to take the body), totally, totally united with sinful man. And then, because God had no pleasure in this condemnation of sin, the body was taken and buried.

Deu 21:23 his body must not remain all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him the same day (for cursed of God is he who is hanged on a tree), so that you don't defile your land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance-
The Jews "slew (Jesus) and hanged (him) on a tree" (Acts 5:30). There seems to be a distinction here; as if the 'slaying' was an ongoing process in His ministry, crowned by

the final hanging on the tree. Paul speaks similarly in Galatians; as if the body was already dead when it was lifted up on the tree; for he quotes the Mosaic law regarding the body of a dead criminal being displayed on a tree as if it was descriptive of the Lord's death (Gal. 3:13 cp. Dt. 21:23).

An interesting point comes out of the Greek text of Lk. 23:39: "One of the criminals who were *suspended* reviled him" (Diaglott). Ancient paintings show the thieves tied by cords to the crosses, not nailed as was Christ. *Hanging* on a tree became an idiom for crucifixion, even if nails were actually used (Dt. 21:23 cp. Gal. 3:13; Acts 5:30; 10:39). If this were so, we see the development of a theme: that the whole ingenuity of man was pitted against the Father and Son. Christ was nailed, not tied; the tomb was sealed and guarded; the legal process was manipulated; the Lord was flogged as well as crucified.

We see here that one dimension of crucifixion on a tree was public shame and public instruction. These were all aspects of the Lord's death. Dt. 21:23 had commanded this taking down bodies of criminals from the tree where they were exhibited, by evening; even condemned criminals were to be shown some respect. For after dark wild animals and birds would have eaten them. We see here reflected how God truly takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. We need not unduly fear condemnation, for God doesn't want to condemn people.

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Luke saw a link between the Lord's death and His whole life when he says that they had been "eyewitnesses" of the Lord's ministry, using the Greek word for autopsy- Luke saw his record of the Lord's life as being an autopsy of His death (Lk. 1:2). Perhaps this idea explains why Paul likens the Lord on the cross to the body of the criminal lifted up *after* death, not in order to lead to death (Gal. 3:13; Dt. 21:23)- as if he understood the Lord to have been effectively dead unto sin at the time the body was lifted up on the cross. He was there the propitiation for our sins, and yet He is that now, each time we sin (1 Jn. 2:1; 4:10). Paul speaks similarly in Galatians; as if the body was already dead when it was lifted up on the tree; for he quotes the Mosaic law regarding the body of a dead criminal being displayed on a tree as if it was descriptive of the Lord's death (Gal. 3:13

cp. Dt. 21:23). The veil symbolized the flesh of the Lord; and yet in it was woven scarlet, a symbol of His blood and sacrifice (Ex. 27:16), which permeated His mortal life. The lesson is that the cross is a daily way of life.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 22

Deu 22:1 You must not see your brother's ox or his sheep go astray and hide yourself from them; you must surely bring them again to your brother-
This penetrates psychologically to the very core of our inaction and frequent sins of omission- we hide the need we encounter from ourselves. We pretend we have not seen. Prov. 28:27 uses the same word: "He that gives to the poor shall not lack: but he that hides his eyes shall have many a curse" (as in Is. 58:7- "Deal your bread to the hungry.... hide not your eyes"). This theme of sins of omission is continued throughout the chapter in :8 and in connection with the woman who did not cry out when raped, for fear of social consequence, being punished with the same punishment as the rapist.

Deu 22:2 If your brother isn't near to you, or if you don't know him, then you shall bring it home to your house and it shall be with you until your brother seeks after it, and you shall restore it to him-
One theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: here, coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of his people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations, so superbly typifies that of Jesus.

Deu 22:3 So you must do with his donkey and with his garment and with every lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found; you must not keep it to yourself-
LXX "thou shalt not have power to overlook", as in :4 "hide yourself from them". The idea is that they were not to pretend they didn't notice that the lost item actually belonged to someone else. Time and again, the Mosaic law addresses issues of the heart. Here, self

deception is specifically targetted. No other legal code pays so much attention to the heart; for Yahweh alone can judge human hearts and attitudes.

Deu 22:4 You must not see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him to lift them up again-
"Hide yourself" as in :3 addresses directly the self deception of the human heart, pretending that we've not seen nor understood a situation. The Bible gives us helpful insight into human psychology and assists us in the practical business of being spiritually minded- for this is of critical importance to God. We see a situation that requires us to act in the way of love, and yet the 'devil' of our own mind tempts us to think that we didn't in fact understand correctly. Spirituality is about who we are when nobody's watching, and the situation here envisages encountering a situation which only we know about.

Deu 22:5 A woman must not wear men's clothing neither should a man put on women's clothing, for whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh your God-
The reference is to some form of sexual perversion. Perhaps this section is not simply random commandments thrown together. Maybe the theme which connects the commandments here is self deception [discussed on :3,4], persuading ourselves of another narrative which is untrue; for that is the root of much sexual perversion.

Deu 22:6 If a bird's nest happens to be before you in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the hen sitting on the young or on the eggs, you must not take the hen with the young-
As in :4, this envisages a situation encountered privately. The law of Moses legislates so often about cases which were intensely private, where there would be no witnesses. This is because this unique legal code is a contract between God [who is witness to all things] and His people. Who we are when nobody else is watching is the essence of true spirituality.

A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The

sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

Deu 22:7 You must surely let the hen go, but the young you may take to yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days-
The bird could only be taken if it was devoted to its young and was willing to die with them, rather than flying away. Such loyalty was to be noticed and respected. This is how to 'do life' in a spiritual way- perceive the good even in the natural creation and learn from it.

Things 'going well / good' with Israel is the language of the Kingdom of God in Dt. 8:16 "to do you good / well at your latter end". It is associated with days being prolonged (Dt. 22:7) and the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Dt. 30:5), and Israel and the children somehow existing "forever" (Dt. 12:28). So I deduce in the wish "that it may go well with you" a hint towards the eternal establishment of God's Kingdom based around Israel, what Paul terms "the hope of Israel".

Deu 22:8 When you build a new house you must make a battlement for your roof, so that you don't bring blood on your house if anyone falls from there-
There is a big principle here. We are responsible for the fall of others, to death or spiritually, if we do not take adequate care for them. That is a principle which alone can drive our entire life's work.

Deu 22:9 You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole fruit be forfeited, the seed which you have sown, and the increase of the vineyard-
"Forfeited" is AV "defiled". The idea of the Hebrew is sanctification. The whole fruit was to dedicated in this case- maybe to destruction, maybe to the priests. The commandments about not inappropriately mixing things are sandwiched between commandments about avoiding sexual perversion and inappropriate bonding, such as adultery, sex with a father's wife (:30), and the perversion of :5, which is also about inappropriate mixture of sexual behaviours. The idea of these commands about not mixing seed and animals may be as it were a fence around these laws. The fear was that this was going to be a subliminal temptation towards sin. Rather like the command not to plant trees near an altar of Yahweh, lest this lead to the subliminal temptation to worship the trees like an Asherah grove.

Deu 22:10 You shall not plough with an ox and a donkey together-
This is the basis for the command not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cot. 6:14). As discussed on :9, there was nothing intrinsically sinful with such ploughing, although it would likely have been painful and frustrating for both parties. But

it was a warning against inappropriate bonding. The donkey was an unclean animal, and the ox was clean. Clearly the lesson to be learned was that clean and unclean were not to be mixed, under the excuse of needing to work together in order to get a job done.

Deu 22:11 You shall not wear mixed stuff, wool and linen together-
Again, as discussed on :9,10, there is nothing intrinsically sinful about this. Rather the idea was that in daily life, there was to be the lesson of separation and avoidance of inappropriate bonding. Just as the ox and donkey of :10 were clean and unclean which should not be mixed, it could be argued that "linen" came from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28; Prov. 7:16; Ez. 27:7), whilst wool was the classic produce of Israel. "Mixed stuff" translates a word which appears to be of Egyptian origin.

Deu 22:12 You shall make yourselves fringes on the four borders of your garment with which you cover yourself-
Each Israelite was to emulate the High Priest, who had such clothing. Daily reminders of spirituality are vital in the daily round of life; these fringes or tassles were to remind them to be obedient (Num. 15:37-41). It is therefore significant that the sick woman of Mt. 9:20 took hold of the fringes of the Lord's garment, perhaps showing some appreciation of the fact that He alone was totally obedient.

Deu 22:13 If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and hates her-
The clear implication is that sex was to follow marriage and not to happen beforehand (also :14). The hatred he feels is either because he doesn't find her a virgin (:14), or because having broken through the taboo and psychological barrier of intercourse, his previous love for her turns to hatred, as in 2 Sam. 13:15, where intercourse made "love" turn to hatred, and he then wanted to slander her as an immoral woman in order to annul the marriage. This is a commonly experienced situation. And the Mosaic law addresses it. LXX "and dwell with her, and hate her" seems to begin this legislation with the hint that the man is likely the guilty one, getting angry with his wife after the honeymoon period is over, as is often observed in marriages. This taking the woman's side is never seen in other legislation of the time.

Deu 22:14 and accuses her of shameful things and brings up an evil name on her and says, I took this woman and when I came near to her I didn't find in her the tokens of virginity-
The argument is weak, because if the token of virginity was a cloth (:17), then he would have been given this when they married. For him to sleep with her without seeing it, and then later demand it, would be strange. And no cloth is absolute guarantee of virginity. However the idea may be that the breaking of the hymen was supposed to cause

bleeding which then stained the bed sheet, and the husband then gave this stained sheet to the parents (:15). If this didn't happen, the man assumed his wife was not a virgin. The bed sheet was unstained. But there was no evidence that was the sheet they had slept together on. And not every woman bleeds when she first has intercourse; and there is the possibility of menstrual bleeding too. The hymen is a fragile tissue with limited blood supply to it, and it can break for many reasons. In any case, it would surely be unreasonable to assume that a broken hymen meant a woman was a whore (:21). I conclude therefore that there must be implied in :20 a far wider examination of the situation, before the woman was declared a whore. Perhaps we are intended to discern that the "cloth" argument is suspect, and therefore the man is likely lying and seeking an excuse to end the marriage because he failed to truly love the woman; see on :13.

Deu 22:15 then shall the father of the young woman and her mother take and bring forth the tokens of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city in the gate-
GNB "the young woman's parents are to take the blood-stained wedding sheet that proves she was a virgin". This suggests it was the custom to give the sheet to the parents of the girl. But I have discussed on :13 that not every woman bleeds the first time she has sex. It's possible that the whole legislation is being given, in order to suggest the conclusion: "This is all so hard to prove, the way ahead is only love and forgiveness".

Deu 22:16 The young woman's father shall tell the elders, I gave my daughter to this man to wife and he hates her-
An accusation that the woman was a whore was a slander of her father and her family. And so often this happens- an individual dislikes another, and the slander raised against them makes social life impossible for the family. All because of the dysfunction of one individual against another.

Deu 22:17 and behold, he has accused her of shameful things saying, 'I didn't find in your daughter the tokens of virginity', and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. They shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city-
I have discussed on :13 that the idea of a literal bed sheet from their first night sleeping together was hardly evidence of virginity. And it was hardly upon that basis that she could be judged to have been a whore (:21). I am not generally in favour of metaphorical or symbolic interpretations, but the Jewish rabbis are understandably insistent that to spread a cloth before people as evidence is an idiom for declaring the full facts of a case. Whilst a literal bed sheet may have been used, it was symbolic of far more. And that seems to me the only explanation that makes sense here. See on :20.

Deu 22:18 The elders of that city must take the man and chastise him-

Chastise can mean to literally beat, or to sternly reprove with words.

Deu 22:19 and they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman-
Dowry was apparently considered to be 50 shekels (:29), so the man was being treated as a thief, who must restore twice the value he had stolen (Ex. 22:8). He had sought to 'steal back' the dowry by claiming the woman was not a virgin.

Because he has brought up an evil name on a virgin of Israel, and she shall be his wife; he may not divorce her all his days-
This reflects the seriousness with which God views slander. It was to be paid to the father- for slander hurts not only the victim but also their family. Prov. 17:4 has a piercing analysis of gossip: "A wicked doer gives heed to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a lying tongue". It's the wicked who listen to gossip. It's liars who pay attention to lies. By listening to gossip, we show what sort of a person we are. Those with an interest in lies or gossip end up lying and gossiping themselves. Both gossiping and listening to it are both therefore part of a serious downward spiral of behaviour; and they are related to each other. This is how serious this matter is. The seriousness of it was reflected in how the Law of Moses stipulated a huge penalty if a man sullied the name of his wife by falsely accusing her- he had to pay 100 shekels of silver, twice the bride price (Dt. 22:19,29). This was a heavy fine, double that for raping a virgin (:29).

The ruling that he could never divorce her reveals how the Law of Moses operated on different levels. Divorce was only permitted for unfaithfulness, which was punishable by death. But this command suggests that divorce was permitted in practice for lesser issues.

Divorce was clearly possible under the Mosaic system. If a man's wife committed adultery he could have her killed; *or* he could put her through the trial of jealousy of Num. 5, with the result that she would become barren; or he could divorce her (Dt. 22:19; 24:1 RV; Lev. 21:14; 22:13). Within a Law that was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), unsurpassed in it's righteousness (Dt. 4:8; and let us not overlook these estimations), there were these different levels of response possible. But there was a higher level: he could simply forgive her. This was what God did with His fickle Israel, time and again (Hos. 3:1-3). And so the Israelite faced with an unfaithful wife could respond on at least four levels. This view would explain how divorce seems outlawed in passages like Dt. 22:19,29, and yet there are other parts of the OT which seem to imply that it was permitted. It should be noted that there were some concessions to weakness under the Law which the Lord was not so willing to make to His followers (e.g., outside the marriage context, Dt. 20:5-8 cp. Lk. 9:59-62; 14:18,19). He ever held before us the

Biblical ideal of marriage. It was as if God gave these laws, intending purposefully that the way of grace was to be beyond them.

Deu 22:20 But if this thing is true, that the tokens of virginity were not found in the young woman-

I have argued on :14 that the evidence of the "cloth" alone is suspect. The presence or absence of blood on the bed sheet the couple first slept on was no evidence that the woman was a whore (:21) and worthy of death. Therefore I think much hinges upon these words "If this thing be true". It must imply that a major investigation was made, as to why she appeared not to be a virgin when she married her husband. The punishment of a whore in :21 was only to be given if this had been established beyond doubt, far beyond the bed sheet evidence.

Deu 22:21 then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house and the men of her city must stone her to death with stones, because she has done folly in Israel, to play the prostitute in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you-

The use of stoning (Dt. 13:10; 17:5; 21:21; 22:21,24) was to show their connection with the death of the apostate. It was to also make them realize that any attempt to deny the saving work of God in bringing them out of Egypt, or attempt to reverse it by returning them to bondage, was worthy of death (Dt. 13:10). To act as a prostitute was to lead others into sin. We note that false teaching, enticing others to sin, is seen as the most serious kind of sin. The New Testament teaching about church discipline takes a similar approach; moral weakness of individuals was tolerated, although criticized; but those teaching such behaviour were condemned. Stoning resulted in the covering of the body with the dust of the earth, as if recognizing that the death being brought about was also to be the fate of all under the curse in Eden.

LXX "turning her father's house into a harlot's" suggests that the "shameful things" she stood accused of (:17) were more than having slept with another village boy years previously. The accusation was that she was in fact a prostitute, hence the severe judgment, and the explanation on :17,20 that there was a major investigation made of the woman, far beyond the dubious evidence of a bed sheet with blood on it.

Deu 22:22 If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they must both of them die, the man who lay with the woman and the woman. So you shall put away the evil from Israel-

There are various ways prescribed for dealing with adultery under the Law of Moses. This was one of them. The trial of jealousy (Num. 5) was another. Or the adulterous woman could be divorced. But the higher option, as practiced by Yahweh through

Hosea, was to forgive and "play on". "They must... you shall..." were therefore all phrases open to interpretation. The very existence of different levels of response to God's principles of itself inspires us to reach up to the highest levels. For who can be a minimalist before the grace and love of God. Or we could argue that the stress is upon if the couple were "found lying" together, and therefore the public nature of the discovery required a stronger response. But the Lord dealt with such a case, and taught that although this command was true, the problem is that none are without sin, and therefore no man should in honest conscience seek to obey this commandment. His view of morality and ethics was far above mere literalistic, legalistic obedience to commandments. He seems to reason as if this commandment was inserted into the law to elicit in honest men an awareness that they could not in good conscience obey it.

Deu 22:23 If there is a young woman who is a virgin pledged to be married to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her-
As an example of unconscious allusion, consider Lk. 1:27: “A virgin betrothed to a man”. This is right out of Dt. 22:23 LXX “If there be a virgin betrothed to a man...”. The context is quite different, but the wording is the same. And in many other cases, Luke picks up phraseology from the LXX apparently without attention to the context. He saw the whole of the OT as having its fulfilment in the story of Jesus.

Deu 22:24 then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you must stone them to death with stones; the woman, because she didn’t cry, being in the city, and the man, because he has humbled his neighbour’s wife-
Rape is rarely a case of a man picking upon a random female victim. Usually there is an element of manipulation in forms other than physical forcing. But the woman in the case was to be condemned because she all the same didn't cry out and thus avoid penetration. She valued her image in society more than her marriage.

So you shall put away the evil from among you-
“The evil one” in the Old Testament was always “the evil man in Israel” (Dt. 17:12; 19:19; 22:21–24 cp. 1 Cor. 5:13) – never a superhuman being, not any personal, superhuman Satan.

Deu 22:25 But if the man finds the woman who is pledged to be married in the field, and the man forces her and lies with her, then the man only who lay with her must die-
This gives the woman the benefit of the doubt, assuming she would have cried out, unlike the woman of :24. This giving the benefit of the doubt is to be part of our generally positive outlook upon people and the cases we encounter in life.

Deu 22:26 but to the woman you shall do nothing; there is in the woman no sin worthy of death. For as when a man rises against his neighbour and kills him, even so is this matter-
The phrase "found her in the field" in :27 leads us to assume that the similarity is being drawn with a murdered body being found in a field. There was no evidence she hadn't called out, so she was not to be condemned without evidence.

Deu 22:27 for when he found her in the field, the betrothed woman cried and there was none to save her-
The assumption is that she cried. There was no investigation as to whether she had cried out or not. The law here is very protective to women and assuming their innocence, in stark contrast to the legal codes of the surrounding nations.

Deu 22:28 If a man finds a woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and lays hold on her and lies with her and they are found-
There is no mention of her crying out, so we can assume that this may not refer to rape but rather a boyfriend / girlfriend situation where they were "found" or discovered, possibly through her falling pregnant. This is why the judgment was that they must marry (:29), which would be inappropriate if the man in view was a random rapist. The equivalent in Ex. 22:16 is "If a man entices a virgin who isn't pledged to be married". The fault in this case is placed more with the man. The law here is again very protective to women and assuming their innocence, in stark contrast to the legal codes of the surrounding nations.

Deu 22:29 then the man who lay with her must give to the woman's father fifty shekels of silver and she shall be his wife, because he has humbled her; he may not put her away all his days-
Divorce was allowed for adultery, so the implication is that if she committed adultery, then divorce was not to be an option. It was as if having wronged her, the man was to exercise maximum forgiveness to her if she were to wrong him. The tendency for the woman to 'hit back' at her husband in later life is here well understood by God, and leniency would have to be shown to her by the husband.

Deu 22:30 A man must not take his father's wife, and shall not uncover his father's skirt-
These laws teach that nakedness should only be uncovered before your wife or husband. Uncovering nakedness is an idiom for the sexual act. The allusion is to Adam and Eve having their nakedness uncovered; we have to accept the situation we are in as a result of the curse, rather than having sexual relations with who we like, as if uncovering nakedness is nothing shameful. Our hope is for the curse put on us in Eden

to be lifted at Christ's return; we can't lift it in this life, as our own ever insistent mortality reminds us.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 23

Deu 23:1 He who is wounded in the testicles, or has his privy member cut off, must not enter into the assembly of Yahweh-
Perhaps the point is that all those who are the Lord's people must recognize their ability to procreate for Him, in the bringing forth of yet others in their Lord's image. Males who could not procreate were barred from the congregation, possibly in prototype of how spiritual procreation was to be a vital characteristic of the future Israel. To bring forth spiritual children in the course of our life before God is expected of us. Israel were seen by the Lord as the tree by the roadside (Mt. 21:19), whose fruit should have been for all that passed by (Dt. 23:24). But because there was not even the glimmer of this kind of giving of fruit, they were condemned by the Lord.

Deu 23:2 An illegitimate person must not enter into the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation shall none of his enter into the assembly of Yahweh-
According to Talmudic writings like *Yebamot* 78b, Dt. 23:2 was interpreted as meaning that a fatherless man wasn't allowed to enter the temple or marry a true Israelite. The reference to Jesus as "son of Mary" (Mk. 6:3) rather than "son of Joseph" is, apparently, very unusual. It reflects the Lord's lack of social identity in first century Israel; He had no father's house to belong to. In passing, the jibe in Mt. 27:64 "the last deception shall be worse than the first" is likely a reference to Mary and Jesus claiming that He was the result of a virgin birth- this, as far as the Jews were concerned, was the "first deception".

Deu 23:3 An Ammonite or a Moabite must not enter into the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation shall none belonging to them enter into the assembly of Yahweh forever-
This would have applied to Ruth, but so many of these laws of Moses had exceptions to them. It was as if God gave these laws, intending purposefully that the way of grace was to be beyond them. See on Dt. 22:19.

Deu 23:4 This is because they didn't meet you with bread and water in the way, when you came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you-
Dt. 2:29 says that the Edomites and Moabites sold Israel food and water as they passed through. But Dt. 23:3,4 says that the Moabites didn't do this and were cursed because

of it. Perhaps a few Moabites did do so, but Moab generally didn't. But see note on Dt. 2:29.

Deu 23:5 Nevertheless Yahweh your God wouldn't listen to Balaam, but Yahweh your God turned the curse into a blessing to you, because Yahweh your God loved you-
Yahweh did not behold iniquity in His people at this time (Num. 23:21). His love was shown in imputing righteousness to them; and as Paul explains in Rom. 1-8, the love of God is articulated through doing this to us too. Dt. 23:5 LXX speaks of Balaam's plural curses being turned into plural blessings, because God refused to listen to Balaam. We learn from this that Balaam wanted to curse Israel [for he so loved the money being offered for doing so], indeed be perhaps began to utter curses, but the Spirit of God overpowered him and made him utter blessings instead. We learn from this that the Spirit of God working upon a person is no guarantee of their personal acceptance with Him. And we marvel at how the love of money drove Balaam to attempt to do what he was clearly not intended to, i.e. to curse Israel. Maybe his unexpressed desires were read by God as a prayer, and to that prayer "Yahweh your God wouldn't listen" (Dt. 23:5). Prayer is therefore not just in the form of spoken words; for then the more verbally articulate would be, as it were, better at prayer. God reads situations and unspoken desires as prayers. For this is what prayer "in the spirit" is all about.

Deu 23:6 You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever-
And yet we read of how Boaz sought the peace and prosperity of Ruth, whom the record seven times stresses was a Moabitess. Clearly the value and meaning of the individual person was so great to God that exceptions could be made to such blanket policy positions. The simple take away is that God values the individual human person to a very great extent.

Deu 23:7 You must not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother-
The brotherhood between Jacob and Esau [who is Edom] is so often recalled in the later Biblical records. This may be to remind Israel that they were no better than Edom; or to remind them of the need for reconciliation to be attempted.

You must not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as a foreigner in his land-
The Egyptians later abused the Israelites, but initially they were their saviours, in human terms, and were extremely generous to them. This commandment was therefore asking them to look back in history and see the past as a glass half full rather than half empty. This is a lesson which needs to be learned. For so many look back in their personal history and see only the abuse and the bad years, rather than appreciating the wider sweep of that history.

Deu 23:8 The children of the third generation who are born to them may enter into the assembly of Yahweh-
This may have been a form of God punishing people to the third generation (Ex. 20:5). This command is presumably time limited, referring to a specific starting point. Perhaps in view are members of the "mixed multitude" which went with Israel out of Egypt, and which would have been addressed at this point.

Deu 23:9 When you go forth to camp against your enemies, you must keep yourselves from every evil thing-
The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 23:10 If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of that which happens to him by night, he must go outside the camp. He shall not come within the camp-
We must be aware that starting in :9, we have here commands specifically relevant to Israel's military; "the camp" is the "camp against your enemies" of :9, referring to "camp" in a specifically military sense. The idea could appear to be that if a man needed to defecate, then he was to do so outside of the camp of soldiers. Having latrines outside the camp would have ensured hygiene within the "camp". But it seems that defecating is what is in view in :12. Therefore this specifically night time reason for uncleanness must refer to an involuntary emission of semen. Hence the reference to what "happens to him at night". Nobody apart from the soldier knew what had happened. Many of the Mosaic commands invited obedience from men on a very

personal and intimate level; for nobody else apart from the soldier would have known whether or not this had happened. This was all designed to inculcate very personal obedience to and relationship with God. See on Ps. 119:55,56.

Deu 23:11 but when evening comes on he must bathe in water, and when the sun is down he shall come within the camp-
To have soldiers needing to remain ritually unclean outside the main camp of soldiers was not perhaps seen as the most effective use of soldiers in a conflict situation, where every man was required. But they were taught thereby that victory was not going to come in their own strength, but through obedience to God's ways. We likewise are tempted to think that careful obedience to God's commands will hinder our material progress in life. But the opposite is in fact true, and this commandment taught that.

Deu 23:12 You must have a place also outside the camp where you shall go to relieve yourself-
This unclean place "outside the camp" is alluded to in Heb. 13:12,13: "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside of the gate. Let us therefore go to him outside the camp, bearing his reproach". The place of crucifixion is likened to the place of "reproach", outside the camp, just as Jesus died outside the city walls of Jerusalem in an unclean place, Golgotha. His death was the climax of a life lived in careful attention to the most intimate requirements of God's laws, as discussed on :10. And we are to unashamedly "go forth" to Him there.

Deu 23:13 and you must have a trowel among your weapons, and when you relieve yourself you must dig with it and turn back and cover that which comes from you-
A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

There is a clear similarity with a dog coverings its own excrement. The idea may be that in going to war, Israel were to remember that they were but unclean dogs, accepted by

grace. Humility, rather than psyching up of soldiers in bravado, was what was required for victory.

Deu 23:14 for Yahweh your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy so that He may not see an unclean thing in you and turn away from you-
In prospect all Israel's battles with the inhabitants of Canaan had been won by the Angels, and it was for them to live in a suitable way and to display enough faith to enable them to make use of these victories. For it was Yahweh through the Angel who walked in the midst of the camp. They were warned that if the camp were impure, Yahweh would turn (Heb.) "from following after you". This recalls how the Angel [who was perhaps dwelling over the ark in the shekinah glory] "went behind" [s.w. "followed"] at the exodus (Ex. 14:19), and "followed them" at the crossing of Jordan and conquest of Jericho (Josh. 6:8 s.w.). The word is also used in Dt. 23:14, where Israel are warned that if they are unclean, then Yahweh will no longer follow them. They of course were bidden follow Him, but He is also presented as following them. And thus God's people hear His voice behind them, urging them to choose the right path (s.w. Is. 30:21); for He is not only their vanguard, but also their rear guard following them (Is. 52:12; 58:8). This indicates not only the mutuality between God and His people; but the sense that we are both following and being followed by Him, as it were sandwiched by His presence.

Deu 23:15 You must not deliver to his master a servant who has escaped from his master to you-
This was to remind them how they were escaped slaves. God wanted them to continually remember the way He had saved them (see too :7), and His law was designed to repeatedly prod their conscience about this in daily life. He wants us to live today in constant awareness of our salvation.

Deu 23:16 He shall dwell with you, in the midst of you in the place which he shall choose within one of your gates, where it pleases him best. You must not oppress him-
There was no mechanism, therefore, for the master to regain a slave who ran away. Unlike most legal codes, the law was on the side of the slave and not of the owner. The master therefore needed to treat slaves well, so that they didn't want to run away. And if they did, he had no legal mechanism to get them back.

Deu 23:17 There must be no prostitute of the daughters of Israel. Neither should there be a sodomite of the sons of Israel-
The implication is that the "Sodomite" refers here to a male prostitute, and the

"prostitute" of the first half of the verse refers to a female prostitute. This is confirmed in :18.

Deu 23:18 You must not bring the hire of a prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of Yahweh your God for any vow, for both of these are an abomination to Yahweh your God-
Prostitution was forbidden under the Law (:17), but this is another tacit recognition made by Moses that such failure would still occur. We see here how Moses forbad something and then went on to give legislation recognizing that it would still occur.

Deu 23:19 You must not lend on interest to your brother, interest of money, of food or of anything that is lent-
Lending was therefore to be seen as an opportunity to help your brother rather than to benefit from him; indeed to lend without interest meant that effectively you were giving your brother something in his time of need.

Deu 23:20 To a foreigner you may lend on interest, but to your brother you shall not lend on interest, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all that you put your hand to in the land where you go in to possess it-
The Lord Jesus in His parable told the rejected man that he should at least have given His money to others on usury (Mt. 25:27). He may have meant that the man should at least have done *something* even if he broke the letter of the law; or He may have meant that if the man had at least shared the Gospel with the Gentiles and got some fruit for Christ, all his other lack of achievement would've been overlooked. The judgment is for the education of those judged. He will shew them how they should have given their talent, the basic Gospel, to others, and therefore gained some interest.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were

constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 23:21 When you make a vow to Yahweh your God you must not be slack to pay it, for Yahweh your God will surely require it of you and it would be sin upon you-
This was to guard against the temptation to make a vow which was publically impressive before men, but then not to pay it. Any attempt to garner kudos for our spiritual devotion is absolutely wrong; such spiritual pride is the worst. God would therefore "require it" and severely judge those who did this (Dt. 23:21). Not being slack to pay a vow (Dt. 23:21) fits in with a wider Biblical theme of being quick in responding to God. It comes to full term in the New Testament accounts of immediate baptisms straight after people had grasped the basic message of the Gospel. "Yes straight away" is what God really seeks from His children. Israel were not to delay in offering their firstfruits to God (Ex. 22:29), lest their intentions weren't translated into practice. The disciples immediately left the ship, simply put their nets down and followed (Mt. 4:20,22); Matthew left his opened books and queue of clients in the tax office and walked out never to return (Lk. 5:17,18 implies).

Deu 23:22 But if you forbear to vow, that will be no sin upon you-
"Sin" is often used to effectively mean "punishment for sin", as here. And this is another great Biblical theme, that sin is of itself its own punishment. This is why those condemned at the last day are effectively self condemned, and indeed judgment day is in this sense right now. For as sin is committed, so is the judgment for that sin, in God's eyes. But repentance and Divine grace can change that judgment.

Deu 23:23 That which has gone out of your lips you must observe and do, according as you have vowed to Yahweh your God, as a freewill offering which you have promised with your mouth-
See on :21. The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

The fact that God’s word is true means that we also ought to be truthful- for we should speak “as oracles of God”. Moses surely intended a connection between his words

recorded in Dt. 8:3 and Dt. 23:23- for they are the only times he uses a particular Hebrew word translated “proceed” or ‘go out’, within the same speech uttered the same day: “By every word that *proceeds* out of the mouth of the Lord does man live... that which *goes forth* [s.w. “proceeds”] out of *your* lips / mouth you shall keep and perform”. The influence of continually hearing *God’s* word should be that *our* words are likewise truthful and trustworthy. The fact that the Bible as God’s word is true has implications for our own truthfulness. *Pistos* is listed as a fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5; but the idea it can carry is not so much of faith in the sense of belief, but of faithfulness, loyalty, reliability, utter dependability. If this is how God’s words are to us, then this is how we and our words should be to others.

Deu 23:24 When you come into your neighbour’s vineyard you may eat your fill of grapes at your own pleasure, but you must not put any in your vessel-
Israel were seen by the Lord as the tree by the roadside (Mt. 21:19), whose fruit should have been for all that passed by (Dt. 23:24). But because there was not even the glimmer of this kind of giving of fruit, they were condemned by the Lord. The command here and in :25 follows straight on from the command to honour the vows we make. Perhaps the sense is that we are not to fulfil our vows by taking grapes or grain from our brother. The abiding principle is that we are not to sacrifice that which costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24). Sacrifice means being left "minus" in absolute terms, and not seeking to do so at the effective expense of others.

Deu 23:25 When you come into your neighbour’s standing grain you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not move a sickle to your neighbour’s standing grain-
Boaz allowed foreigners to glean immediately behind his reapers, and then was personally generous in giving Ruth sacks of barley. He understood this law as a springboard into a culture of far more extensive grace, rather than a chain which limits human behaviour, to be tolerated and obeyed with reluctance. See on Dt. 25:7.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 24

Deu 24:1 When a man takes a wife and marries her, if she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found some unseemly thing in her, he shall write her a bill of divorce and give it into her hand and send her out of his house-
Divorce was clearly possible under the Mosaic system. If a man's wife committed adultery he could have her killed; *or* he could put her through the trial of jealousy of Num. 5, with the result that she would become barren; or he could divorce her (Dt. 22:19; 24:1 RV; Lev. 21:14; 22:13). Within a Law that was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), unsurpassed in it's righteousness (Dt. 4:8; and let us not overlook these estimations), there were these different levels of response possible. But there was a

higher level: he could simply forgive her. This was what God did with His fickle Israel, time and again (Hos. 3:1-3). And so the Israelite faced with an unfaithful wife could respond on at least four levels. This view would explain how divorce seems outlawed in passages like Dt. 22:19,29, and yet there are other parts of the OT which seem to imply that it was permitted. It should be noted that there were some concessions to weakness under the Law which the Lord was not so willing to make to His followers (e.g., outside the marriage context, Dt. 20:5-8 cp. Lk. 9:59-62; 14:18,19). He ever held before us the Biblical ideal of marriage.

Deu 24:2 When she has departed out of his house she may go and be another man's wife-
The Lord Himself spoke of how the Law's attitude to divorce was a concession because of the hardness of men's hearts. Dt. 24:1-4 allows divorce if a man "found some uncleanness" in his wife. This, the Lord comments, was a concession for the hardness of their hearts. But the passage moves on to say: "When a man hath taken *new* wife, he shall not go out to war...but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife" (:5). Taking a *new* wife seems a strange way to describe taking a first wife. It would seem that Yahweh through Moses is making a gracious concession to a man taking a second wife according to the concession laid down in the previous verses.

Deu 24:3 If the latter husband hates her and writes her a bill of divorce and gives it to her and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband who took her to be his wife dies-
This seems to imply that divorce was even possible if a husband simply 'hated' his wife. Or we may assume that the divorce had to be because of unfaithfulness on her part (:1), and yet to divorce her for this was in fact read by God as 'hating' her. For the standard He sought to inculcate (see on :1) was forgiveness of the unfaithful wife, motivated in love for her- which was just how He treated Israel.

Deu 24:4 her former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife after she is defiled, for that is abomination before Yahweh. You shall not cause the land to sin, which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance-
The prophets describe God divorcing Israel for her infidelity and yet still asking her to return to Him. He chose this metaphor to reflect the level of His desperate love for His people- that He would do what His own law declared to be abomination to Him. That same kind of love is what He has for us today. It is God's earnest desire to save repentant sinners. He will even bend His own laws to enable this. Consider how within His own law, it was an abomination for a man to re-marry the woman he had divorced. Yet this notwithstanding, God abases Himself in asking worthless Israel to re-marry Him (Dt. 24:4 cp. Jer. 3:1). Yahweh Himself had stated in His own law that to divorce a wife and then re-marry her after she had been "defiled" was an act of abomination to Him,

and would defile the land. And yet in full knowledge of this, and with conscious allusion to it, Yahweh begs His defiled, divorced wife Israel to return to Him (Jer. 4:1), even though the land was defiled by her (Jer. 3:9; 16:18). Here we see the utter self-abnegation of Yahweh, God of Israel, that He might save His people.

Deu 24:5 When a man takes a new wife he shall not go into the army, neither must he be assigned any business. He shall be free at home for one year and shall please his wife whom he has taken-

See on :2. Often the parables of the Lord Jesus warn that those who think He will understand their weakness, those who are too familiar with His softer side. The parable of the great supper records men explaining to Christ why they can't *immediately* respond to Him, although they want to when it's more convenient: "I have bought a piece of ground, *and must needs* go and see it... I have married a wife, therefore *I* cannot come" (Lk. 14:18-20). The implication is that they assumed that the servant calling them to the wedding (i.e. Christ) would understand that their excuses were quite reasonable; the man who pleaded marriage as his excuse would have been alluding to the Law's provision to have time off from the Lord's duties on account of marriage (Dt. 20:7). All these reasons were assumed to be quite reasonable, and the men sound as if they were confident that *of course* Christ would understand. But His demands are in fact higher than those made under the old covenant.

To say that marriage means that we can't respond so enthusiastically to the call of the Gospel is an irrelevant excuse, in the eyes of the Lord (Lk. 14:26). Those who said it evidently thought that the Lord would understand and appreciate that their marriage was important, and so they couldn't respond as He was asking. But Christ didn't appreciate their way of thinking as they thought He would (Lk. 14:20,26). Christ was referring back to the way that under the Law, a man was legitimately excused from fighting the Lord's battles if he had recently married (Dt. 24:5). The Lord is teaching that He realizes that His followers will be inclined to think that the OT attitude to marriage was His. 'But', He effectively continued, 'that isn't the case. I don't think that marriage is any excuse at all for not responding to me with all your soul. I'm asking you to take up my cross, to follow my example, to hate ['love less'] wife and relations and houses etc. And that's that, I'm not ameliorating the standard I put before you' (although He later allowed Paul to do this). Quite clearly, the call of Christ is to give ourselves to Him at the expense of human relationships. Of course this doesn't mean that one can quit family life or take their responsibilities less seriously because they feel called to do the Lord's work; His work is to be found in family life, too.

Deu 24:6 No man may take the mill or the upper millstone as pledge, for he takes a life in pledge-

Moses does not repeat every single commandment in the Law. Rather are there several themes of Moses in Deuteronomy presented. His choice of which ones he does repeat

indicates his feelings towards Israel. His sensitivity towards the weakest and poorest of Israel comes out in this. He was reaching the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who said that the weakest of his brethren represented him (Mt. 25:40 Gk.). Thus Moses stresses how they were not to go into the house of a poor man to take back his pledge (Dt. 24:10); Moses could enter into the sense of shame and embarrassment of the poor man when a richer man enters his home. The Law in Exodus 22:26 did not stipulate that the house of the poor man should not be entered; by making this point in his farewell speech, Moses was showing his sensitivity, his ability now to enter into the feelings of the poorest of God's people. Indeed, the whole passage in Deuteronomy (24:6-17) about pledges is quite an expansion upon what the Law actually said in Ex. 22. And this from a man who could have been the king of Egypt, who could have had the world.

Deu 24:7 If a man is found stealing any of his brothers of the children of Israel, and he deals with him as a slave or sells him, then that thief must die. So you shall put away the evil from among you-

To deal with another person as a slave or chattel, to not treat a person as a person, was seen even under Mosaic Law as meriting the death penalty- for it was as if a person had been killed by treating them like that (Dt. 24:7 RVmg.).

Deu 24:8 Take heed that in the plague of leprosy you observe diligently to do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you. As I commanded them, so you shall observe to do-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

Deu 24:9 Remember what Yahweh your God did to Miriam by the way as you came forth out of Egypt-
The reference may be to how she was shut out of the camp for seven days. This would have been inconvenient in domestic terms, especially if the leprosy victim was a woman who was a mother and wife, expected to do all the domestic chores. Moses foresaw how tempting it would be for men to quietly ignore the need to put a leprous woman outside their camp for seven days. So we see how at the end of the wilderness journey, Moses was so sensitive to the likely weaknesses of his people; and he in this was a type of the Lord Jesus.

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 24:10 When you lend your neighbour any kind of loan, you must not go into his house to get his pledge-
Moses in Deuteronomy, the 'second law', does not repeat every single commandment in the Law. Rather are there several themes of Moses presented in Deuteronomy. His choice of which ones he does repeat indicates his feelings towards Israel. His sensitivity towards the weakest and poorest of Israel comes out in this, and is a sign of his maturity. He was reaching the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who said that the weakest of His brethren represented Him (Mt. 25:40). Moses for all his wealthy background and high status amongst Israel could enter into the sense of shame and embarrassment of the poor man when a richer man enters his home. The Law in Ex. 22:26 did not stipulate that the house of the poor man should not be entered; by making this point in his farewell speech, Moses was showing his sensitivity, his ability now to enter into the feelings of the poorest of God's people. He typified in this the sensitivity of God's son to our spiritual poverty. In some things we all have some advantage over others; some 'wealth' which they don't have; for even the wealthiest person has some area of spiritual poverty

in their lives. We are not to shame them, but to be sensitive to how they might feel if that poverty is exposed before us.

Deu 24:11 You shall stand outside and the man to whom you lent shall bring the pledge outside to you-
The poor are often ashamed when the more wealthy enter their homes and see their poverty. We see here the extreme sensitivity of God to the poor, and to human feelings. He who is apparently so far away, is in fact so near in understanding us.

Deu 24:12 If he is a poor man you must not sleep with his pledge-
Like many Mosaic laws, this was open to interpretation within the conscience of the lender. He had to judge whether the person was "poor" or not. Clearly these laws were often not intended as literalistic demands for a yes / no kind of obedience; but rather were a springboard towards a greater understanding of the human person, and finally to a culture of love, sensitivity and kindness.

Deu 24:13 you must surely restore to him the pledge when the sun goes down so that he may sleep in his garment and bless you, and it shall be righteousness to you before Yahweh your God-
The Lord's high value of persons is reflected in how He taught His followers to not resist evil. A poor man had only two garments- an outer one, and an inner one (Dt. 24:10-13). Underneath that, he was naked. Yet the Lord taught that if you had your outer garment unjustly taken from you, then offer your abuser your undercloth. Offer him, in all seriousness, to take it off you, and leave you standing next to him arrystarkus. This would have turned the table. The abuser would be the one left ashamed, as he surely wouldn't do this. And thus the *dignity of the abused person was left intact at the end*. This was the Lord's desire. Likewise, Roman soldiers were allowed to impress a Jew to carry their pack for a mile, but they were liable to punishment if they made him carry it two miles. To offer to carry it the second mile would almost always be turned down by the abusive soldier. And again, at the end of the exchange, he would be the one humiliated, and the Lord's follower, even though abused, would remain with head up and dignity intact. See on :6.

Deu 24:14 You must not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is of your brothers or of the foreigners who are in your land within your gates-
The oppression in view is things like not paying him his hire every day (Dt. 24:14,15; Lev. 19:13). The ethnic background of the man was irrelevant; he was to be treated as a person and not in any way abused because of his weak economic position. "Oppress" is the same word translated "deceive"; to not oppress others through deceiving them

would elicit the heaviest judgment from God, when the person realized the deception and cried to God because of it (Dt. 24:15). Deceiving / oppressing a neighbour was a sin against Yahweh (Lev. 6:2 s.w.), because He has a special interest in the poor. And His law reflects that.

Deu 24:15 Each day you must give him his hire. The sun must not go down on it for he is poor and sets his heart on it, lest he cry against you to Yahweh and it be sin to you-
This is one of many examples of the utter inversion of values to be found in the sphere of God's dealings with men: The rich are to almost fear the landless poor labourer, in case he feels hard done by and prays to God against the rich. The power, in ultimate and spiritual terms, is with the poor- and the balance of power is against the wealthy. James 5:4 specifically alludes to this command, and says that the cry of those we have been insensitive to will enter the ears of Yahweh of Hosts, a title typically associated with His active judgment. The cries of those we hurt are effectively a calling out to Yahweh of Hosts to enter into judgment with us. Whilst we may not have hired labourers, there are many ways in which we can make our less privileged brethren cry out in pain to God; particularly through refusing them fellowship at the Lord's table.

Deu 24:16 The fathers must not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers. Every man shall be put to death for his own sin-
It must be remembered that although in some ways *all* Israel were guilty for the sins of some of them (e.g. Daniel and Ezra describe themselves as guilty members of a guilty nation), this 'guilt by association' could not be 'escaped' by leaving Israel, the covenant people. And neither did God ever hold any individual Israelite personally guilty of the sin of another Israelite (Dt. 24:16 etc.). Ultimately, God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked (Gen. 18:24), although the righteous in Israel sometimes suffered *the effect* of the nation's wickedness (cp. our suffering the *effect* of Adam's sin without being personally guilty of it).

Deu 24:17 You must not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, nor take a widow's clothing in pledge-
God again reveals His especial interest in the foreigner, orphan and widow. This should be reflected in our perspectives too.

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "justice" or "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them and reflect that justice to others. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed

to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 24:18 but you must remember that you were a bondservant in Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you from there, therefore I command you to do this-
One of the most repeated themes of Moses in Deuteronomy is the way he keeps on telling them to "remember" all the great things which God had done for them on their wilderness journey, and especially the wonder of how He had redeemed them as children (his audience had been under twenty years old when they went through the Red Sea). Moses really wanted them to overcome the human tendency to forget the greatness of God as manifested earlier in our lives and spiritual experience. Our tendency as the new Israel is just the same- to forget the wonder of baptism, of how God reached out His arm to save us. The deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We need to "remember" how weak and vulnerable we were before we were brought out of Egypt / the world. The grace of our personal redemption is to never stop impressing us. And it will give rise to care for the vulnerable in practice as well as spiritually.

Deu 24:19 When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hands-
A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses, his eager imagination of his people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations... so superbly typifies that of our Lord.

Dt. 24:19 doesn't make allowing gleaning a binding law upon landowners. The text simply states that "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf

in the field, do not go back to get it. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow". By allowing gleaners to come and pick up dropped grain, Boaz's grace was going far beyond the letter of the law. This was taking that law way beyond what it said, in a spirit of grace. This would account for the hint in Ruth 2:22 that not every landowner allowed such gleaning in their fields. Likewise he extrapolates from the law of Levirate marriage to marry Ruth. So we see that the law of Moses was not a chain, a leash binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; for Israel is God's partner, not His dog. But rather was it designed as a springboard towards a culture of grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice.

Deu 24:20 When you beat your olive tree do not go over the boughs again. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow-
The essence of this was that they were not to seek maximum personal wealth. That of course is the exact opposite of the spirit of our age, and is absolutely counter instinctive. The power to overcome this basic instinct towards maximizing personal wealth can only come from an awareness of the grace we have received, and a subsequent conscience toward others because of that.

Deu 24:21 When you harvest your vineyard do not glean it afterwards yourselves. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow-
The idea is that the gleaning happened after harvesting had finished. We see how Boaz took the spirit of these gleaning laws far beyond their letter. He allowed gleaners to follow immediately behind the harvesters, and gave extra grain to Ruth. Again I feel the need to labour the point; that the law of Moses was not a chain, binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; but rather was designed as a springboard towards a culture of grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice. ,

Deu 24:22 You shall remember that you were a bondservant in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing-
Lev. 25:38 reasons that because of Israel's experience of the Red Sea redemption, therefore they were to have a generous spirit to their brother. Because the Egyptians were hard taskmasters, and Israel had been graciously saved from them, *therefore* they were not to be hard on each other (Lev. 25:40). If the oppressed [as Israel were oppressed] cry out unto you [as Israel cried out for their affliction], you must hear them, otherwise God will hear them and punish you, as if you are the Egyptian taskmaster (Ex. 22:24-27). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is shot through with direct and indirect reference to the Red Sea experience. It was as if this was to be the motivator for their obedience and upholding of the culture of kindness which the Law sought to engender (Lev.23, 24; Dt. 17:7; 24:19-24). And our experience of redemption from this world ought to have the same effect.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 25

Deu 25:1 If there is a controversy between men, and they come to judgment and the judges judge them, then they must justify the righteous and condemn the wicked-
This coming to judgment suggests the two men walk together to the place of judgment. This was clearly in the Lord's mind when He spoke of such a scenario, and urged that instead of allowing the case to come to the judges, by all means the spiritual person will make peace with his brother. The implication is that we should not assume that because we are innocent, therefore we will find justice. Rather should we seek to make peace with our brother, even if we think we are in the right.

Deu 25:2 If the wicked man is worthy to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence according to his wickedness, by number-
"His presence" may refer to "the righteous" who took "the wicked" to court. Or it may refer to the judge. Even if someone is so seriously astray that they require discipline, remember that the judges of Israel had to have the person they judged worthy of stripes lay down before their presence [or that of the injured party] and be beaten in their presence. The principle being taught was that we should be fully aware of the pain and implications of the judgment we inflict upon others. Those who practice exclusion of others through closed communion need to see the tears they are causing, the ruptured marriages, the little children left without a daddy or mummy, the cancer, the stress, the tears every night for life… and unflinchingly look at all that and give a string of Bible verses which says that this is how believers in Christ should treat other believers in Christ.

Deu 25:3 Forty stripes he may give him. He must not exceed this number. If he should beat him with many more than forty stripes, then your brother may seem vile to you-
There's a tendency in us to be harsh in punishing others for their sin. This is psychologically explainable by our conscience for our own sins, and subconsciously realizing we deserve punishment; we then eagerly transfer this guilt and need for punishment onto others. Instead we are to confess our sins and believe that the final judgment for our sin was in Christ upon the cross; and if we believe this to the point of really feeling it, we will never punish anyone more than required, indeed we will be gracious to them as God has been to us.

We should never be abusive, in any form, to or about anyone, even if it is sure that they will never know or feel our abuse. The Law also taught that a man must not be over punished, or else, if you did this, you considered him "light" (Dt. 25:3 Heb.). The weight of persons, the immense meaning attached to them, is not accepted by us if our judgment of them is too harsh or severe. Even a criminal was not to be overly punished,

"lest your brother be degraded in *your* sight" (Dt. 25:3)- he was still to be treated as a person, and nothing should be done to him which would make the punishers think too lowly of that person.

Deu 25:4 You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the grain-
Moses' sensitivity is shown by the introduction in Deuteronomy [the 'second law'] of expansions upon existing commandments; e.g. "You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn". This is quoted by Paul as being actually part of the Law (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18), showing that Moses was so attune with the mind of God that these practical extensions which his sensitivity led him to command Israel were indeed the inspired commandments of God.

In 1 Cor. 9:9 Paul likens himself to a lowly ox treading out corn, and being allowed to eat a bit of it. The argument seems to be that this commandment was not given because God cares for oxen, but for the sake of teaching us a principle. But often Paul uses a grammatical device whereby he argues 'Not [so much] A, but B'. Such a device is common in several other languages. God is clearly not insensitive to animals, as so many cases in the Old Testament demonstrate. So surely we are to read this as meaning that this command about not muzzling the ox was not primarily for the sake of the oxen, but even more importantly for the sake of teaching us a lesson. The treading out of corn connects with the metaphor of judgment day in Mt. 3:12, where we read that the "floor", literally 'the treading place' will be winnowed by the Lord Jesus in judgment. The fruit of Paul's labours for Corinth would be tested by the winnowing of what he had trodden out. He saw his work as preparing them for judgment, making them true grain, separating them from the husks. We note the immediate context here in Dt. 15:1-3 is of judgment.

The command is also quoted about providing sustenance for church teachers (1 Tim. 5:18). The word for "muzzle" means literally to render speechless. The idea may be that if an elder was not paid, then they would not have time to prepare their talks for the congregation. The Old Testament contains examples of where the Levites failed to teach the people because the tithes for supporting them were not paid. The stress may be on the word "when" in "when he treads out the corn"; the elder must do this if he is to be fed. The treading out of the corn represents the labour in the word which is required before teaching it to the church congregation (see on 1 Tim. 5:17). The corn represents God's word and the treading out the processing of it. And yet in this figure, the ox [cp. the elder] eats some of the corn he processes. This has been a theme of Paul in advising Timothy- that the very process of spiritually feeding others leads to the spiritual benefit of the feeder (see on 1 Tim. 4:6 *Nourished up*).

Deu 25:5 If brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead should not be married outside to a stranger. Her husband's brother should go in to

her and take her to him as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her-
This tacitly allowed polygamy. Here we have an example where one principle [the one man: one woman ideal of Eden] is in conflict with another [to build up the family name of your childless brother]. God could have arranged ethics in a simpler manner; but He has allowed and in this case encouraged the development of such conflicts in order that we think and reason things through, and make whatever decision we do consciously and from our own desire rather than merely in mindless submission to a commandment.

Deu 25:6 The firstborn whom she bears shall succeed in the name of his brother who is dead, so that his name is not blotted out of Israel-
Not only does all this show a concession to human weakness and human inability to live up to the Biblical ideal of marriage; but it should be observed that seeing that most adult men in such societies were married, obeying this command probably involved polygamy. One principle was broken in order to keep another, more important one (in this case "that his name be not put out of Israel").

Deu 25:7 If the man doesn't want to take his brother's wife, then she shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, My husband's brother refuses to raise up to his brother a name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me-
Naomi apparently had only produced two sickly sons who survived to adulthood, and they had both prematurely died; and she felt herself to be barren. There was no legal requirement for a widow to marry the younger brother of a deceased husband, but it could be argued that any future children of Naomi had a duty to marry their late brother's wife and have children by her in his name. But that would be a very strict reading of the Mosaic legislation in this case, if not simply a wrong interpretation of the Levirate law. For the simple intention of the Levirate law was that if a man died, his brother was to marry his widow and have children by her. And it only applied to "brothers dwelling together". But Naomi has clearly thought it through; for all her apparent weakness and even apostacy as noted so far, she was aware of God's laws. Despite having nobody to teach her there in Moab and no written scripture with her [she was surely illiterate anyway], she remembered the Mosaic law and thought through its implications. However her very strict interpretation of them in this case may suggest she is seeking every reason to discourage the young women to follow her back to Israel. And this makes Ruth's decision the more commendable. But they were to be surprised by the grace of Boaz. For he had no obligation to marry Ruth, neither did the anonymous kinsman. Boaz understood this law as a springboard into a culture of far more extensive grace, rather than a chain which limits human behaviour, to be tolerated and obeyed with reluctance. See on Dt. 23:25.

Deu 25:8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he stands and says, I don't want to take her-
This was nearly always from economic reasons. Most men were married and had children already, and to take another wife and have more children would have been crippling for many. The children would have to have an inheritance in their own names (:6), but that inheritance would have to come from this man who married the widow. So his own inheritance would be reduced, and also that of his existing children. This is why the anonymous relative of Ruth 4:6 didn't want to spoil his own inheritance. And yet he remains anonymous- his name was the name cut off from Israel, whereas the name of Boaz continued, and he became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus.

Land at that time was organized according to strips of land within a field, rather than owning a field. Even wealthy Boaz only owned part of the field (Ruth 2:3). Strip farming was very inefficient; upon death, land was split up between the children, and then when they died, the land was split up even further. The anonymous man didn't want to have any more children because it would mean that what he was leaving as an inheritance would be even more reduced and divided. But because of that, he remains anonymous. He was concerned about what would happen over the next generation or so. By contrast, Boaz wasn't worried about splitting up yet further the inheritance which he was leaving- and because of that, he left an inheritance which was recorded and stretched right down to the Lord Jesus.

It seems to me that the nameless relative in Ruth 4 was like so many people today. He was interested in getting a bit more land to add to his stack; but he didn't really care for the redemption of his brother, and pulled out of the whole thing once he learnt he would have to marry another wife and have more children. He said he couldn't do this because he would spoil [AV] or endanger [NIV] his inheritance. We know that at this time, strip farming was being practiced- whereby a field was split up into parts, each of which belonged to a different person (Ruth 2:3). By having more children, the man would have to split up his land into yet more parts so that each son had his strips. And the son he had by Ruth would be counted as Mahlon's son, in the spirit of the levirate marriage laws. And so his bit of land would then be separate from the land strips the man was intending to give to his existing children. Ultimately this could lead to the man's total inheritance becoming almost worthless if it was just split into tiny strips because he had too many children.

I like how the NIV has the man speaking of 'endangering' his inheritance. He was like so many people- he had say a 20 year horizon, genuinely concerned about what was best for his children in the short term, rather than thinking about his responsibility to his brother. He saw 'danger' in doing that. It could be argued that the 50 year Jubilee law meant that the land boundaries returned to how they originally were after 50 years… so

perhaps [although it's hard to work out how the Jubilee law worked in practice] he was worrying about something which only had meaning for the next few decades [if that]. He wasn't a bad man; just one who was fearful and wouldn't look beyond the next 20 years or so. And I suggest the genealogy at the end of Ruth 4 comments upon this- that man is anonymous, his name never went down in history, whereas Boaz who loved his brother and didn't focus solely on his own immediate family went on to be the ancestor of both David and the Lord Jesus Himself.

Deu 25:9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders and loose his shoe from off his foot, spit in his face, and say, So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house-
Such selfish thinking (see on :8) was worthy of the maximum level of contempt. God's whole work for us His people is about building up a house for His Name (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:5). Building up others in faith, that might be a part of that house, is to be a focus which eclipses all temporary material advantage. It means we allow career and personal materialism to be subsumed beneath our passion to build up our brethren. This is where these ancient principles have constant contemporary relevance in the multitude of life decisions we face.

"As one occupied land by treading on it, the shoe became the symbol of taking possession (Ps. 60:8; 108:9); when a man renounced property to another, he drew off and gave him his shoe. So among the ancient Germans the taking off of the shoe was a symbol for giving up property and heritable rights, and with the delivery of the shoe or the throwing of it away goods were conveyed to another". In this case the man was effectively losing a potential inheritance.

Deu 25:10 His name shall be called in Israel', The house of him who had his shoe untied'-
The person in view preferred temporal advantage materially rather than worrying about his long term name in Israel. This is true of so many today, and the anonymous relative of Ruth's remained anonymous in the historical record, whereas Boaz's name will be eternally remembered as an ancestor of the Lord Jesus.

Deu 25:11 When men strive together one with another-
This appears to connect with the situation in :5, where brothers lived together in peace. It seems these various laws are legal rulings given by Divine inspiration to Moses, from actual cases which arose during the wilderness journeyings. However, the striving together may e a reference to a legal struggle. See on :12.

And the wife of the one draws near to deliver her husband out of the hand of him who strikes him, and puts forth her hand and takes him by the private parts-
The principle from this is that each person has a weakness, an exposed point in their lives or character, which we are aware of. We are not to use that to unfair advantage- because if we were touched in that way, we likewise could not endure. And God saves His weak people and has historically been angry with those who do such things (:18).

A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

Deu 25:12 then you shall cut off her hand, your eye shall have no pity-
The striving together of :11 could refer to a legal struggle, which resulted in a striking or beating. The woman's attempt to stop this was therefore effectively her argument with God and His decreed justice; hence the punishment. There is also the teaching here that we should never exploit the obvious weakness of another; and a reminder that all men are very vulnerable and have weak points. See on :18.

Deu 25:13 You must not have in your bag different weights, a great and a small-
Deceitful traders still use balancing weights (Heb. "stones") of different weights, the lighter to sell with, the heavier to buy with. But the reference to the bag suggests that this command strikes at the forethought before the action. Don't go to market having prepared such weights in your bag. Any human legal code would focus just upon the act of using deceitful weights, whereas God foresees the planning and thought process behind the act of sin.

Deu 25:14 You must not have in your house different measures, a great and a small-
To avoid temptation it's best to not even possess things which we may be tempted to misuse. See on :13. The act of deceiving at the market was analyzed by God as beginning in the home, and it was there and to that thought that the Divine law struck. Even possessing such "different measures" was a temptation to misuse them, and we take the lesson that we are to remove sources of temptation.

Deu 25:15 You shall have a perfect and just weight. You shall have a perfect and just measure, that your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you-
The repeated promises recorded in Deuteronomy of prolonged days upon the land of Israel would therefore hint at the eternity of the Kingdom rather than this life. Obedience to the law could not give life of itself, but an Israel obedient to the covenant would have been given a Messiah who could have enabled this. And having integrity in apparently minor matters like just weights was one of the issues God looked at, for he who is faithful in the small things is faithful in all. Indeed, Dt. 4:40 says they would prolong their days "for ever". For an individual Israelite might be faithful but not prolong his or her days in the land because the whole people were to be carried away captive for their sins and the land given to a Gentile power. The opposite of 'days being prolonged' was 'utter destruction' (Dt. 4:26)- which would then speak of condemnation in the second death. This is one of many examples of where eternal life was possible under the Old Covenant- there were multiple different possibilities and plans God could have worked by. Israel could have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and not killed Him, and so forth. It seems the closer we probe God's word, the more open He is revealed as being.

Deu 25:16 For all who do such things, all who do unrighteously, are an abomination to Yahweh your God-
The 'doing' in view is not deceiving customers in the marketplace but the forethought which preceded it- having unjust weights and measures in your bag when you set out to market, or even having them in your home. The Lord Jesus rightly interpreted this teaching as meaning that the thought is counted as the action, the doing. See on :13,14. These forethoughts, planning deceit in order to gain a petty amount of material advantage, were seen by Yahweh as "abomination", the word for idol worship. And such things are our temptation constantly.

Deu 25:17 Remember what Amalek did to you by the way as you came forth out of Egypt-
In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. We are to learn from history, not as a merely fascinating exercise. But the Bible is history, and yet it is a living word to us. Israel were supposed to reason back from the actions of Amalek towards them, and therefore not exploit the weakness of others in unjust weights, or by a woman exploiting the male weakness of her husband's enemy (:12).

Deu 25:18 how he met you by the way and struck the hindmost of you, all who were feeble behind you, when you were faint and weary, and he didn't fear God-
This explained why the woman of :12 was to be punished for taking a man from behind by his sensitive, private parts. We note the analogy makes a man's reproductive organs his "feeble" part, when it was the boast of men in those times.

Deu 25:19 Therefore when Yahweh your God has given you rest from all your enemies all around in the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it-
"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

You must blot out the memory of Amalek from under the sky. Do not forget-
Yahweh's Name, by contrast, was to be an eternal memory (Ex. 3:15). He was to be remembered for how He had articulated His Name in how He had historically acted in saving the patriarchs, and He would be remembered for how He was going to act to save His people from Egypt. What was to be memorialized was therefore His actions, rather than simply the letters YHWH. It was His wonderful works which were to be remembered [Ps. 111:4, s.w. "My memorial"]. By contrast, the sinful works and persons of the wicked would not be remembered / memorialized, be they Amalek (s.w. Ex. 17:14; Dt. 25:19), or God's apostate people (s.w. Dt. 32:26).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 26

Deu 26:1 When you come into the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, and possess it and dwell in it-
"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite

peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 26:2 take of the first of all the fruit of the ground which you bring in from your land that Yahweh your God gives you, and put it in a basket and go to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there-

It was therefore not impossible for God to accept non-blood sacrifices (Num. 15:17-21; 18:12,13; Dt. 26:1-4). Cain, the epitome of 'the devil' (Jn. 8:44), was characterized by the attitude that he was not his brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9). But the Lord Jesus perhaps offered a commentary on the incident when he said that our offering can only be accepted if we are first reconciled to our brother (Mt. 5:24). Cain's insistent lack of responsibility for his brother was the real sin, and therefore his sacrifice wasn't accepted by God. He wanted to serve God his own way, disregard his brother, justify his disagreement with him... to be a private person. But this was the basis of his rejection.

Deu 26:3 You shall come to the priest who will be in those days and tell him, I declare this day to Yahweh your God that I have come to the land which Yahweh swore to our fathers to give us-

There is both a collective and personal dimension to salvation. We are saved in the body of Christ, as Israel were saved in the body of Moses (1 Cor. 10:1,2). But each individual was to respond to this by personally visiting the sanctuary and declaring that the promises to Abraham were to him personally. And had been fulfilled. There is no evidence Israel ever did this. Whilst church membership and attendance is all good, the problem with membership of a denomination can lead to this vital individual dimension of salvation being overlooked. When it is of the essence.

Deu 26:4 The priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the

altar of Yahweh your God-
The cameraman of Divine inspiration is as it were zoomed in upon the individual setting down the basket out of his hand. This was to be a highly significant act; and yet there is no record Israel ever did so.

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 26:5 You shall answer and say before Yahweh your God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father and he went down into Egypt and lived there, few in number, and he became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous-
The reference is to Gen. 20:13. Abraham's comment that God caused him to go astray from his father's house would likely have been understood by those who first heard it as a negative reference to God- for the word "gone astray" is used of a lost sheep (Jer. 50:6; Ez. 34:4,16; Ps. 119:176); and it was understood that "A bad shepherd causes a sheep to go astray from the flock because he is careless". Perhaps God recognized Abraham's failure by instructing His people to confess every year that "An Aramean gone astray was my father" (Dt. 26:5). I take this to be a reference to Abraham more than Jacob; for it seems that the people of Aram migrated to Ur, and that Abraham having settled in Padan Aram, Abraham could also for that reason be called an Aramean. So Israel were asked to remember that their forefather Abraham had gone astray both literally and spiritually; and thus Abraham's God was a God of grace, and was thereby their God too.

Israel were to recognize that their Arab brethren were in fact their cousins, and Abraham and Jacob their ancestors were at times no more than starving, desperate, homeless, wandering Arabs. That they had been given a fruitful land was therefore a great grace to them.

The closer we look at the Pentateuch, the more we see the huge emphasis placed by Moses upon deconstructing the wrong views about Satan and presenting Yahweh as omnipotent, and the ultimate source of both good and evil in the lives of His people. Thus in the prayer of the first fruits recorded in Dt. 26:5-11 we have the Hebrew verb "to give" repeated seven times. The first and last three usages of it refer to what God has 'given' to Israel; but the centerpiece reference is to Israel being *'given* hard bondage' in Egypt (Dt. 26:6). Thus Yahweh is presented as the ultimate giver- of both good and evil.

Deu 26:6 The Egyptians behaved badly with us, afflicted us and laid on us hard bondage-

Literally, 'gave us hard bondage'. The closer we look at the Pentateuch, the more we see the huge emphasis placed by Moses upon deconstructing the wrong views about Satan and presenting Yahweh as omnipotent, and the ultimate source of both good and evil in the lives of His people. Thus in the prayer of the first fruits recorded in Dt. 26:5-11 we have the Hebrew verb "to give" repeated seven times. The first and last three usages of it refer to what God has 'given' to Israel; but the centerpiece reference is to Israel being *'given* hard bondage' in Egypt (Dt. 26:6). Thus Yahweh is presented as the ultimate giver-of both good and evil.

Deu 26:7 and we cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers and Yahweh heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression-

The individual Israelite was to perceive his absolute connection with God's historical deliverance of His people from Egypt. And to be appropriately awed by all the grace shown in that. In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. We are to learn from history, not as a merely fascinating exercise. But the Bible is history, and yet it is a living word to us. Israel were supposed to reason back from the actions of Egypt towards them, and their weakness spiritually at that time. And to respond personally to that grace.

Deu 26:8 and Yahweh brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm and with great terror, with signs and wonders-

The might of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched our arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to

save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 26:9 and He has brought us into this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey-
Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 26:10 Now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground which You, Yahweh, have given me. You shall set it down before Yahweh your God, and worship before Yahweh your God-
Again we lament that there was no record of their ever doing this. It was a redemption which went largely unappreciated by them. As noted on :4, the language is zoomed in upon the individual setting down the produce out of the basket in his hand.

Deu 26:11 You shall rejoice in all the good which Yahweh your God has given to you and to your house; you and the Levite and the foreigner who is in the midst of you-
So often, the Mosaic law associates rejoicing with giving, for truly it is more blessed or happy to give than to receive. The Lord's teaching about this was clearly reflective of this major Mosaic theme (Acts 20:35).

Deu 26:12 When you have made an end of tithing all your increase in the third year, which is the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the foreigner, to the fatherless and to the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled-
Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But

the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

LXX "And when thou shalt have completed all the tithings of thy fruits in the third year, thou shalt give the second tenth to the Levite, and stranger, and fatherless, and widow; and they shall eat it in thy cities, and be merry". The stranger / foreigner may refer to those of the "mixed multitude" which were with them, or to those Canaanites who had accepted the message of Yahweh's Kingdom.

There were three separate tithes commanded under the Law of Moses. Yet the tithing churches have simply said: 'There's something about tithing in the Old Testament. So, hey, give us 10% of your money!'. The first was the Levitical tithe of 10% on 100% of the produce for the first six years and was destined for the Levites and priests (see too Dt. 12:19). The second tithe was the Festival tithe of 10% on the 90% remaining produce after the Levitical tithe. This tithe had to be eaten in the presence of the Lord and was collected on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th years only. The third tithe was the tithe of the poor to be collected on the 3rd and 6th years only (Dt. 14:22-29; 26:12-15; Am. 4:4-5). No tithe was collected on the 7th year or Sabbatical year. The farmers were to let the land rest in that year. The tithe consisted of fruit, grain, wine and later animals that are treated as produce from the land. It never consisted of money. Tithes were conducted annually and were based upon one's produce increase for the year. This just isn't talking about putting paper money or cheques on an offering plate each week as demanded by the tithing churches.

Deu 26:13 You shall say before Yahweh your God, I have put away the holy things out of my house and have given them to the Levite and to the foreigner, to the fatherless and to the widow, according to all Your commandment which You have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of Your commandments, neither have I forgotten them-
So often the Mosaic law was designed to elicit introspection, and to convict of sin. For who could truly say "I have not transgressed any of Your commandments". These very words are placed by the Lord Jesus in the mouth of the hypocritical elder brother. and it is he who remains outside of the Father's fellowship, whereas the disobedient younger son is the one finally accepted. Likewise in the parable of the two sons, the one who says he will be totally obedient actually isn't. The whole structure of the law was to lead the spiritually minded Israelite to a conviction of sin, and a longing for a way to permanently resolve this. And that was to ultimately be in the Lord Jesus.

Deu 26:14 I have not eaten of it in mourning, neither have I put away any of it while unclean, nor given any of it for the dead. I have listened to the voice of Yahweh my God. I have done according to all that You have commanded me-
See on :13; these protestations of total obedience would have elicited a sense of sin and self examination in all spiritually minded people. GNB "I have not given any of it as

an offering for the dead" suggests that there was in Israel the existence of false understandings of the death state. Yet still God loved His people and accepted them in covenant with Him.

Deu 26:15 Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel-
The "holy habitation" alludes to the most holy place, which is here presented as a figure of "heaven", just as Heb. 9:24 makes clear The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25 cp. 1 Kings 8:30; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple, and is therefore at times referred to as the heavenlies in the New Testament.

And the ground which You have given us, as You swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey-
The land was only potentially one flowing with milk and honey; it required God's blessing upon the ground. And that blessing was predicated upon Israel's obedience, as Dt. 28 makes clear. And so it is with the promise of the Kingdom of God to us. It is not without any conditions, although the word of promise is absolutely certain.

Deu 26:16 This day Yahweh your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore keep and do them-
Because God saved them from Egypt by grace [cp. baptism- 1 Cor. 10:1,2], with they themselves so spiritually weak at the time, still taking idols of Egypt through the Red Sea with them- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 11:7,8). Because God gave them the land of Canaan, a land for which they did not labour, didn't do any 'work' to receive, but were given because "You did a favour unto them" (Ps. 44:3)- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 26:15,16; 29:8,9; Josh. 23:5,6). David said that he loved keeping the law *because* God's testimony to him was so miraculous (Ps. 119:129 Heb.). There is an awesomeness to God's grace in all this. Hence the paradox of Ex. 20:20: "Fear not... that the fear of God may be before your faces". We are not to fear Him, for such perfect love casts out fear... yet it is exactly because of the wonder of all this that we live life in some fear / awe of misusing and abusing that grace.

With all your heart and with all your soul-
Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise

saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 26:17 You have undertaken Yahweh this day to be your God and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances and listen to His voice-

See on :16. The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

A covenant is a two way thing. This tie that binds applies to God too (:18); hence the wonderful, oft-repeated idea of His *chesed*, His covenant faithfulness to us His people. He likewise carries a kind of responsibility to us. The entry of Israel into covenant with God was a pattern of what we undertake at baptism. And afterwards there is a wonderful mutuality between God and man within that covenant.

Deu 26:18 And Yahweh has undertaken to you this day that you shall be a people for His own possession, as He has promised you, in order that you should keep all His commandments-

We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they

would be His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His “peculiar treasure” by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that “the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people [s.w.]... *that* thou shouldest keep all his commandments” (Dt. 26:18). See what’s happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

The Hebrew can mean "Today Yahweh has obtained your agreement". We see His efforts to win Israel and His joy that they gave even half hearted assent to the covenant.

Deu 26:19 so as to make you high above all nations that He has made, in praise, in name and in honour, and that you might be a holy people to Yahweh your God, as He has spoken-

The allusion is to the glory and beauty (s.w. "honour") of the priestly garments, which were all holy to Yahweh (Ex. 28:2). The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world. Again we see

repeated the ideal intention that all Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 27

Deu 27:1 Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day-
The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 27:2 On the day when you pass over the Jordan to the land which Yahweh your God gives you, you must set up great stones and plaster them with plaster-
Dt. 27:2-8 commanded that "in the day" Israel passed over Jordan, they were to set up plastered stones with the law written upon them [perhaps just the ten commandments], and put them "in mount Ebal". But when Joshua fulfilled it in Josh. 8:30, this was not "in the day" that Israel passed over Jordan. They had indeed taken stones with them from the Jordan, but had not used them as intended. They didn't plaster them nor write the law upon them. And so perhaps God ammended His intention- which was initially that they would set those stones up in mount Ebal immediately. Instead, He sent the people against Jericho, and then against Ai. Perhaps an instant conquest of Jericho had been originally intended, so that they could proceed to mount Ebal immediately. For later in Joshua we will read of God giving His people unnaturally speedy progress against their enemies, all in the same day. Or maybe His intention was that firstly they ought to have gone to mount Ebal with the plastered stones, and only then attacked Jericho. But they didn't plaster the stones nor wish to

proceed immediately to Ebal. And so He arranged the campaign against Jericho and then Ai. We see how God is so eager to accommodate His programs to the weakness of men.

Deu 27:3 and write on them all the words of this law, when you have passed over, that you may go in to the land which Yahweh your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as Yahweh, the God of your fathers has promised you-
Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 27:4 When you have passed over the Jordan, I command you this day that you shall set up these stones, in Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster-
The word "commandments" occurs 43 times in Deuteronomy, and only 19 times in the other three records; "remember" occurs 16 times compared to 8 times in the other three. And yet Moses commanded Israel specifically to engrave the law on tables of plaster, not stone, knowing that they would soon be washed away; thus he wished to teach Israel [or try to] the temporary nature of the Law (Dt. 27:4-8). Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing *love* of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law.

Deu 27:5 There you shall build an altar to Yahweh your God, an altar of stones. You shall lift up no iron on them-
Ex. 20:25 says that the use of any tool upon an altar would defile it (also see Dt. 27:5). This is how strongly God despises chic externality, and wants us to offer to Him as we are, uncut stones. He wants us, as we are, and not covered by cosmetics. In this we see the deep unspirituality of the altars in the temple, as designed by David and Solomon. I have suggested that although Solomon claims all this was commanded by God, in fact that was merely His assumption. Solomon attempted to get around this law by ensuring that the stones were cut away from the temple construction site (1 Kings 6:7). But this surely was breaking the spirit of the law.

Deu 27:6 You shall build the altar of Yahweh your God of uncut stones and you shall offer burnt offerings thereon to Yahweh your God-
God wants us to serve Him in simplicity without trying to make our altars externally beautiful as if to impress a human eye. Israel had lived generations in Egypt, and had

taken the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:7,8). The Egyptian altars were all of hewed stones, with images of their gods engraved upon them. Perhaps the insistence that "cut stones" must not be used was in order to strengthen them against the temptation to engrave images upon the sides of the altar, as they had seen in Egypt. We see how God's laws are designed not as a burden, but to ease our overall obedience to His ways

Deu 27:7 You shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God-
Eating upon a heap of unhewn stones was understood as a sign of having made a covenant on mutually agreed terms and being at peace with each other (Gen. 31:46,47). Our eating before God at the breaking of bread meeting is something similar. Again we note how the Mosaic law associates rejoicing with giving, for truly it is more blessed or happy to give than to receive. The Lord's teaching about this was clearly reflective of this major Mosaic theme (Acts 20:35).

Deu 27:8 You must write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly-
"All the words" may be used as in Ex. 15:22, and might refer just to Dt. 26:16-19. "Plainly" is literally 'dug' or 'engraved'. As the old covenant was engraved upon stones, both on the tables of the covenant and here again, so Paul draws the contrast with how under the new covenant, God's law is engraved or dug in to our heart: "written... with the Spirit of the living God. Not in tablets of stone, but in tablets that are hearts of flesh" (2 Cor. 3:3; Rom. 2:15). There is implied here a direct working of God upon the human heart, in order to dig in or engrave His law there, just as He will do to latter day Israel when they too enter the new covenant (Jer. 31:33). He instills His word and ways into the hearts or minds of His people. This is all part of blessing under the new covenant, the gift of the holy Spirit within our human spirit or mind.

Deu 27:9 Moses and the priests and Levites spoke to all Israel, saying, Keep silence and listen, Israel-
"Keep silence" is AV "take heed". Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

This day you have become the people of Yahweh your God-
At this time, God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). He fulfilled His promise at Sinai

that if they were obedient, He would make them His people; and He did, counting them as obedient. Yet the events of the intervening forty years hardly sound like Israel being obedient; He "suffered their manners" forty years (Ps. 95:10; Acts 13:18). And yet at the end of that period, they were counted as having been sufficiently obedient to be made God's people (Ex. 19:5 cp. Dt. 27:9).

Deu 27:10 You must therefore obey the voice of Yahweh your God and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you this day-
As noted on :9, they were to become God's people if they were obedient (Ex. 19:5). They had been disobedient, but still they were counted as His people (:9). But the response to such grace was that they should therefore be obedient- not in order to gain God's acceptance as His people, for He had already given them that, by grace. But instead their obedience was to be a sign of their gratitude for that grace. And so the commandments given them were a channel, an opportunity, through which to express gratitude for God's salvation by grace rather than legal obedience.

Deu 27:11 Moses commanded the people the same day saying-
"The same day... this day" runs as a refrain throughout Deuteronomy. Although "I tell you this day" can be read as merely a way of making a solemn statement, verses like this ["the same day"] suggest we would be justified in reading them literally. Thus Deuteronomy would be a transcript of Moses' final address to Israel on the last day of his life.

Deu 27:12 These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people when you have passed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin-
Josh. 8:33 says that "All Israel, their elders and officers and their judges, stood on both sides of the ark before the priests the Levites who carried the ark of Yahweh's covenant". So we can assume that the ark remained in the very narrow valley between the two mountains, with Israel as it were like the wings of the cherubim on both sides of it. Ezekiel's visions likewise use the cherubim to represent Israel. The departure and return of the cherubim spoke of Israel with their representative Angels leaving and then returning to the land and temple.

We note that generally the sons of Rachel and Leah said "Amen" to the blessings, whilst the cursed Reuben and the sons of the concubines said "Amen" to the curses (:13).

Deu 27:13 These shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali-
Reuben had been the firstborn but had been demoted from that for sleeping with his father's wife, which was one of the curses (:20). This was a reminder to the people that their own honoured ancestors had done the very things they were now cursing (see on

:18,22). They were a people who stood before God blessed by grace, rather than because of their obedience.

Deu 27:14 The Levites shall answer and tell all the men of Israel with a loud voice-
The Levites were in the narrow valley in between the two mountains (see on :12). They would turn to Ebal and pronounce the curses, and the tribes standing there would shout "Amen". Just as they had turned to Gerazim and pronounced the blessings, and the tribes there had shouted "Amen".

Deu 27:15 'Cursed is the man who makes an engraved or molten image, an abomination to Yahweh, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and secretly sets it up'. All the people shall answer and say 'Amen'-
The list of sins which follow in :15-25 are all matters of the heart or things which are not seen by others. The people were confirming their acceptance of the fact that God sees and knows all things, and there really would be a judgment for them.

Deu 27:16 'Cursed is he who dishonours his father or his mother'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
As noted on :15,23, the context here is of things done in the heart, or unperceived by others. This "dishonour" of parents may therefore refer to hidden mental attitudes and curses of parents, which [unrepented of] we will be held culpable for in the last day.

Deu 27:17 'Cursed is he who removes his neighbour's landmark'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
This again was likely to be done secretly, bit by bit grabbing small parcels of extra land from your neighbour. Why this was so abhorrent was because each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units. This was "The inheritance of fathers", "your possession" (Lev. 25:27,28; Num. 36:7,8). God had given specific inheritances to His people, that this was not to be sold or traded. The division by lot in Josh. 15:1 presumably meant that the tribal areas were defined and then distributed by lot. And then within those areas, each family was given a specific inheritance. So to try to remove another's inheritance was tantamount to removing the inheritance of another in God's Kingdom. Anything which edges another out of their eternal inheritance is abhorrent to God. It is reflected in the Lord's condemnation of any who make their brother stumble from the path to the Kingdom.

Deu 27:18 'Cursed is he who makes the blind wander out of the way'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
It was Aaron, their revered leader, who had made Israel wander "out of the way" through the golden calf apostacy (Ex. 32:8). Likewise :22 is a clear reference to the wrong behaviour of Abraham. The people surely could not have repeated these words without thinking of Aaron. It was intended, therefore, as a reminder to them of how their very standing with God was by grace alone; and they were not from any wonderful spiritual pedigree, but instead were God's people by grace through faith.

Deu 27:19 'Cursed is he who deprives the foreigner, fatherless and widow of justice'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
This is in the context of a list of things which were done in secret and would not be judged by men. So the lack of justice in view would mean having a biased, discriminatory attitude, deep within the heart, unseen by men. And this is so easy for us all to slip in to. When our own experience before baptism was like Israel's in Egypt. We were foreigners, the excluded and marginal, who were saved by grace. And this is to affect our mental attitudes to others like that.

Deu 27:20 'Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's skirt'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
Nakedness should only be uncovered before your wife or husband. Uncovering nakedness is an idiom for the sexual act. The allusion is to Adam and Eve having their nakedness uncovered; we have to accept the situation we are in as a result of the curse, rather than having sexual relations with who we like, as if uncovering nakedness is nothing shameful. Our hope is for the curse put on us in Eden to be lifted at Christ's return; we can't lift it in this life, as our own ever insistent mortality reminds us. See on :13.

Deu 27:21 'Cursed is he who lies with any kind of animal'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the message for us is that we are to respect ourselves as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level.

Deu 27:22 'Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
This is phrased in such language as to allude to the way that Abraham says of Sarah his

wife: "She is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife" (Gen. 20:12). The people surely could not have repeated these words without thinking of their forefather Abraham, whose children they were, originating from a legally cursed relationship. It was intended, therefore, as a reminder to them of how their very standing with God was by grace alone; and they were not from any wonderful spiritual pedigree, but instead were God's people by grace through faith. See on :18.

Deu 27:23 'Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
The implication seems to be, 'And doesn't get caught doing so'. For this kind of inappropriate bonding would have been done in secret. So many of these curses are for sins committed which would never be found out by man, such as taking a bribe (:25). The idea of the curses therefore is that Israel were recognizing that who we are when nobody is watching is significant to God, because He does watch and judge, all the time. And He is therefore invited to "curse" our secret sins, at the last day. No other legal code was like this- criminalizing things which were unseen and would never be discovered by anyone else. Because God is the judge of all, and sees all things and will judge them in His own time.

Deu 27:24 'Cursed is he who strikes his neighbour in secret'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
This may refer to a man striking his neighbour in his "secrets", i.e. his most vulnerable part, the testicles. In which case we deduce the principle that inappropriate exploitation of another's weakness is as it were a mortal sin. Or the idea may be that if you strike a person secretly with no witness, even though you will not be judged for it by men, you will be by God, and are pronounced "cursed". But the meaning may simply be "in secret". See on :23.

Deu 27:25 'Cursed is he who takes a bribe to kill an innocent person'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
The idea of a bribe suggests that this doesn't refer to a contract killer, but to someone taking a bribe to make a false legal statement. But indirect consequence of wrong action is here understood as having performed the action, of murder in this case. For the death penalty would come because of the false statement which was made in return for a bribe. And this is an abiding principle.

Deu 27:26 'Cursed is he who doesn't confirm the words of this law to do them'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-
When the people ratified their covenant with Yahweh [cp. the breaking of bread], they had to confirm their agreement that they would be cursed for disobedience to it; and

“cursed is who doesn't confirm the words…". They couldn’t opt out of bringing this curse upon themselves for disobedience- if they did, they were cursed. Israel were told that *because* they were the people of God, in covenant with Him, *therefore* they *had* to be obedient. If they were disobedient, they would be cursed. And if they backed out of being God’s people, they were also cursed (Dt. 27:9,19,26). There was no way back: total devotion to obedience. God would either rejoice over them to bless them, or rejoice over them to curse them (Dt. 28:63). He isn’t passive; His energy will be expended upon us one way or the other. There are only two types of builder, the wise and the foolish; two types of tree, yielding either good or bad fruit.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 28

Deu 28:1 If you will listen diligently to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe all His commandments which I command you this day, Yahweh your God will set you on high above all the nations of the earth-

"The earth" specifically and initially refers to the territory promised to Abraham; see on :10. The long list of blessings in Dt. 28 were given by God perhaps knowing at the start that they would never be realized- "It shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord" (Dt. 28:1). God gave such detailed blessings for obedience even though they would never be realized by Israel. Likewise He gave such detailed plans for the temple in Ez. 40-48- even though the envisaged, possible scenario never came about because Israel chose to be disobedient.

Deu 28:2 All these blessings shall come on you and be with you, if you will listen to the voice of Yahweh your God-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 28:3 You shall be blessed in the city and you shall be blessed in the field-

The love of God for Israel isn’t just something in the past. You may have noticed how the blessings for Israel’s obedience are actually in a strange way somehow still given to them even in their disobedience. The blessings of many children and general prosperity have somehow been fulfilled to the Jewish people; they have somehow prospered “in all that thou settest thine hand unto…and all people of the earth shall see that thou art

called by the name of the Lord... and the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods...and thou shalt lend unto many nations...thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath" (Dt. 28:3-13). This has all come true for the Jewish people in their unbelief, from the Jewish taxi driver in Vilnius who somehow makes more than the other guys, to the Jewish bankers of New York- and all achieved despite every man's hand against them. Here we see the grace and love of God for Israel. And thus finally He shall give them the valley of Achor, symbol of their shameful disobedience, for a door of hope. The ineffable love of God for Israel continues. And we, as God's children, should show forth that same love, expressed supremely in seeking to turn them to Messiah.

Deuteronomy 28:4 You shall be blessed in the fruit of your body, the fruit of your ground, the fruit of your animals, the increase of your livestock and the young of your flock-
The curses of Dt. 28:4,18 involved cursing coming upon descendants of sinful people; perhaps in that their fathers influenced them to do wrong. Thus the salvation of men can be affected by a third party not preaching to them or not teaching them correct doctrine. Herein lies the crying need to 'defend the Faith'. Speaking of how he had suffered to defend purity of understanding of the Gospel, Paul reflected: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10). *Their* salvation was dependent upon *his* enduring.

Deu 28:5 Your basket and your kneading trough shall be blessed-
LXX "Blessed shall be thy barns, and thy stores" certainly seems to be in the Lord's mind in His parable of the man who had to build larger barns. He so often alludes to Mosaic commandments and statements and places a very different spin upon them. In this case, His point was that one may receive blessing in this life, which might look like blessing for obedience to the covenant- when in fact, it was a result of your own hard work, and you are not in fact with the Father at all, and will die condemned by Him.

Deu 28:6 You shall be blessed when you come in and you shall be blessed when you go out-
Within the Pentateuch, the idea of blessing creation paves the way for God promising to "bless" the children of Abraham, and the blessings upon them with which Deuteronomy concludes (see too Lev. 9:22; Num. 6:22-24). The pagan creation stories sometimes spoke of the things created by the gods then blessing *them*. The Sumerians recorded that at 'creation', "The whole universe, the people in unison, to Enlil in one tongue gave praise". But the true God, the God of all grace, not only creates His people and other creatures, but then blesses *them*! And the spirit of that grace should be seen in all our relationships. The Sumerian and Babylonian myths speak of people being created in order to serve the gods, "to bear the yoke of the gods" (S.G.F.Brandon), to relieve them in

their everyday work. But the Genesis creation has God creating man and giving him great freedom, and blessing him.

Deu 28:7 Yahweh will cause your enemies who rise up against you-
LXX "thine enemies that withstand thee", another hint that the bloody conquest of Canaan was only bloody because the nations withstood Yahweh's people, rather than like Rahab and the Gibeonites, seeking covenant relationship with Him.

To be struck before you. They will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways-
The fleeing of the Egyptians from Israel in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27) was to be repeated in all Israel's conflicts with their enemies; every time, the essence of the Red Sea deliverance [which was by grace alone, as Israel then were so weak spiritually] was to be repeated throughout the history of God's people (Num. 10:35; Dt. 28:7).

Deu 28:8 Yahweh will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to; He will bless you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you-
See on :5. The blessing of Yahweh would come if His commands were obeyed (Dt. 11:27); but in response, He would command that blessing (s.w. Dt. 28:8). His commandments were therefore effectively a commandment of blessing. They were designed for Israel's good and blessing, and not as a test of mindless obedience.

Deu 28:9 Yahweh will establish you for a holy people to Himself as He has sworn to you, if you will keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and walk in His ways-
Moses urges the peoples' faithfulness so that Yahweh might "establish His covenant" with them (Dt. 8:18; 28:9; 29:13); and yet we note that despite their disobedience, He still "established" the covenant with them, by grace alone (Dt. 9:5).

Deu 28:10 All the peoples of the land-
The reference of the “land” is to the *eretz* promised to Abraham. God would set Israel on high above all nations of the land (28:1). Only those round about Israel would see this, not the whole planet. “The nations” therefore refer to those in the land. In this same context they are warned that if they are *not* obedient, then they would be taken into all kingdoms of the earth (v. 25). And this is what happened- they were taken into captivity in Babylon, Assyria and their empires within the ‘earth’ / land. They were invaded by a nation from the end of the earth (28:49), which Habakkuk defines as Babylon, a nation at the extremity of the land / earth promised to Abraham.

Will see that you are called by the name of Yahweh and they will be afraid of you-
Whatever carried the name of a person was seen as his property. If a city was conquered, it bore the name of the conqueror (2 Sam. 12:28); the names of owners

were on their property (Ps. 49:12). So to bear God's Name is to recognize His complete ownership and even conquest of us. And yet there's a significant twist to all this in Is. 43:1: "I have called you by *your* name, because you are mine". It seems like a slip- we expect God to say that He has called us by *His* Name, because we are His. But no- He wishes us to bear both His Name and our own name, He doesn't wish to subsume us beneath His ownership and manifestation to the point that we are not significant as persons.

"Proclaim the Name" (Ex. 33:19; 34:5) is the same phrase used about 'calling upon the Name' (e.g. Dt. 28:10). The calling out / proclamation of Yahweh's Name, in the Gospel and ultimately in the declaration of the Name on the cross (Jn. 17:26), elicits a desire to call that Name upon us, which we initially do through baptism into that Name. And like Moses, we in turn proclaim the Name to others (Dt. 32:3 s.w.).

Deu 28:11 Yahweh will make you prosperous in the fruit of your body and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give you-

The blessings of Dt. 28 were conditional upon obedience. Israel were not obedient, from Sinai onwards, as the prophets lament. But many of those blessings were still experienced by Israel. So we conclude that this was by grace alone, and indeed the idea of Abraham's seed being "blessed" is associated in the New Testament with the blessing of grace. Again we note God's passionate desire to by all means give His people His Kingdom. He wants to do this, it is the good pleasure or will of God to give us the Kingdom. He is not indifferent to our salvation, and wants us desperately to be in His Kingdom, as the parable of the marriage supper also indicates. It concludes with pretty much anyone willing to say "yes" being ushered in to the marriage supper.

Deu 28:12 Yahweh will open to you His good treasure in the sky, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations and you shall not borrow-

The returned exiles didn't have God's treasure 'opened' to them because of their disobedience (s.w. Mal. 3:10); and yet their very return was a blessing for apparent obedience. We therefore see how God gave them blessings they didn't deserve, whilst also cursing them for their disobedience. He by all means yearned to give them blessing and salvation, and thereby imputed to them a righteousness which they simply didn't have. That same passion, expressed in these same ways, is now articulated to Israel after the Spirit.

Money lending worldwide has been a feature of Jewish existence over the centuries, and yet this is here predicted as happening only if they were obedient. They have been disobedient, and yet it’s as if God loves to advertise His grace to the world by still

blessing the disobedient. But I suggest that the context is simply that "The Lord shall open unto you *His* good treasure, the heaven to give the rain of your land… and *you* shall lend unto many nations". If God opens His treasure to us, we should open our treasures to others, even lending with a spirit of generosity, motivated by our experience of His generosity to *us*. Because Yahweh had redeemed Israel, they were not to be petty materialists, cheating others out of a few grams or centimeters in trading. The wealth and largeness of God's work for them should lead them to shun such petty desire for self-betterment. God gives to all men with a single eye (James 1:5 Gk.); and in response, we too must be single eyed in our giving (Mt. 6:22 s.w.- this is one of James; many allusions to the sermon on the mount). The Jews' experience of redemption from Haman *quite naturally* resulted in them giving gifts both to each other and to the poor around them (Es. 9:22).

Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is constantly thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. "The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands", even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Deu 28:13 Yahweh will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only be above and you shall not be beneath, if you will listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you this day, to observe and to do-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22;

22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 28:14 and do not turn aside-
Israel had been commanded to "not depart" from the way of Yahweh's commandments (Dt. 28:14; Josh. 1:7), but the frequent lament of the historical records is that they did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. The Bible, especially in Proverbs, constantly reduces human moral choice to that between two ways of life and being. We constantly wish to argue that "it's not so simple" because there are grey areas. But the 'grey area' argument is what leads us so often into sin, into following the "way" of sin.

From any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left-
The wall of water on their right hand and left when they crossed the Red Sea is twice emphasized (Ex. 14:22,29). It is alluded to later, when they are urged to not depart from God's way, not to the right hand nor left (Dt. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14). We passed through the Red Sea when we were baptized (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were set upon a path which is walled up to keep us within it. And we are to remain in that path upon which we were set. To turn aside from it would be as foolish as Israel turning away from their path and trying to walk into the walls of water.

To go after other gods to serve them-
"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God, then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh,

throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations and heart, as revealed in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

Deu 28:15 But if you will not listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command you this day, all these curses shall come on you and consume you-
Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7).

Deu 28:16 You shall be cursed in the city and you shall be cursed in the field-
A faithless and disobedient Israel were apparently blessed and not cursed in the city and in the field since their reestablishment of Israel in 1948. But this is therefore of itself a sign of God's absolute grace to them, given no doubt in the hope that it would lead them to repentance concerning the Lord Jesus (Rom. 2:4).

Deu 28:17 Your basket and your kneading trough shall be cursed-
The material prosperity of Israel, particularly the fertility of the land, was to be cursed if they disobeyed God (Dt. 28:16-18). If this has a latter-day application, it follows that Israel must first have returned to their land in the last days and become agriculturally prosperous before it can happen. This is exactly the position today.

Deu 28:18 The fruit of your body, the fruit of your ground, the increase of your livestock and the young of your flock shall be cursed-
LXX specifically mentions oxen for "livestock" and sheep for "flock". Hab. 3:17 seems to allude to this picture, but the faithful writer rejoices that despite the experience of the curses for disobedience on a national level, he can personally look forward to a relationship with God. So even at the height of the curses, there was always the

possibility for individuals to have a relationship with God, even if they shared the effect of others' sins.

Deu 28:19 You shall be cursed when you come in and you shall be cursed when you go out-

There is a most interesting connection between the curses for disobedience and the time of the judges in the words of Azariah to Asa. He reminded Asa of the problems of weak leadership in that period, and encouraged Asa to learn the lesson from it, as a ruler of Israel. He describes Israel at that time as being "for a long season... without the true God, and without a teaching priest (cp. 1 Sam. 3:1, Hebrew), and without law" (2 Chron. 15:3). This is quoted in Hos. 3:4,5 concerning Israel's state before their final repentance. Azariah continued: "In those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in (an idiom for the rulers), but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants" (2 Chron. 15:5). This is definitely alluding to Dt. 28:19,20: "Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in... and goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee... vexation" (same word in 2 Chron. 15:5). "Nation was destroyed of nation" (2 Chron. 15:6) must be alluded to in Lk. 21:10 concerning the situation in latter-day Israel. And 2 Chron. 15:7 = 1 Cor. 15:58 - a certain latter-day application.

Deu 28:20 Yahweh will send on you cursing, confusion and rebuke in all that you put your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly-

The connections between the record of Job's experience of depression and those curses upon Israel gives us a cameo of latter-day Jewry's position. This 'confusion of mind' (Dt. 28:20, Hebrew), "madness... and astonishment of heart" (Dt. 28:28) will, not surprisingly, result in a complete collapse of leadership within Israel (Dt. 28:19), resulting in them fleeing a disorganized seven ways before their enemies (Dt. 28:25). There is a sharp contrast between this and Israel's present nonchalance. During their latter day tribulation, Israel will experience "faintness in their hearts", intense "terror" (Lev. 26:16), which would be enough to kill them (Dt. 32:25). This extraordinary level of paranoia will be modelled upon that of Jacob as he faced Esau - representing Israel's confrontation with their neighbours and brethren in the last days (Jer. 30:5,7). This state of fear will result in many Jews going to live in Jerusalem, as happened during the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions (Jer. 35:11). Ezekiel had prophesied of this time: "Terrors (an intensive plural - i.e. 'the one great terror') by reason of the sword shall be upon my people" (Ez. 21:12). Likewise our Lord spoke of "fearful sights" being seen in latter-day Israel (Lk. 21:11). This fear will be absolute paranoia: "I will make you a terror to yourself" (Jer. 20:4) because of latter day Babylon's invasion; "ye shall flee when none pursueth you... I will send a faintness into their hearts... the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them" (Lev. 26:17,36). "I will bring the land into *desolation*" (Lev. 26:32) uses a Hebrew word which can imply stupefaction by fear. This paranoia will be associated

with a manic depression which will have its roots in a chronically bad conscience towards God, going back thousands of years to their national childhood: "I will... cause sorrow of heart... they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity... and also in the iniquity of their fathers shall they pine away" (Lev. 26:16,39). Note how the *land* will be brought into this mental desolation. Frequently the land of Israel is paralleled with the people (e.g. Jer.19:14 cp. 26:17). The intense desolation of Jewry will be reflected physically in the state of their land. And the resolution of this psychological torment will only be through repentance and acceptance of the Saviour Messiah whom they crucified.

Because of the evil of your doings by which you have forsaken Him-
Jud. 2:13 says that the people did forsake Yahweh. But instead of these judgments , we are to read that although God punished them, He raised up saviours to save them from the judgments; and this looks forward to His grace in the Lord Jesus, 'Yah's salvation'.

Deu 28:21 Yahweh will make the pestilence cleave to you until He has consumed you from off the land-
The "pestilence" which was the plague upon Egypt (Ex. 9:3) was to come upon a hard hearted Israel (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Num. 14:12; Dt. 28:21; Jer. 21:6). The plagues upon Egypt form the basis for the vials and seals of Revelation, which speak of judgment to come upon the land of Israel. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

Into which you now go in to possess it-
"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 28:22 Yahweh will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation and with fiery heat; with the sword, with blight and with mildew, and they shall pursue you until you perish-

The curses to come upon Israel as a result of the latter day invasions are described in terms which are extremely apposite to modern warfare. The plagues to come upon Israel as a result of the invasions are almost impossible to identify with anything presently known: "a consumption... a fever... an inflammation... an extreme burning... blasting... the burning ague that shall consume the eyes" (Dt. 28:22; Lev. 26:16) all seems to echo the language of nuclear fall-out. "They shall be burnt... and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction" (Dt. 32:24) is similar. The release of complex chemical weapons, as well as nuclear detonation, would explain why rainfall patterns will be interrupted during this latter day tribulation (Dt. 28:23). The fall-out from such weapons would create the murderous rain of dust upon the land which Dt. 28:24 speaks of: "The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed". It is twice emphasized that those in the land would suffer blindness (Dt. 28:28,29), which may also be related to such nuclear or chemical fallout. This has not yet happened; the context invites us to read this as literal rather than figurative. We know that the latter day invaders who attack Jerusalem will both fight each other and have their eyes rot in their sockets (Zech. 14:12), the implication being that they use their weaponry against each other as well as against Israel. Their earlier use of these weapons would account for this blindness coming upon Israel, and again we see the principle that what the attackers do to Israel will be inflicted upon them.

Deu 28:23 Your sky that is over your head shall be brass and the earth that is under you shall be iron-

This may well be the result of latter day chemical or nuclear weapons; see on :22. And yet the initial application was surely to the hardness of the earth reflecting the hot, rainless skies above them.

Deu 28:24 Yahweh will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from the sky shall it come down on you until you are destroyed-

This has not yet been fulfilled; maybe because God in His grace has not punished His people according to all their sins. Or it could be that it has yet to be fulfilled in the final tribulation to come upon Israel. Nuclear fallout would fulfil these words- and likewise those of Is. 29:6, describing the invasion of latter day Babylon / Assyria, which have yet to be accurately fulfilled. See on :22.

Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 promised a curse to come upon the land [of Eden / Israel] for their failure within it, just as happened to Adam and Eve; and of course ultimately they were

driven out of the land just as Israel's very first parents had been. As the *eretz* / earth / land was initially "without form and void", so the same term is used of the land of Israel after the people had been driven out of it (Jer. 4:23). As thorns and thistles came up in the land [and those plants are unknown in some parts of the planet], so they did again when Israel were driven from their land (Gen. 3:18; Hos. 10:8). As Adam was punished by returning to dust, so Israel would be destroyed by dust (Dt. 28:24). As Adam and Eve failed to "subdue" the garden of Eden (Gen. 1:28), so Israel failed to fully "subdue" [s.w.] the tribes of the land (Num. 32:22). They subdued a few local to them; but they never really rose up to the reality of being able to have the whole land area promised to Abraham subjected to them.

Deu 28:25 Yahweh will cause you to be struck before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them but shall flee seven ways before them-
The fleeing of the Egyptians from Israel in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27) was a case of fleeing when none pursued them. This was the judgment upon Israel (Lev. 26:17,36; Dt. 28:25), which was to arise because in their hearts they had returned to Egypt (the world) and were therefore to be judged as Egypt, "condemned with the world" they had loved (1 Cor. 11:32).

And you shall be tossed back and forth among all the kingdoms of the earth-
The idea is of a sieve, which was tossed back and forth until the grain was left and all the lighter chaff had fallen to the earth. The idea is that Israel's wandering amongst the nations, and especially their latter day scattering and wandering amongst the kingdoms of the earth / land promised to Abraham, would result in the appearance of a faithful seed. But the very same phrase "tossed back and forth (s.w. "removed") among all the kingdoms of the earth" is used repeatedly of what was to happen at the time of the Babylonian exile (Jer. 15:4; 24:9; 29:18; 34:17). But the judgments associated with this in :23,24,26 etc. didn't fully happen. We can therefore conclude that indeed, God didn't carry out His side of the covenant curses for disobedience.

Deu 28:26 Your dead body shall be food to all birds of the sky and to the animals of the earth-
The events of AD70 were a detailed initial fulfilment of some parts of these prophecies. But they were only a foretaste of the tragedies of Israel's latter day cursing. Our Lord's quotation of Dt. 28:26 in Mt. 24:28 ("your carcasses shall be meat unto the fowls of the air") is confirmation of this. "None to frighten them away" recalls the events of the covenant with Abraham in Gen. 15. The end result of all this will be Israel returning to that covenant, accepting the new covenant which is based upon the promises to Abraham.

These "beasts of the earth / land" (Dt. 28:26) must refer to the nations within the earth / land promised to Abraham. But they were not destroyed in this way at the time of the Babylonian judgment for Israel's breaking covenant (see on :25). Nor were they struck with the medical conditions of the following verses. God's amelioration of the curses may have been in response to Jeremiah's Lamentations and prayers of other faithful men at the time (e.g. Ezekiel).

And there shall be none to frighten them away- Jer. 7:33 applies this to the exile in Babylon: "The dead bodies of this people shall be food for the birds of the sky and for the animals of the earth; and none shall frighten them away". But clearly these curses were greatly ameliorated at that time; the exiles were not destroyed, many Jews remained in the land, and the exiles became popular and wealthy, as the book of Esther testifies.

Deu 28:27 Yahweh will strike you with the boil of Egypt-
Apostate Israel were to be punished with the judgments of Egypt, and this was the plague on Egypt of Ex. 9:9. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

And with the tumours, the scurvy and the itch, from which you cannot be healed-
Nuclear fallout would fulfil these words- see on :22. But the previous judgments upon Israel for breaking the covenant didn't seem to feature these elements of medical judgment upon them. We will remark so often that they were punished less than their inquities desrved, for by grace God remembered mercy in His wrath.

Deu 28:28 Yahweh will strike you with madness, blindness and astonishment of heart-
Dt. 28:14–28,59–61 predicted that mental disease would be one of the punishments for worshipping other gods/demons. This explains the association of demons with mental illness in the New Testament. But let it be noted that the language of demons is associated with illness, not sin. We do not read of Christ casting out demons of envy, murder etc. It must also be noted that the Bible speaks of people *having* a demon/disease, rather than saying that demons *caused* the disease. It is significant that the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) used the word *daimonion* for “idol”; this is the word translated “demon” in the New Testament.

Deu 28:29 You shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. You shall be only oppressed and robbed always-
Nuclear fallout would fulfil these words- see on :22. The darkness that came down at the crucifixion would have recalled Jer. 33:19-21- when day and night no longer follow

their normal sequence, God is breaking His covenant. Israel's condemnation would be that "even at midday you will grope like a blind man in the dark" (Dt. 28:29). And yet the Lord would have known that He was suffering for Israel, treated as an apostate Israel, and thus He was the more inspired to pray for their ultimate forgiveness and salvation, seeing He had borne their condemnation. The Lord suffered "for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due" (Is. 53:8 RVmg.). There are therefore elements of the crucifixion sufferings of Jesus in every suffering of natural Israel.

And there shall be none to save you-

This was not the case at the time of the restoration, for Yahweh insisted that He was the One "to save you" (Is. 43:11,12; 45:21). Yet there was no repentance in the exiles; the covenant remained broken, and yet God acted to them as if it were still functional- and Israel were receiving blessing for obedience. This is all the stuff of radical grace and desire to force through a relationshi. God says He Himself saved Israel seeing there "was none to save you" (Is. 59:16; 63:5). These passages ultimately look ahead to God's saving work in the Lord Jesus, 'Yah's salvation'; a work likewise of grace.

Deu 28:30 You will betroth a wife and another man shall lie with her. You will build a house and not dwell therein-
Again we observe that these judgments were ameliorated. For Jeremiah urges the exiles to build houses in exile and dwell in them. Even though they were still impenitent, they were given the blessings of obedience.

You will plant a vineyard and not use its fruit-
The Lord likened His preachers to men reaping a harvest. He speaks of how they fulfilled the proverb that one sows and another reaps (Jn. 4:37,38). Yet this 'proverb' has no direct Biblical source. What we *do* find in the Old Testament is the repeated idea that if someone sows but another reaps, this is a sign that they are suffering God's judgment for their sins (Dt. 20:6; 28:30; Job 31:8; Mic. 6:15). But the Lord turns around the 'proverb' concerning Israel's condemnation; He makes it apply to the way that the preacher / reaper who doesn't sow is the one who harvests others in converting them to Him. Surely His implication was that His preacher-reapers were those who had known condemnation for their sins, but on that basis were His humbled harvesters in the mission field.

Deu 28:31 Your ox will be slain before your eyes and you shall not eat of it. Your donkey will be violently taken away from before your face and shall not be restored to you. Your sheep will be given to your enemies and you will have none to save you-
"I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and

destroy your cattle" (Lev. 26:22 cp. Dt. 28:31) speaks of the "beasts of the earth / land" (Dt. 28:26), who refer to the nations within the earth / land promised to Abraham. The use of cattle raiding language in Ez. 38:12 would then lead us to equate that latter day invasion with the final fulfilment of the curses upon Israel here.

Deu 28:32 Your sons and your daughters will be given to another people and your eyes will look and fail with longing for them all day long; and there shall be no power in your hand-

God said that the sign of His condemnation and rejection of Israel was that He would give their sons and daughters to be married to Gentiles (Dt. 28:32). To willingly marry a Gentile was therefore to proclaim oneself as rejected from the Israel of God. The Lord Jesus had read these words and engaged with them; for He uses the picture of eyes failing with longing for the return of exiled children and applies it to the Father longing for the return of the prodigal son. That son clearly spoke of Israel in exile.

Deu 28:33 The fruit of your ground and all your labours shall a nation which you don't know eat up-

This was clearly fulfilled at the time of the Babylonian invasion (Jer. 5:17), but this only looked forward to the even greater fulfilment in the curses of the last days. It is repeatedly stressed that God's people would suffer at the hands of a nation they didn't know (Jer. 14:18; 15:14; 17:4; 22:28). They did "know" the Babylonians, and had worshipped their gods. So "know" is used in the Hebraic sense of 'having a relationship with'. The idea may be that they would receive no mercy from those they were not in any relationship with.

And you will be only oppressed and crushed always-

This was exactly what God's people did to each other, oppressing and crushing their weaker brethren (s.w. Am. 4:1). By doing so, they were living out their condemnation.

Deu 28:34 so that you will be mad because of the sight your eyes shall see-

This again speaks of the deep psychological trauma of God's people. See on :28. The deep distress would be at the sight of themselves covered in boils (:35).

Deu 28:35 Yahweh will strike you in the knees and in the legs with a sore boil of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head-

This language is applied to Job (Job 2:7). He was clearly representative of Israel suffering the curses for disobedience. But he was a righteous man, and was saved in the end. He pointed forward to how the perfect Lord Jesus suffered the curses for Israel's sins, as their total representative.

Deu 28:36 Yahweh will bring you and your king whom you will set over you-
This makes these curses have specific reference to the Babylonian rather than Roman invasion. The latter day application may require Israel to put their trust in some charismatic leader.

To a nation that you have not known, you nor your fathers, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone-
Israel and Judah are strongly rebuked by the prophets for their choice to do this, and are begged to cease doing so. But their freewill choice to sin was in fact a result of being cursed by God; they were led into sin, as it were, by God confirming them in the downward spiral they had chosen to be part of. In this case, if they didn't want to be cursed, then they simply had to stop living out the curse in their lives.

The reference to Israel serving the gods of the nations to whom they are carried captive, gods which their ancestors abhorred, may refer to some accepting Islam in the last days. Indeed, Dt. 31:29 suggests that in the latter (Heb. end) times, Israel will specifically "do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands". This is the language commonly used concerning Israel's worship of the idols of the surrounding lands; if they are to specifically do this in the time of the end, it would seem reasonable to guess that this may refer to an acceptance of Islam.

Deu 28:37 You will become an astonishment, a proverb and a byword among all the peoples where Yahweh shall lead you away-
But this was in order for a witness to be made to those nations. Hence LXX "And thou shalt be there for a wonder, and a parable". The tragedy of Israel's curses for disobedience is even now to be understood as an appeal to the Gentile world to take God seriously and repent. This was fulfilled at the Babylonian exile (s.w. Jer. 24:9); but there is no clear record of Judah and their land becoming a proverb and byword. Again we sense that these curses were ameliorated by grace.

Deu 28:38 You will carry much seed out into the field and gather little in, for the locust shall consume it-
The locust was a plague brought upon Egypt. The judgments upon the land of Israel in the last days are described in Revelation, and they are full of allusion to the plagues upon Egypt. The locust is a figure of Judah's latter day judgments (Joel 1:4). It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

This is the situation experienced at the time of the restoration, and is alluded to by Haggai in Hag. 1:9. The restoration was supposed to happen when they were obedient. But they received the curses for disobedience at the time of the restoration because they were disobedient- their harvests resulted in "little", they were plagued etc. We conclude therefore that the restoration was a blessing for obedience which was given when they were not in fact obedient. And we see in this God's grace.

Deu 28:39 You will plant vineyards and dress them but you shall neither drink of the wine nor harvest them, for the worm shall eat them-
Just as the locust of :38 is alluded to in Joel 1:4, so Joel 1:4-7 also alludes to the "worm" which destroys vines- and they are used as a symbol of Judah's latter day invaders. Maimonides in "A guide for the perplexed" makes a big issue about these worms of vine weevils. He claims that the various false gods and witches which Israel tended to worship and trust in all offered agricultural prosperity, and specifically offered protection from the dreaded vine weevils. The point is therefore made that all those gods and incantations would be revealed to Israel as powerless to turn away the curse for disobedience to the covenant.

Deu 28:40 You will have olive trees throughout all your borders but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off-
See on :39. The picture here is of labour in vain, so it was all a psychological punishment.

Deu 28:41 You will father sons and daughters but they shall not be yours, for they will go into captivity-
It has been observed that the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings have certain similarities. For example, they all quote the Deuteronomy version of Israel's earlier history, leading to the suggestion that Deuteronomy was the first of the collection, a kind of introductory background history. The curses listed in Dt. 28 are all especially relevant to the situation in Judah before the Babylonian invasion, and a number of the curses are alluded to in Lamentations as being descriptive of the situation after the final destruction of Jerusalem. Some of the curses can have little other application, e.g. Dt. 28:41 speaks of begetting children, "but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity". Other relevant passages are Dt. 28:36 (a king taken captive), 49,50,52. These "former prophets" (Deuteronomy - 2 Kings) appear to have been edited during the exile as history which spoke to the concerns and needs of the exiled people of God. This combined history speaks mainly of the southern Kingdom, which was the group who went to captivity in Babylon; and it explains why this captivity was justified, as well as giving many examples of where repentance could bring

about a restoration (1 Kings 8:46-53 is specific). This history addresses the questions which concerned the captives- does God abandon His people for ever? Are Israel entirely to blame for what happened? Is there hope of restoration after receiving Divine judgment and breaching His covenant? Can God have a relationship with His people without a temple? To what extent will God always honour the promises to Abraham and David? Should other gods also be worshipped? Reading these books from this perspective reveals how incident after incident was especially selected by the inspired editors in Babylon in order to guide God's people there.

Deu 28:42 All your trees and the fruit of your ground shall the locust possess-
Joel's likening of the latter day invader to locusts (Joel 1:4) is perhaps based upon the prophecy that "locusts shall consume (the land)... the fruit of thy land shall the locust possess" (Dt. 28:38,42 A.V. mg.). 'Possess' invites us to see the locusts as representative of a group of invaders. See on :43.

Deu 28:43 The foreigner who is in the midst of you shall mount up above you higher and higher-
This surely begs for an application to the Arab inhabitants of the [so called] Occupied Territories, who will no doubt join in with the 'locust' invasions, dominating the Jews as the Philistines did.

And you shall come down lower and lower-
Flesh must be humbled- either we do it now, we humble ourselves that we may be exalted in due time; or it will have to be done to us through the terror of rejection. Time and again ‘bringing low’ or ‘humiliation’ is the result of condemnation (Dt. 28:43; 2 Chron. 28:19; Job 40:12; Ps. 106:43).

Deu 28:44 He will lend to you and you shall not lend to him; he will be the head and you shall be the tail-
This has not had widespread fulfilment, but it must do in the latter day desolation of Israel- which presumably must last for a period of time for this to come true. There are various indications of a literal 1260 days, 42 months, three and a half year period of tribulation in the last days.

Deu 28:45 All these curses will come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed-
As if the curses are to be equated with the invaders.

Because you didn’t listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you-

This began with God's first invitation to Israel to hear His voice. But they didn't want to and shied away, asking Moses to go and hear God's voice and relay it to them. This refusal to listen to His literal voice is being alluded to, and compared to their refusal to obey His voice / word. If they had been open to personal engagement with Yahweh their God, hearing His word spoken to them personally rather than retreating into mere religion and thereby placing God at a distance from them, then they would have been personally obedient to that voice.

Deu 28:46 and they shall be to you and your seed a sign and a wonder forever-
"Forever" here is clearly not used with the sense of literal eternity. Indeed there is no word for that in ancient Hebrew; *olahm* means really 'time out of mind'.

Deu 28:47 Because you didn't serve Yahweh your God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart because of the abundance of all things-
So often, the Mosaic law associates rejoicing with giving and sacrificing, for truly it is more blessed or happy to give than to receive. The Lord's teaching about this was clearly reflective of this major Mosaic theme (Acts 20:35). But Israel sacrificed grudgingly, without joy. And this was of supreme significance to God as a reason for their condemnation.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Israel would be rejected and cursed if they didn't serve God "with gladness". Service to God must be done with joy; if we lose the rejoicing of our hope, we lose the hope itself (Heb. 3:6). Joy is therefore a vital characteristic of God's true people.

Deu 28:48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom Yahweh shall send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness and in want of all things-
This is so relevant to the Lord's sufferings on the cross, when He bore Israel's condemnation. The whole of Romans 6 plays on the idea that we are slaves to sin, and through entering Christ, we become slaves of righteousness. Total freedom to do what *we* personally want is not possible. We are slaves, we can't serve two masters. So why not serve Christ rather than the Biblical devil? Likewise Moses offered Israel the choice of bondservice to either Yahweh or their enemies (Dt. 28:47,48). And Mic. 2:3 likewise reminds Israel that they will be under the yoke of judgment if they reject Yahweh's yoke. The Lord spoke of His servants having a light yoke (Mt. 11:30). The Bible minded among His hearers would have thought back to the threatened punishment of an iron yoke for the disobedient (Dt. 28:48). 'It's a yoke either way', they would have concluded. But the Lord's yoke *even in this life* is light, and has promise of the life which is to come! The logic of taking it, with the restrictions it inevitably implies (for it is a yoke), is simply overpowering.

And He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you-
Moses offered Israel the choice of bondservice to either Yahweh or their enemies. The whole of Romans 6 plays on this idea. We are slaves to sin, and through entering Christ by baptism, we become slaves of righteousness. Total freedom to do what *we* personally want is not possible. We are slaves, we can't serve two masters. So why not serve Christ rather than the Biblical devil? Jesus spoke of His servants having a light yoke (Mt. 11:30). The Bible minded among His hearers would have thought back to the threatened punishment of an iron yoke for the disobedient (:48). 'It's a yoke either way', they would have concluded. But the Lord's yoke *even in this life* is light, and has promise of the life which is to come! The logic of taking it, with the restrictions it inevitably implies (for it is a yoke), is simply overpowering.

But this is the language of slave labour camps, working the Jews until they drop dead. This is one of a number of word pictures among the curses which recall the scenes of Nazi death camps. But even they were nothing to the scenes which tragically are yet to come in the last days.

Deu 28:49 Yahweh will bring a nation against you from far, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flies; a nation whose language you will not understand-
As explained on :10, the "earth" refers to the land promised to Abraham. They were invaded by a nation from the end of the earth, which Habakkuk defines as Babylon, a nation at the extremity of the land / earth promised to Abraham. Rome is not here in view. The latter day application is likewise to the nations within the land promised to Abraham, and not to "Rome".

Deu 28:50 a nation of fierce face who will not respect the person of the old nor show favour to the young-
Moses not only repeats all the curses of Lev. 26 to them, but he adds even more, under inspiration (Dt. 28:50-57). Presumably the Angel had explained in one of their conversations how Israel would suffer even greater punishment than what He had outlined in Lev. 26. Notice in passing that Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 are not strictly parallel. And in some ways, Moses became more demanding, whilst at the same time emphasizing grace and love.

Deu 28:51 It will eat the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your ground until you are destroyed. It will not leave you grain, new wine or oil, the increase of your livestock or the young of your flock, until it has caused you to perish-
Moses not only repeats all the curses of Lev. 26 to them, but he adds even more, under inspiration. Presumably the Angel had explained in one of their conversations how Israel would suffer even greater punishment than that outlined in Lev. 26. Notice that Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 are not strictly parallel. Moses in his spiritual maturity urged Israel to be the more fully aware of the nature and reality of Divine punishment for human sin; his increased focus upon grace and salvation didn't mean that he increasingly ignored the harder side of God- but rather the opposite was the case.

Deu 28:52 It will besiege you in all your gates until your high and fortified walls come down in which you trusted, throughout all your land. It will besiege you in all your gates throughout all your land which Yahweh your God has given you-
Their trust in "high and fenced walls" (Dt. 28:52) would have its latter-day equivalent in Israel's trust in its military deterrents and defences. The reference to the land Yahweh gave them would then refer to the events of 1948, in the latter day context. "High" is the word for "haughty" or proud, and modern Israel's pride in their defences will be brought down.

Deu 28:53 You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters, whom Yahweh your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you-
The plural "enemies" suggests that the siege in view would not be by one enemy but by a confederacy of them. And this is exactly the latter day prophetic scenario during Israel's final time of curing.

Deu 28:54 The man who is tender among you and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother and toward the wife of his heart and toward the remnant of his children whom he has remaining-

The Biblical record seems to very frequently seek to deconstruct popular ideas about sin and evil. One of the most widespread notions was the "evil eye", whereby it was believed that some people had an "evil eye" which could bring distress into the eyes of those upon whom they looked in jealousy or anger. This concept is alive and well in many areas to this day. The idea entered Judaism very strongly after the Babylonian captivity; the Babylonian Talmud is full of references to it. The sage Rav attributed many illnesses to the evil eye, and the Talmud even claimed that 99 out of 100 people died prematurely from this (Bava Metzia 107b). The Biblical deconstruction of this is through stressing that *God's* eye is all powerful in the destiny of His people (Dt. 11:12; Ps. 33:18); and that "an evil eye" refers to an *internal* attitude of mean spiritedness *within* people- e.g. an "evil eye" is understood as an ungenerous spirit in Dt. 15:9; Mt. 6:23; 20:15; or pure selfishness in Dt. 28:54,56; Prov. 23:6; 28:22. We must remember that the people of Biblical times understood an "evil eye" as an *external* ability to look at someone and bring curses upon them. But the Bible redefines an "evil eye" as a purely *internal* attitude; and cosmic evil, even if it were to exist, need hold no fear for us- seeing the eyes of the only true God are running around the earth *for* us and not against us (2 Chron. 16:9).

Deu 28:55 so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your gates-
This clearly had a fulfilment at the time of 2 Kings 6:28,29. But all these incipient fulfillments only looked ahead to the greater one in the last days.

Deu 28:56 The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye will be evil toward the husband of her heart and toward her son and her daughter-
The curses repeatedly stress the psychological torment. The sensitive woman would become desensitized by the desperation, so that her "eye will be evil". Her husband was the man "of her heart", but her eye or heart / mind will become "evil" toward him, and likewise toward her own children. The mental torment of those judged by God will be the main component of their judgment. "Weeping and gnashing of teeth" speaks of this; for to behold the future they had missed, to perceive how easily they could have been there, will be an unbearable psychological trauma. All the dramatic figurative descriptions of condemnation are an attempt to portray this.

Deu 28:57 and toward her young one who comes out from between her feet and her children whom she shall bear; for she will eat them secretly, for want of all things in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your gates-
This clearly had some application to the situation in AD70, but that whole scenario was

but a foretaste of the situation in the last days. Most especially is Babylon called "the enemy": Ps. 78:61; Jer. 6:25; 15:11; 18:17; 31:16 and an impressive 11 times in Lamentations. 'Babylon' has specific latter-day application to the neighbouring enemies of Israel.

Deu 28:58 If you will not observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and fearful name, YAHWEH YOUR GOD-
For all Moses' desire for Israel's obedience, there are some subtle differences in his attitude to law and obedience between Deuteronomy, and the law earlier given. Thus in Leviticus 26 it was stressed that obedience would bring blessing; whilst Dt. 28:58 says that obedience results in fearing the fearful Name of Yahweh and His glory. Fear shouldn't lead to obedience; but obedience leads a man to *know and fear his God and His Name*. This is blessing enough. The Hebrew *yare* means both fear / dread, and also reverence / worship. Knowing the enveloping mercy of God should lead to a real fear of a God so gracious (Ps. 5:7). However, obedience to God's commands would lead to a fear of Yahweh's glorious and fearful name (Dt. 28:58); not the other way round, whereby fear of God leads to obedience. God's character is not just partly severe, partly gracious. His grace and His judgment of sin are wonderfully interconnected within His character.

Like Jacob and Job, Moses came to a fine appreciation of Yahweh's Name at his latter end, perceiving that the wonder of relationship with God far eclipses any material blessing we may receive from Him in this life. To respect or fear the Name doesn't mean to remember that God's Name is 'Yahweh'. It refers to his character (Ex. 34:4-6). The Lord Jesus fed off the majesty of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4)- this was how inspirational He found the things of the Name. To fear the Name of Yahweh involved practical obedience to "all the words of this law". Meditation and sustained reflection upon the characteristics of God as epitomized and memorialized in His Name will of itself lead to a conforming of personality to that same Name. If we declare that Name to others, they too have the chance to be transformed by it- thus Moses comments that "I will proclaim the name of Yahweh; you, ascribe greatness to our God" (Dt. 32:3).

All the commands of Moses' law were in order to teach Israel to appreciate and respect the character and name of Yahweh (Dt. 28:58) - therefore all this commands were a manifestation of the fundamental personality of the Father. Ditto for the words of Jesus, who was the prophet who would speak God's word as Moses spoke it (Dt. 18:15-18). Because Jesus would speak God's word as Moses did, the words of Moses should be studied as much as the words of Jesus - as Jesus himself said (Jn. 5:47). Yet do we *love* the Law of Moses as David did? Or do we not incline to be spiritually lazy, to be influenced by the (so called) New Testament Christianity of the apostate religious world around us? It is only by truly entering into the spirit of Moses' words that we can really understand our Lord - he said this himself. And yet we would rather read Jesus' words

than those of Moses, because we can't be bothered to make *the effort to understand the spirit of our Lord as it is revealed there*. And therefore we complain (if we are honest) of a lack of sense that we are having a real relationship with the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus fed off the majesty of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4)- this was how inspirational He found the things of the Name. To fear the Name of Yahweh was to "observe to do all the words of this law" (Dt. 28:58). Meditation and sustained reflection upon the characteristics of God as epitomized and memorialized in His Name will of itself lead to a conformation of personality to that same Name. If we declare that Name to others, they too have the chance to be transformed by it- thus Moses comments: "Because *I* will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe *ye* greatness unto our God" (Dt. 32:3).

Deu 28:59 then Yahweh will make your plagues terrible and the plagues of your seed, great plagues and of long continuance, and severe sicknesses and of long continuance-
"Then..." could suggest that when suffering the curses for disobedience, they would then be offered the opportunity for repentance. But if they refused this, then the plagues would not be of 'short continuance' as was potentially possible, but would last "long" (Dt. 28:59), or made seven times heavier (Lev. 26:21). The medical aspects of these plagues were apparently not fulfilled to the extent implied here and in :60; and that is typical of how in wrath, God remembered mercy. For although the covenant was broken, the curses they had agreed to bear for this were somehow ameliorated in practice. And despite their lack of obedience, the blessings for obedience did have partial fulfilment (e.g. the multiplication of their numbers, :63 cp. Dt. 1:10; 10:22; 26:5). And even further, God still sought ongoing relationship with them on the basis of the covenant He had made with Abraham and his seed; those promises became the basis of His offer of a new covenant to Israel.

Deu 28:60 He will bring on you again all the diseases of Egypt which you feared, and they shall cling to you-
Sickness is from God and not a personal Satan. "*The Lord* will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt" (Dt. 28:60); "an evil spirit *from the Lord* troubled [Saul]" (1 Sam. 16:14); "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?" (Ex. 4:11).

Legion's desire to see his mental disease return to the herds of swine probably stemmed from a need to know that his affliction had been cured in a rather permanent sort of way. And the Lord went along with this. The idea of transference of disease from one to another was a common Semitic perception, and it's an idea used by God. And thus God went along with the peoples' idea of disease transference, and the result is recorded in terms of demons [which was how they understood illness] going from one

person to another. Likewise the leprosy of Naaman clave to Gehazi (2 Kings 5:27). God threatened to make the diseases of the inhabitants of Canaan and Egypt to cleave to Israel if they were disobedient (Dt. 28:21,60). Here too, as with Legion, there is Divine accommodation to the ideas of disease transference which people had at the time.

Deu 28:61 Also Yahweh will bring on you every sickness and every plague which is not written in the book of this law, until you are destroyed-
"Destroyed" is the word for "utterly destroyed", and is used of how God would utterly destroy Israel if they were disobedient to the covenant (Dt. 4:26). God had used the word to speak of how He would totally destroy Israel and make a new nation from Moses (s.w. Dt. 9:19,25; Ps. 106:23), but Moses changed God's mind about that. But these later usages of the word are saying that this was going to happen, if Israel were disobedient. And they were, but it didn't happen. Individuals were 'utterly destroyed', but the word is used in Am. 9:8 of how "I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob". This was all by pure grace. Just as the wages of sin is death for each of us, but by grace we are saved from that.

Deu 28:62 You will be left few in number-
This is hard to convincingly apply to any previous persecution, if it refers to numbers of Jews worldwide. However, it may refer specifically to the Jewish population of the land of Israel. There must therefore be a world-wide persecution of Jews for this to come about, or a total overrunning of the land of Israel, just as radical Islam dreams of. The tide of history is turning against the West, and this opens up the prospect of America and Britain also persecuting Jews.

Whereas you were as the stars of the sky for multitude, because you didn't listen to the voice of Yahweh your God-
Passages like Dt. 7:1 confidently proclaim that "When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land... and shall pluck off / cast out many nations...". Yet this casting out was dependent upon Israel doing this work; if they did it, God was eager to work mightily with them. But the reality is that they didn't drive out all the nations. This doesn't falsify Scripture; rather does it indicate the positive hope of God that His people will work with Him to make His potentially true prophecies turn into reality. Even the promises to Abraham were to some extent conditional- Israel would no longer be "as the stars of heaven for multitude; because you would not obey the voice of the Lord" (Dt. 28:62). Hence the fulfillment of those promises was dependent to some extent upon the obedience of the promised seed.

Deu 28:63 As Yahweh rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so Yahweh will rejoice over you to cause you to perish and to destroy you-

Israel were told that *because* they were the people of God, in covenant with Him, *therefore* they *had* to be obedient. If they were disobedient, they would be cursed. And if they backed out of being God's people, they were also cursed (Dt. 27:9,19,26). There was no way back: total devotion to obedience. God would either rejoice over them to bless them, or rejoice over them to curse them (Dt. 28:63). He isn't passive; His energy will be expended upon us one way or the other. There are only two types of builder, the wise and the foolish; two types of tree, yielding either good or bad fruit.

In Esther's time, a decree was made to "destroy...and cause to perish" the Jews throughout the provinces of Persia / Babylon (Esther 3:13; 7:4). This phrase uses the two Hebrew words which we find together three times in the list of curses to be brought upon a disobedient Israel (Dt. 28:20,51,63). There evidently is a connection. And yet by her wonderful self-sacrificial mediation, Esther brought about the deferment and even annulment of those justifiable curses. God's prophetic word was again changed- due to a mediator, who of course pointed both backwards to Moses, and forwards to the Lord Jesus.

They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, knowing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and failure. We wonder why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He rejoiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

You will be plucked from off the land where you go in to possess it-
Abraham was promised that his seed would have Yahweh as their personal God, and would eternally inherit the land. In a sense, the promises that the seed *would* inherit the land, and that God *would be* their God were fulfilled straight after God said them. He became Isaac's God (Gen. 31:42,53 refer to this), the God of Abraham's son. Time and again God reminds Israel that He *is* their God. And that land in a sense *was* given to the Jewish fathers (Gen. 15:18; Dt. 28:63; 30:5 NIV; Josh. 1:2-9; 21:43; 1 Kings 4:20,21). David could praise God simply because He was "my God" (Ps. 118:28)- an allusion back to the Abrahamic promise. Of course, the *main* fulfillment of this promise will be in the Kingdom; but in principle, the promise has *already* been fulfilled to Abraham's seed- i.e., us!

Deu 28:64 Yahweh will scatter you among all peoples, from the one end of the earth to

the other end of the earth, and there you shall serve other gods which you have not known - you nor your fathers - gods of wood and stone-
This refers to the "earth" in the sense of the land promised to Abraham; see on :10. The implication is that Jews now within the state of Israel will be scattered throughout that area in the last days. And yet the Babylonian exile left many of the people in the land; again, the curses were not carried out to the extent called for by these terms of the covenant. The poor of the people, which was the majority, remained there. Babylonian policy was to deport the leadership and establish puppet rulers over the impoverished masses. The idea here is that the calling of Abraham out of idolatrous Ur would be reversed; they would return to those ends of the land, and serve idols there.

Deu 28:65 Among these nations you shall find no ease and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot. Yahweh will give you there a trembling heart and failing of eyes and pining of soul-
This is in line with the state of psychological breakdown described and discussed on :20. We note how God can give people attitudes of heart; and positively, His Holy Spirit works directly upon the human spirit. God brought Israel out of Egypt in order to "cause him to rest" (Jer. 31:20), s.w. "ease" here. But Israel didn't "find" that promised ease / rest, the Kingdom was prepared and made possible, but they refused it. And so any life without the Kingdom is but an aimless wandering. And yet the book of Esther presents the Jews as wealthy and popular in exile; again we see how these curses were not totally carried out.

Deu 28:66 and your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear night and day and shall have no assurance of your life-
This is one of a number of word pictures among the curses which recall the scenes of Nazi death camps. But even they were nothing to the scenes which tragically are yet to come in the last days. "Assurance" is the word for faith; their lives would have no faith / stability (s.w. Dt. 9:23; Num. 20:12 etc.), as they had lived their lives without faith.

Deu 28:67 In the morning you will say, I wish it were evening! and at evening you will say, I wish it were morning! for the fear of your heart which you shall fear and for the sight of your eyes which you shall see-
There are links between Job and Deuteronomy 28, connecting Job with a faithless Israel:

"Thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness" (Dt. 28:29) = "They (the wicked; although the friends are getting at Job when they speak of them) meet with darkness in the daytime and grope in the noonday as in the night" (Job 5:14).
"The blind" (Dt. 28:29) = Job had fits of blindness (Job 22:10,11)

"The Lord shall smite thee in the knees and in the legs with a sore botch from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head" (Dt. 28:35) = "Boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7). These were inflicted by the satan, but by "The Lord" in Dt.28. In practice, "the Lord" was the wilderness Angel; which is one of several indications that Job's satan was an Angel.
"An astonishment" (Dt. 28:37) = "Mark me (Job) and be astonished" (Job 21:5;17:8).
"and a byword, among all nations" (Dt. 28:37) = "A byword of the people" (Job 17:6;30:9).
"In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning" (Dt. 28:67) = "When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro until the dawning" (Job 7:4).
All the Jews' blessings from God were to be taken away and their children cursed: "Thou shalt beget sons and daughters but thou shalt not enjoy them" (Dt. 28:41) = "Cattle... flocks of thy sheep", ditto for Job.
"The Lord shall bring a nation against thee (Dt. 28:49) = The Sabeans/ Chaldeans- forerunners of the Babylonians and Assyrians who punished Israel.

Deu 28:68 Yahweh will bring you into Egypt again with ships by the way of which I said to you, You shall see it no more again, and there you shall sell yourselves to your enemies for bondservants and for bondmaids, and no man will buy you-

As noted on previous curses, here we have the climactic curse never actually fulfilled to the extent implied here- i.e. a reversal of God's entire salvation plan in bringing Israel out of Egypt in the first place. It didn't much happen at the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, which are presented in the prophets of the fulfilment of the curses for breaking the covenant. It is a case of God in wrath remembering mercy, taking pity upon His children simply because they are His children. Hosea records how God threatened to return them to Egypt, and yet in that same prophecy says that they will not return there. Just as Hosea didn't finally punish Gomer as her whoredom deserved, neither did God punish His people to the extent He speaks of here. Simply because He loves them.

Other Bible prophecies speak of a great re-gathering of a repentant Israel from dispersion around the return of Christ. It's been tempting to apply this to Jewish emigration to Israel post 1948, but many of the prophecies in their context require that this return is part of a spiritual restoration. Dt. 28:68 speaks of Israel being punished by being taken into Egypt in ships- and it's hard to find a very significant fulfilment of that prophecy to date. Such scattering of the Jews throughout the *eretz*, the territory of the land promised to Abraham, would fulfil the patterns set by Babylon, Assyria, Persia and Rome in their dominations of Israel. Such scattering is possible and likely, seeing that it is a requirement of the Hadith about jihad against Israel: "Fight against those who

disbelieve in Allah. Make a holy war... When you meet your enemies... invite them to three courses of action. If they respond to any one of these, you also accept it and withhold yourself from doing them any harm. Invite them to (accept) Islam; if they respond to you, accept it from them and desist from fighting against them. Then invite them to migrate from their lands to the land of Muhairs... If they refuse to accept Islam, demand from them the Jizya. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and hold off your hands. If they refuse to pay the tax, seek Allah's help and fight them" (The Hadith, Book 19.4294, about Jihad). This paying of tax is likely to involve accepting the seal / mark of the beast, without which there can be no trading. "The land of Muhairs" refers to the lands of origin of the Moslem fighters; *muhair* means 'origin' in Arabic. This means that a mass deportation of Jews to other parts of the land promised to Abraham, the lands of origin of their enemies, is very much what the jihadists envisage. These concepts are particularly applied to the Jews, in Hadith 19.4363: "(Let us) go to the Jews... The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) stood up and called out to them (saying): O ye assembly of Jews, accept Islam (and) you will be safe... He said to them (the same words) the third time (and on getting the same reply) he added: You should know that the earth belongs to Allah and His Apostle, and I wish that I should expel you from this land... and they may have to go away leaving everything behind".

At the time of Israel's repentance, God will "break the bands of your yoke" (Ez. 34:27), using the language of their suffering in Egypt (Lev. 26:13). If they are literally delivered from Egypt, this would fit nicely. The language of Ez. 20:34,35 recalls that of Ez. 20:10: "I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness...I will bring you out from the people... and I will bring you into the wilderness of the people". Thus Israel's leaving the physical persecution of Egypt and being brought into the spiritual testing of the wilderness, will have its counterpart in the Jews being led out of the lands of their Arab captors, to be spiritually refined in "the wilderness of the people". "*There* will I plead with you", suggests that this " wilderness" is a specific country. There is good reason to think that this will be literal Egypt. Is. 19:18-25 indicates that there will be repentant Jews in latter-day Egypt. "The wilderness of the people... the wilderness of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:35,35) will be the place of Israel's final latter-day refining. Thus Israel are brought out from their captivity in Arab lands, figurative 'Egypt', into *literal* Egypt, which will be the figurative 'wilderness' of spiritual testing.

Ex. 14:13 could appear to be prophecy: "The Egyptians... you shall see them again no more for ever". But it is understood as a command not to return to Egypt in Dt. 17:16- and because of Israel turning back to Egypt in their hearts, they would be taken there again (Dt. 28:68). So we must be prepared to accept that what may appear to be prophecy is in fact commandment, which we have the freewill to obey or disobey. Hence they would not go back there; and yet, God says, they will go back there.

Ez. 43:7 likewise is more command than prediction: “The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name” (RV). It isn’t saying ‘this is a prophecy that they will not do this’- for they did. Rather is it a plea, a command, that they are not to do this any more. So God’s promise that Israel would never again see Egypt was therefore conditional, and thus capable of being broken; although those conditions aren’t mentioned when He makes the promise in Dt. 17:16; Ex. 14:13.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 29

Deu 29:1 These are the words of the covenant which Yahweh commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb-

This additional repetition of the covenant was because by grace, God wished to reaffirm the covenant even though Israel had broken their part of it- see on :13 and :23. The covenant on Sinai (Ex. 19:20) was reaffirmed in the plains of Moab (Dt. 29:1) and on Joshua's death (Josh. 24:25), and was to be reaffirmed every seven years (Dt. 31:9-11,25,26). It is this reaffirmation of covenant relationship which we make in the breaking of bread service.

*Deu 29:2 Moses called all Israel and said to them, You have seen all that Yahweh did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land;-*As in Dt. 4:34 and Dt. 7:19 they had not literally seen these things- the audience by the end of Deuteronomy included those who had been born during the 40 years wandering. But historical events in God's word are as if we were there, hence David can rejoice as if he personally was delivered at the Red Sea.

Deu 29:3 the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and those great wonders-

The individual Israelite was to perceive his absolute connection with God's historical deliverance of His people from Egypt. And to be appropriately awed by all the grace shown in that. In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. We are to learn from history, not as a merely fascinating exercise. But the Bible is history, and yet it is a living word to us. Israel were supposed to reason back from the actions of Egypt towards them, and their weakness spiritually at that time. And to respond personally to that grace.

Deu 29:4 But Yahweh has not given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this day-
In :2 we are told "you have seen" , but they didn't spiritually 'see' what they saw with their physical eyes. God confirms people in the psychological attitudes they adopt.

Deu 29:5 I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not grown old on you and your shoes have not grown old on your feet-
The observation that their "clothes didn't grow old, and their feet didn't swell" is made in the context of lamenting that "Yet Yahweh has not given you a heart to perceive nor eyes to see nor ears to hear" (Dt. 29:4). They refused to perceive His great and daily grace to them as witnessed in His daily provision of food and clothing, just as we can fail to perceive it today. Regular prayers of thanksgiving before food are a good way of guarding against this human tendency to not perceive such grace. The returned exiles likewise had been miraculously provided for by the decrees of the Persian kings, but refused to perceive the grace of all that provision (Neh. 9:21).

We must remember that the 40 years wandering were punishment for sin, it was the experience of condemnation, and serves as the basis for later Biblical pictures of the rejected. Unable to enter the Kingdom they so wanted to enter, wandering until they died. But Moses in Deuteronomy perceives that even for those condemned people, Yahweh provided and they "lacked nothing" by His grace. Dt. 8 says He ensured their clothes didn't wear out and their feet didn't swell. He ensured the condemned had comfortable footwear. How staggeringly gracious is that. We see something of God's essence here- that He cares even for the condemned. Such a far cry from the classical picture of "hell".

Deu 29:6 You have not eaten bread neither have you drunk wine or strong drink, that you may know that I am Yahweh your God-
The whole process of Nazariteship was to encourage the normal Israelite to have the ambition to rise up to the spirit of the High Priest himself; the restrictions governing Nazariteship were a purposeful echo of those regarding the High Priest. The way God describes Himself as depriving Israel of "wine or strong drink" (Dt. 29:6) throughout the wilderness journey is Nazarite language: as if in all their weakness and profligacy, God still sought to inspire them to rise up to the heights.

Deu 29:7 When we came to this place-
Moses was standing with the people near the battlefield where they had won a victory which was intended as a foretaste of how they would conquer Canaan.

Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle and we struck them-
The Divine intention was that the victory over Sihon would put fear into the hearts of all

the other tribes (Dt. 2:25). But it was God's ideal intention that Sihon would have accepted the message of peace (Dt. 2:26)- perhaps implying peace with God, as "peace" often means in the Bible. We see here the complexity of God's workings with men. Little surprise, therefore, that at times we fail to perceive what God is doing in our lives. Things appear to be left hanging, or events lack apparent meaning, or things could have various possible outcomes, some of which are quite contradictory when compared against each other. This offering of peace before fighting was to be typical of Israel's approach (Dt. 20:10).

Deu 29:8 and we took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of the Manassites-
To take and give land for an inheritance whilst still on the East side of Jordan was a foretaste of what was possible for them when they entered the land West of Jordan. The same terms are used about what Israel were to do with the rest of the land- although their fear of the Canaanite tribes suggests they didn't learn the lesson. It was a foretaste of the Kingdom... and our wilderness walk is designed, especially towards the end of it, to have similar foretastes encouraging us that really this is what we will experience.

Deu 29:9 Keep therefore the words of this covenant and do them, so that you may prosper in all that you do-
The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

See on Josh. 1:6. Joshua [cp. Jesus] is repeatedly made parallel with Israel [cp. Us]; his victories were theirs; what he achieved is counted to them. In the same way, the people

of the Lord Jesus are counted as Him. Joshua was to be strong and possess the land (Josh. 1:6), just as they had been told to do, using the same Hebrew words (Dt. 11:8). Indeed, Israel and Joshua are given parallel charges, to be strong and of good courage to take the land (Dt. 31:6,7). Both Israel and Joshua are given the same charge to keep the words of the covenant, that they might "prosper" (Dt. 29:9; Josh. 1:7).

Deu 29:10 You stand this day, all of you, before Yahweh your God: your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel-
Moses on that last day of his life addressed the whole assembly of Israel; and yet he so often speaks in the singular ("thee" rather than "ye" in the KJV), as if to emphasize that the laws and covenant he was giving them was to them *personally*. This is made clear in :10,12: "You (plural) stand this day, all of you, before Yahweh... that you (singular) may enter into covenant with Yahweh". That covenant was made anew by God to each generation and individual. We cannot hide within a family or a church. We are individually responsible to God and will personally be saved. In the same spirit, Moses points out that Yahweh is the only God that can be personally *known*; all the idols could not be known personally (:26). No fewer than 137 times in Scripture we read the phrase "my God". This was used in a public, unashamed way by many of God's children (it was a particular favourite of Nehemiah, David and Paul).

Deu 29:11 your little ones, your wives and the foreigner who is in the midst of your camps, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water-
Verses 10-13 is a very long sentence; from now until the end of his speech in Deuteronomy, Moses uses (in the Hebrew text) very long sentences, at times with unclear syntax- as if he was getting increasingly intense and excited as he speaks of the utter realities to which we stand personally related by our covenant with God.

Deu 29:12 You wish to enter into covenant with Yahweh your God and into His oath, which Yahweh your God makes with you this day-
For Israel in covenant with God, absolutely nothing- not sex, menstruation, the content of clothing fabric, diet- could fall outside the scope of their covenant relationship. And so in principle it is with us under the new covenant. Such a relationship also precludes the worship of *any* other God. The covenant we have entered has constant and binding claims upon our loyalty; and it also speaks of God's constant and passionate commitment to us.

Deu 29:13 that He may establish you this day to Himself for a people and that He may be to you a God, as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob-

The promise that Israel would be God's people and He would be their God was conditional upon their obedience- that was the deal made with them nearly 40 years previously (Ex. 19:5,6). They had not kept their side of it- but by grace, God still wanted to fulfill His side of it. Israel would be 'established' as God's people "unto Himself" only if they were obedient (Dt. 28:9)- the point of the covenant proclaimed in chapter 29 is that despite their disobedience, God was still going to establish them as His people. This was the grace that only comes from a deep love and desire for the beloved. Moses urges the peoples' faithfulness so that Yahweh might "establish His covenant" with them (Dt. 8:18; 28:9; 29:13); and we note that despite their disobedience, He still "established" the covenant with them, by grace alone (Dt. 9:5).

Deu 29:14 Not only with you do I make this covenant and this oath-
Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. Therefore the pronouns often change (in Deuteronomy especially), showing a confusion between the voice of God and that of Moses. Dt. 7:4 is an example: “They will turn away thy son from following me (this is Moses speaking for God)… so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you”. Thus Moses’ comments on God’s words are mixed up with the words of God Himself. There are other examples of this in Dt. 7:11; 29:1,10,14,15 (“I” cp. “us”). Consider especially Dt. 11:13,14: “If ye shall diligently hearken unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord… that I will give you the rain of your land… I will send grass in thy fields”. The “I” here switches at ease between God and Moses. The Moses/God pronouns are also mixed in Rom. 10:19.

Deu 29:15 but with him who stands here with us this day before Yahweh our God and also with him who is not here with us this day-
"Not only with you… but with him…" requires us to read in an ellipsis here; clearly the idea is that what God had done at Sinai wasn’t *only* between Him and the people there at that time, *not so much* with the first hearers as with the later ones, with all His subsequent people. In our Bible study we must be aware that we are reading translations of languages which often rely on understanding the idiom for their real meaning to be delivered to us the readers. In Hebrew especially, we often have to read in an ellipsis; and this verse is a parade example.

Deu 29:16 For you know how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed-
The argument is that when living in Egypt and passing through the nations on the wilderness journey, they had "seen" idols (:17) and were now warned not to worship

them (:18). And yet Ez. 20:7,8 is clear that they carried the idols of Egypt with them through the wilderness; they carried the tabernacles of both Yahweh and Moloch, the standards of their tribes and also the star or Remphan (Acts 7:43). Yahweh and Moses surely knew this, so the language here is very soft indeed. This overly positive view of Israel is in line with the way God says He fell in love with Israel in the desert, and did not count iniquity to them nor see perverseness in Jacob (Num. 23:21). His positive view of us in Christ is even greater.

Deu 29:17 and you have seen their abominations and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them-
See on :16. Israel passed through the nations at close enough range to see their idols. We should not therefore envisage the 38 year wilderness journey as being through endless tracts of uninhabited desert.

Deu 29:18 This covenant is made lest there should be among you man or woman, family or tribe-
Covenant relationship brings a natural desire to live within the atmosphere of God's spirituality. For Israel in covenant with God, absolutely nothing- not sex, menstruation, the content of clothing fabric, diet- could fall outside the scope of their covenant relationship. And so in principle it is with us under the new covenant. Such a relationship also precludes the worship of *any* other God. Moses said that God had made a covenant with every member of Israel "lest there should be among you..." any who turn away from God and influence others. The height of the demand, the extent of the implication of being in covenant with God, ought to preclude the possibility of worshipping anything else. The covenant we have entered has constant and binding claims upon our loyalty.

Whose heart turns away this day from Yahweh our God, to go to serve the gods of those nations; lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood-
Applied in Heb. 12:15 to those within the church who discourage others from total commitment to God. Those who don't totally commit to Him will poison others by their attitude and cause them to fall away from God's grace; and we must be keenly aware of this, because there are such people around- so says Heb. 12:15. The idea however seems to be that the root is the thought in the heart of :18, and if that was their thought as they entered covenant with Yahweh, then it would give rise to a bitter plant.

Deu 29:19 who, when he hears the words of this curse blesses himself in his heart saying I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart- The context is of the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, listed in the previous chapter. God here addresses the deepest psychology of the sinner. He hears the words

of cursing for disobedience, but in his heart, says that the blessings for obedience will apply to him, even if he sins in his heart. And this is the assumption made by sinners- 'the condemnation stuff won't happen to me'.

To destroy the moist with the dry-
This may refer to the mentality that the moist [the blessed righteous] will likely be destroyed anyway with the dry [unspiritual] majority, so seeing Israel generally are astray, there was no point in being righteous. This totally fails to see individual standing before God and thinks instead only of membership in a collective sense of God's people. "To add drunkenness to thirst" (AV) could however mean that the reasoning went that sin [getting drunk] was only anyway a natural meeting of basic human needs [to drink and slake thirst]. Whatever, this is an indication that God knows the mind games played by the 'devil' of our own sin-inclined hearts. See on :29.

The "peace and safety" cry within the latter day ecclesia (1 Thess. 5:3) is part of an extended set of allusions back to the parables of Mt. 24 and 25, concerning the apostate, drunken servant who thinks everything is fine- but it then suddenly destroyed by his Lord's coming. This kind of believer had been foreseen by Moses in Dt. 29:19; the type who hears the curses for disobedience, but blesses (forgives) himself in his heart, "saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst" (AV).

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 29:20 Yahweh will not pardon him, but then the anger of Yahweh and His jealousy will smoke against that man, and all the curse that is written in this book shall lie on him, and Yahweh will blot out his name from under the sky-

Yahweh's refusal to pardon will only be at the last day, so these events may be intended as only coming fully true at judgment day.

Deu 29:21 Yahweh will separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that is written in this book of the law-
The ministering of judgement on the unworthy will no doubt be supervised by an (the?) Angel of evil, in the same way that it appears an Angel of evil ministered the curses of the Law: "The Lord shall separate (Hebrew: sever) him (the disobedient man) out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the words of the covenant" (Dt. 29:21)- just as He did to Achan. In the same way the Angels "sever the wicked from among the just" (Mt. 13:49) at the judgement. The picture of the rejected severed from among God's people is fairly common in the pictures of condemnation- the people of God shall see the naked shame of the rejected (Rev. 16:15). Willful separation from God's people in this life, either by thinking them worthy of our rejection or through disinterest in them, is therefore living out the picture of condemnation.

Deu 29:22 The generation to come, your children who shall rise up after you and the foreigner who will come from a distant land, shall see the plagues of the land and the sicknesses with which Yahweh has made it sick-
The curses for disobedience outlined in Dt. 28 and 29 never came totally true; hence the prophecy that disobedient Israel would be poor and unsuccessful in business during their dispersion never really came true, and instead God had blessed them through His grace. The whole land of Israel was to become “brimstone and salt and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom…” (Dt. 29:22-25). It’s no good even reasoning that this will come true in the future; these were to be the punishments that would come when Israel broke covenant and went into dispersion. They’ve been in this position for many centuries, but still the full extent of the prophesied cursing hasn’t come about. And yet God keeps His word; and yet His grace is such that He can chose not to keep some of the punishments. This is a paradox of grace, beyond our human explanation in trite, logical, expositional terms. This to my mind is the real explanation of why the prophecy that in the day Adam ate of the fruit, he would die… never came true, in that sense.

Deu 29:23 The whole land is sulphur, salt and burning, that it is not sown nor giving produce and no grass grows therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which Yahweh overthrew in His anger and in his wrath-
Israel were disobedient, but still this promised judgment didn't come. This chapter is full of grace; for Israel was never made as Sodom although this was commonly threatened. Although they acted worse than Sodom (Ez. 16:48; Jer. 7:16). It was due to the faithful remnant that God did not judge Judah as Sodom even though their rulers

were in fact rulers of Sodom (Is. 1:9,10). They were Sodom, disobedient Israel were to be judged as Sodom (Dt. 29:23), but were not judged as Sodom because of a remnant- who themselves were preserved by God's grace. We see grace all through this. Although Rev. 18 and many of the prophets seem to foresee a Sodom-like destruction coming upon latter day Israel.

Deu 29:24 They and all the nations shall say, Why has Yahweh done thus to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean?-
There is no particular example of this oft repeated curse coming true, apart from in Lam. 2:15, which appears to be spoken by Jeremiah in deep grief, and does not include the words predicted here and in :25. The actual destruction of Jerusalem and Judah was not as extensive as threatened; either God took pity, or there was a modicum of intercession or repentance which ameliorated the extent of the judgment. And that would explain why neither in the Bible nor other history is there any record of this happening.

Deu 29:25 Then men shall say, Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt-
See on :24. The idea was that the destroyed land would be a silent witness to the power of Yahweh, and how this God who kept covenant was now as it were 'free' as His earlier people had betrayed Him and left Him without a people. The deserted city and ruined temple (1 Kings 9:8,9; Jer. 22:8,9) would therefore have been an invitation to observers to seek this Yahweh, and enquire whether they could enter a new covenant with Him, seeing His previous covenant with His people had been broken and He was now, as it were, unattached.

Jud. 2:13 says that the people did forsake Yahweh. But instead of these judgments , we are to read that although God punished them, He raised up saviours to save them from the judgments; and this looks forward to His grace in the Lord Jesus, 'Yah's salvation'.

Deu 29:26 and went and served other gods and worshipped them, gods that they didn't know and that He had not given to them-
Moses points out that Yahweh is the only God that can be personally *known*; all the idols could not be known personally (Dt. 29:26). No fewer than 137 times in Scripture we read the phrase "my God". This was used in a public, unashamed way by many of God's children (it was a particular favourite of Nehemiah, David and Paul).

Deu 29:27 Therefore the anger of Yahweh was kindled against this land, to bring on it all

the curse that is written in this book-
See on :25,26. The fact is, not all the curses were brought upon the land. But the allusions to the language of :22,23 in the book of Revelation suggests that it will come true in the last days, and will be the prelude to the conversion of a Gentile remnant at the time of the Lord's return and establishment of His Kingdom on earth.

Deu 29:28 and Yahweh rooted them out of their land in anger in wrath and in great indignation and cast them into another land, as at this day-
As Israel were "cast" out of their land and into another country (Dt. 29:28) so the rejected are cast out of God's presence. Zedekiah fled, was overtaken, wept (Ez. 7:27), judgment was given upon him (Jer. 52:9), he was punished in the presence of the king (Jer. 52:10), cast into prison (Jer. 52:11 cp. Mt. 5:25).

Deu 29:29 The secret things belong to Yahweh our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law-
This could be translated as meaning that the secret things of God have been revealed unto God's children. Or it could mean that the things which have been revealed are the Law and Covenant made with Israel then, but they should not think that this was all there was to God. There was more, the "secret things", which had not then been opened to them. And those things were the things of Christ and the new covenant- 1 Cor. 2:9,10 appears to allude here by saying that "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" .

The immediate context of the "secret things" is :19, where they refer to the secret thought that one could continue in sin, and just be treated by God as He was going to treat the nation of Israel. But the warning here would be that God indeed does know the secret things of hearts, and will judge people on an individual and not a collective basis. And this is indeed how the New Testament speaks of God's individual judgment of the secret things of human hearts (Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5; 14:25). Therefore the lesson is that the revealed things of God's law 'belonged to' Israel for them to keep individually.

"Forever" doesn't require us to think that the Mosaic law and covenant was eternal. The Sabbath is described as a perpetual, eternal ordinance between God and His people (Ex. 31:16). Yet in the New Testament we read that the Old Covenant has been done away; and the Old Covenant clearly included the ten commandments (Dt. 4:13), one of which was concerning the Sabbath. For this reason the New Testament is at pains to explain that Sabbath keeping is not now required of God’s people (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-3). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is.

24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting covenant" evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase "everlasting covenant" is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David's throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word olahm, which is translated "eternal", "perpetual", "everlasting" in the Old Testament? James Strong defines olahm as literally meaning "the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity". It was God's purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn't grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of "practically eternity". For all of us, the spectre of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God's eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 30

Deu 30:1 When all these things have come on you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where Yahweh your God has driven you-

We're wrong to think that God passionlessly waits for us to repent or pray to Him, and then He will forgive or act for us. He loves us, simply so; and with all love's manipulation of circumstances, seeks to pour out His love upon us. Thus repentance itself is a gift which God gives and is not totally upon human initiative (Dt. 4:29-31; 30:1-10; 1 Kings 8:58).

Moses by the end of his life had a great sensitivity to the likely failures of Israel, and in this he points forward to the Lord Jesus. He often reminds them that he knows that they will turn away from the Covenant he had given them (e.g. Dt. 30:1; 31:29). He knew that one day they would want a king, even though God was their king (Dt. 17:14). He knew

that there would always be poor people in the land, even though if the Law was properly kept this would not be the case (Dt. 15:4mg, 11). He knew they would accidentally commit murder and would need a way of escape; therefore he twice repeats and explains the law concerning the cities of refuge (Dt. 4:42; 19:5). These being a symbol of the future Messiah (Heb. 6:18), this emphasis would suggest that like Paul and Jacob, the mind of Moses in his time of spiritual maturity was firmly fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He foresaw how they would see horses and chariots and get frightened (Dt. 20:1-4).

Deu 30:2 and return to Yahweh your God and obey His voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul-
This point of return of repentance is when all the curses of Dt. 29 have come upon Israel (:1). But as noted on Dt. 29:23, the level of curse stated there has never come upon Israel: "The whole land is sulphur, salt and burning, that it is not sown nor giving produce and no grass grows therein, like the overthrow of Sodom". It waits to be fulfilled therefore in the last days, and so this 'returning' ultimately speaks of the latter day repentance of a minority in Israel once the tribulation comes upon the land. Revelation gives more details of all this.

Deu 30:3 then Yahweh your God will turn your captivity and have compassion on you. He will return and gather you from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you-
God's attempt to regather Judah from captivity *before* they had repented therefore indicates His grace, operating at times beyond the conditions which He has stated in His own word. LXX "the Lord shall heal thine iniquities, and shall pity thee, and shall again gather you..." suggests that there will be a psychological action of God upon the hearts of Israel, healing their sin (:6). This will be as a result of accepting the new covenant which we now accept at baptism, when the law is written on our hearts, and God's Spirit transforms our spirit / heart (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16). See on :14. "Shall *again* gather you" suggests that the restoration from Babylon will be repeated in the last days.

Dt. 30:1-5 is clear that when Israel returned to Yahweh in repentance whilst in captivity, He would gather them back to their land. Hence the word play with *shub*, meaning both to repent, and to return. But the servant in Is. 49 is tasked with gathering Israel to Yahweh and returning them to their land. As if His work was to bring them to repentance and gather them almost in spite of their lack of repentance. And this is indeed the work of the Lord Jesus on human hearts today. It is the Lord's death that does this, according to John's allusions to this servant prophecy; He lifted up is the point and impetus of gathering together. The cross elicits repentance and return to God. Whilst there must

still be freewill response, the cross is a far more powerful impetus to repentance than simply offering to gather God's people once they repent.

Deu 30:4 If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of the heavens, from there will Yahweh your God gather you, and from there He will bring you back-
Time and again in the context of the restoration it is emphasized that God would return to His people if they returned to Him (Zech. 1:3; Mal. 3:7). And they didn't return to Him- most chose not to return to the land, and those who did for the most part did not return to their God in their hearts. The whole basis of Israel's covenant relationship with God was that if they were exiled from the land for their sins, they must repent and *then* God would return to them (Dt. 30:1-10). Yet God graciously states to the exiles: "I am returned unto you" (Zech. 1:16; 8:3). Here was grace indeed. Passages like Ez. 36:24-31 therefore speak as if God's grace to the exiles was effectively a new covenant- which has in essence been extended to us. Having stated the conditionality of His 'returning' to His people, and recognizing they hadn't fulfilled their part of the conditions- God all the same returns to them, such was and is His almost desperate desire for relationship with His beloved people. This is a lesson for us in our relationships with others- to continue our acceptance and 'return' to them, even if they don't fulfill their part of the deal. For this, day by day, is how our God deals not only with us but with His weak and wayward people as a whole.

Deu 30:5 Yahweh your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it, and He will do you good and multiply you above your fathers-
"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Abraham was promised that his seed would have Yahweh as their personal God, and would eternally inherit the land. In a sense, the promises that the seed *would* inherit the

land, and that God *would be* their God were fulfilled straight after God said them. He became Isaac's God (Gen. 31:42,53 refer to this), the God of Abraham's son. Time and again God reminds Israel that He *is* their God. And that land in a sense *was* given to the Jewish fathers (Gen. 15:18; Dt. 28:63; 30:5 NIV; Josh. 1:2-9; 21:43; 1 Kings 4:20,21). David could praise God simply because He was "my God" (Ps. 118:28)- an allusion back to the Abrahamic promise. Of course, the *main* fulfillment of this promise will be in the Kingdom; but in principle, the promise has *already* been fulfilled to Abraham's seed- i.e., us!

They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, knowing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and failure. We wonder why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He rejoiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

Things 'going well / good' with Israel is the language of the Kingdom of God in Dt. 8:16 "to do you good / well at your latter end". It is associated with days being prolonged (Dt. 22:7) and the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Dt. 30:5), and Israel and the children somehow existing "forever" (Dt. 12:28). So I deduce in the wish "that it may go well with you" a hint towards the eternal establishment of God's Kingdom based around Israel, what Paul terms "the hope of Israel".

Deu 30:6 Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed-
If Israel took the initiative in attempting to circumcise their hearts (Dt. 10:16; Jer. 4:4), then God would confirm them in this by doing what man cannot do- operating directly upon the human heart to cut off the flesh from it (Dt. 30:6). Col. 2:12 presents baptism as the equivalent in our day if we wish to enter the new covenant, which is based upon the same promises to Abraham. But there is more to new covenant relationship than simply the ritual of baptism. Circumcision spoke of a cutting off of the flesh in the most private and intimate place. We always read of circumcision as being done to a person. Water baptism enables us to receive the birth of the Spirit, whereby the Lord will work through the Spirit to change our hearts, to cut off our flesh in the most private and personal recesses of human hearts. Col. 2:11 explains: "In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ". Through baptism, we enter the "in Christ"

status, and our flesh is as it were cut off, by status we are in Him and not in the flesh. This is repeated in Paul's argument in Romans 1-8, although there he stresses that our flesh still remains; but from God's perspective, it is cut off. It takes faith to believe this- faith in God's operation, that the circumcision operation was really performed by Him (Col. 2:12). Baptism is the means by which we become "in Christ" and in spiritual terms cease to be uncircumcised (Col. 2:13).

There will be a psychological action of God upon the hearts of Israel, healing their sin (see on :3). This will be as a result of accepting the new covenant which we now accept at baptism, when the law is written on our hearts, and God's Spirit transforms our spirit / heart (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16).

To love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live- Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word ekklesia eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

"Love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your might". Time and again, Moses in his final hours used these words, as he pleaded on that last day of his life for Israel to grasp the nettle, to take on board the idea of loving God, of giving our all (Dt. 6:5; 10:12; 11:13,22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6 ; an impressive seven-fold emphasis). I can almost hear his voice cracking as he stressed the word "all". Having pleaded six times for them to love God with *all* their soul and *all* their might, Moses then makes the point that if they enter the Kingdom, there they will be *made by God* to love Him then with all their soul and might (Dt. 30:6). The logic is over-powering. In the Kingdom, our very nature, every fiber of our being, will be bent towards love of God. If this will be our eternal destiny, isn't it logical that we at least aspire to it now?

Deu 30:7 Yahweh your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you and persecuted you-

The curses upon Israel will then come upon their haters. This is exactly the message of the book of Revelation, once we accept the book speaks of the latter day events to come upon the earth / land of Israel. The seals, vials and trumpets are all rather similar in their imagery and effect- because the judgments which come upon latter day Israel [the seals] then come upon their abusers within the land promised to Abraham- after the repentance of a Jewish remnant, which is presented in the visions of the 144,000. What the beast coalition did to Israel is done to her- a major theme of Revelation.

Deu 30:8 You shall return and obey the voice of Yahweh and do all His commandments which I command you this day-
The Hebrew word for 'hear' is also translated 'obey' (Gen. 22:18; Ex. 19:5; Dt. 30:8,20; Ps. 95:7). We can hear God's word and not obey it. But if we really hear it as we are intended to, we will obey it. If we truly believe God's word to be His voice personally speaking to us, then we will by the very fact of hearing, obey. The message itself, if heard properly and not just on a surface level, will compel action. We can delight to know God's laws and pray daily to Him, when at the same time we are forsaking Him and His laws; if we are truly obedient, then we will delight in God's law (Is. 58:2 cp. 14). We have a tendency to have a love of and delight in God's law only on the surface. John especially often uses 'hearing' to mean 'believing' (e.g. Jn. 10:4,26,27). And yet the Jews 'heard' but didn't believe. We must, we really must ask ourselves: whether we merely hear, or hear and believe. For we can hear, but not really hear.

Deu 30:9 Yahweh your God will make you plenteous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, for good. Yahweh will again rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your fathers-
I have explained above that the scenario here envisaged is when the curses of Dt. 29 have come upon Israel, which they have not yet done. This is yet to come, and as a result, a remnant of Israel will repent and their curses will come upon their latter day abusers. The description here of material blessing then applies to the situation when a restored Israel become the basis of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Yahweh rejoicing over His people is the prophetic picture of that time (Is. 62:5; Zeph. 3:17).

Deu 30:10 if you will obey the voice of Yahweh your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if you turn to Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul-
I have explained above on :9 and elsewhere that the ultimate fulfilment of this is when Israel repent in the last days. But the scenario could have happened earlier, in which case the repentance would have been shown by obeying the Mosaic law. But that law

and covenant has now been abrogated, so it is the essence and not the letter of these things which will come true in the last days.

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 30:11 For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off-

Moses assures them that full obedience to his Law is possible (even if finally nobody achieved it). It was "not grievous" (LXX), and the LXX is quoted and applied to us in 1 Jn. 5:3. It was Judaism and legalism which made obedience to the law "grievous" (Mt. 23:4), and again this LXX passage was alluded to by the Lord in saying that. The individual commandments of the law of Moses were designed to reinforce each other and to make obedience relatively easy. Hence NET Bible: "This commandment I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it too remote". It wasn't as if they had to climb up to Heaven or go down beneath the sea, they had to simply from the heart obey it as a way of life and thinking. In Rom. 10:6-9 Paul quotes this passage, having observed that in practice nobody has actually succeeded in fully keeping the Law. He says that the going up to Heaven was done by Christ at His ascension, and going beneath the sea and returning by Christ at His resurrection; and so what remains is not to keep the Mosaic law but to believe in the word of Christ; and the "life" promised here (:15) will be *eternal* life for those in Christ. See on :12.

Deu 30:12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and

bring it back down to us and make us hear it, that we may do it?-
Paul comments that truly Israel have already heard the essence of the Gospel we preach, in that "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (Rom. 10:8). He quotes here from Dt. 30:12: "For this command [to be obedient- or, as Paul interprets it, the word of the Gospel]... is it not far from thee [cp. how God is "not far" from anybody, Acts 17:27]. It is not in heaven above, that thou shouldest say, Who will ascend for us into heaven, and bring it to us, that we may *hear and do it*" (Dt. 30:12 LXX). As noted on :11, obedience is presented as not difficult; and this perhaps became true when the command to keep the old covenant was reinterpreted as keeping the new covenant, through faith in Jesus. God wants to save us; so conformity to His conditions [faith in Jesus] are not difficult.

As Moses spoke these words on the last day of his life, he was at the foot of Nebo, which he ascended for his final meeting with God. He is surely alluding to the way in which he had 'ascended to heaven' before in ascending to God on Sinai, fulfilling Israel's wish that he should bring God's word to them rather than God Himself speak with them. He had returned bringing God's word to them, to which they had agreed they would "hear and do". Earlier, in Dt. 5:27, Moses had reminded the people how they had said: "Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will *hear it, and do* it". Now he is telling them that actually the word he had brought to them needn't have been brought to them as in essence it was within their hearts. It is for exactly this reason that Paul could reason elsewhere in Romans that the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the Law, although they don't know the letter of the Law. And the same principle is found in 1 Thess. 4:9: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves [i.e. from within yourselves?] are taught of God to love one another". This is rather like how the Gentiles were not 'written unto' and yet they knew from their conscience the essential spirit of the Mosaic Law.

Deu 30:13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go down into the deeps for us and bring it up to us-
The depths or abyss may refer as in Rom. 10:7 to the lands beyond Israel. The beast that comes out of the abyss comes out of the sea (Rev. 11:7; 13:1). It seems that the geographical area referred to is that just outside the *eretz / land promised to Abraham, the sea on the border of the land, as it were. Iran, Egypt or Turkey would fit this. Israel had no need to go outside to the Gentile world in order to find relationship with God*.

And make us hear it, that we may do it?-
LXX "make it audible to us, and we will do it?". The allusion is how Israel had shied away from hearing God's personal voice, and had asked Moses to go and hear that voice and tell it to them, "that we may do it". But what was in view was a new covenant, where the

word would not be spoken collectively through a mediator, but directly to the heart (:14).

Deu 30:14 But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it-

The idea is that God's word spoke directly to the hearers. His revelation to His individual people needed no group of professionals to interpret it, because it spoke directly to the human heart.
What was hinted at was a new covenant, where after repentance, God would put His word into their hearts (see on :3,6). And therefore these words are quoted by Paul in the New Testament about the experience of believers today. Acceptance of the new covenant means the receipt of the Holy Spirit, and God placing His word in our hearts, writing His law in our hearts as promised (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16).

Paul therefore defines the word here as "That is, the word of faith, which we preach". The word of the simple Gospel- that if you believe in Christ you shall be saved- was enabled by the Lord's resurrection and shall come to full term in His descent from Heaven at the last day (Rom. 10:6,7). "The word of faith" can simply mean that the basic content of God's word is an appeal for faith in His Son. But it is thereby also true that the word of the Gospel leads to faith. The Lord foresaw in Jn. 17:20 that there would be those who would believe on Him “through their word” (i.e. the word taught by the disciples). Our word of preaching can bring others to faith. Our preaching leads to faith being created in the hearers. “The word of faith, which we preach” (Rom. 10:8) is the word (Gospel) that leads to faith; and a man cannot believe without hearing the Gospel, and he will not hear it unless it is preached by a preacher. Paul summarizes by saying that faith comes by hearing [the Gospel] and hearing by [the preaching of] the word of God (Rom. 10:8,14,17). Paul’s point is that whoever believes will be saved (Rom. 9:33)- and therefore, we must preach to all, so that they might take advantage of this blessed opportunity. In his repetitious manner, Paul builds up the argument in this letter:

- Even under the law, Israel could believe God’s word as preached by Moses and have righteousness imputed to them (Rom. 10:5-8)
- We preach, in essence, the very same word (Rom. 10:9,10)
- Isaiah said the same: that belief of his preaching would result in justification (Rom. 10:11)
- We preach the same. Whoever believes in the Lord’s saving Name by baptism will be saved (Rom. 10:12,13)
- Therefore preach the word, for without your doing this, people can never believe it and therefore be saved (Rom. 10:14,15)
- Israel had heard the word of the cross preached in the past, so just hearing the preacher will not automatically result in faith (Rom. 10:16-21). Both preacher and

hearer must be aware of this. Therefore there was a need for the preachers to turn to another wider audience, i.e. the Gentiles.

Deu 30:15 Behold, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil-
As with Israel, the ways of life and death are set before us (Dt. 30:15-20; Jer. 21:8). Moses, on the day of his death and at his final spiritual maturity, realized that this was the ultimate choice. His appeal to *therefore* chose life is painfully evident in its logic. We are either on the road to the Kingdom, or to eternal death; from God's perspective. We may not see the issues of life that clearly; we may not see our direction as clearly as God does.

Deu 30:16 I command you this day to love Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments, His statutes and His ordinances, that you may live and multiply, and that Yahweh your God may bless you in the land where you go in to possess it-
"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus.

God is His word (Jn. 1:1); to love God is to love His word. If we love Christ, we will keep His words (Jn. 14:15,21; 15:10). This is evidently alluding to the many Old Testament passages which say that Israel's love for God would be shown through their keeping of His commands (Ex. 20:6; Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,13,22; 30:16; Josh. 22:5). Israel were also told that God's commands were all related to showing love (Dt. 11:13; 19:9). So there is a logical circuit here: We love God by keeping His commands, the essence of which is love of people, therefore His commands are fundamentally about love. Thus love is the fulfilling of the law of God; both under the Old and New covenants (Rom. 13:10).

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 30:17 But if your heart turns away and you will not hear, but shall be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them-
The heart that *turns away* from God by free choice then becomes *drawn away* by other forces. Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 30:18 I declare to you this day, that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land, where you pass over the Jordan to go in to possess it-
Moses pleaded with them to see that "this day... this day... this day" he set before them life and death, forgiveness or salvation (Dt. 30:15-19). The Lord Jesus had His mind on this when He told the thief with the same emphasis that "this day" He could tell them that he would be saved, not condemned (Lk. 23:46). He felt like Moses, but greater than Moses, in that He not only set before men the choice, but could grant them the salvation they sought. The fact Israel did prolong their days for some centuries in the land, despite their disobedience, is therefore a reflection of God's great patience with them.

Deu 30:19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed-
Finely aware of the seriousness of our relationship with God, Moses pleads with Israel to "choose life", not with the passivity which may appear from our armchair reading of passages like Dt. 30:19. I wonder if he wasn't screaming this to them, breaking down in the climax of logic and passion which resulted in that appeal. Yet he knew that the majority of Israel would not choose life. When he appeals to them to choose obedience he is therefore thinking of the minority who would respond. Yet he knew that the

majority of Israel would not choose life. When he appeals to them to choose obedience he is therefore thinking of the minority who would respond. Our Lord Jesus, with his knowledge of human nature, must have sensed that so many of those called into his new covenant would also turn away; He must have known that only a minority of Israel would choose the life which He offered. Yet like Moses He doubtless concentrated his thoughts on the minority who would respond. Moses spoke Deuteronomy without notes. It was no set piece address. All these things were in his heart; their proneness to failure, the coming of judgment for sin, his knowledge of their future apostasy. Enter into the *passion* of it all. The man who was willing to give his eternal life for them, about to die for the sake of their provocation- singing a final song to them, giving a final speech, which showed that he knew perfectly well that they would turn away from what he was trying to do for them, and therefore the majority of them would not be saved.

"Blessing" is parallel with "life", and eternal life may ultimately be in view in Moses' mind. The connection between blessing and forgiveness / salvation is widespread throughout Scripture: Dt. 33:23; Ps. 5:12 (blessing = grace) Dt. 30:19; Ps. 3:8; 24:5; 28:9; 133:3 (= salvation); Ex. 12:32; 32:29; Num. 24:1; 2 Sam. 21:3; Ps. 67:1 (cp. context); Lk. 6:28; Acts 3:26; Rom. 4:7,8; 1 Cor. 10:16; Gal. 3:14 (= forgiveness).

Deu 30:20 Love Yahweh your God, to obey His voice and to cling to Him; for He is your life and the length of your days, that you may dwell in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give them-
Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

"Cling" is "cleave". The idea of 'cleaving' to God is a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

The Lord's common Upper Room theme of 'abiding' in Him uses the same word as Moses used in the LXX when exhorting his people to 'cleave unto' God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 31

Deu 31:1 Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel-
LXX "And Moses finished speaking all these words".

Deu 31:2 I am one hundred and twenty years old this day-
He died on his birthday. His life so clearly splits up into three periods of 40 years; the 40 years leading sheep around Sinai clearly prepared him for 40 years leading Israel. We too can look back on life and see how clearly God had arranged things.

I can no more go out and come in, and Yahweh has said to me, 'You shall not go over this Jordan'-
See on Dt. 31:9. We note that he makes no reference to the reason why he couldn't enter the land. He makes his age an excuse for not entering the land, but we read later that his natural strength was not at all abated. Even in his great spiritual maturity, even Moses maybe found it hard to accept personal sin and consequences for it.

Deu 31:3 Yahweh your God, He will go over before you. He will destroy these nations from before you and you shall dispossess them. Joshua shall go over before you, as Yahweh has spoken-
See on Dt. 1:36. Moses recalled how God had said to him "The LORD thy God He will go over before thee", and then said to Joshua "be strong and of a good courage, fear not nor be afraid of them: for the LORD *thy* God (the same Angel called 'the LORD thy God' in relation to Moses), He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee nor forsake thee" (Dt. 31:3,6,7). These words are quoted in Heb. 13:5, and it is good to note the original Angelic context in which the words were used: "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I (the Angel) will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord (i. e. the Angel) is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me". Later on we see that Joshua did conceive of God in terms of the Angel- he took Moses' exhortation.

At Moses' death, the positive thrust of his closing exhortation was his conviction that the Angel of His presence which had been with them so far would continue to be so, to enable them to enter the land. This alone shows the great part that the Angel played in Moses' life. "The Lord thy God, He will go over before thee. . . and Joshua shall go over before thee. . . and Joshua shall go over before thee (showing Moses' belief that Joshua would work with the Angel- cp. Ps. 91, where Moses commends Joshua for keeping close to the Angel in the tabernacle). . . Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God (the Angel God of Israel), He it is that doth go with thee, He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Dt. 31:3-6).

Deu 31:4 Yahweh will do to them as He did to Sihon and to Og, the kings of the Amorites and to their land, whom He destroyed-
The victories over Sihon and Og were intended as foretastes and assurances of the Kingdom, and we have the same in our lives.

Deu 31:5 Yahweh will deliver them up before you and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you-
The truth was that they were not obedient to the commandments. Their entry to the land was predicated upon their obedience, but they were disobedient. So they entered the land by grace, and that experience was intended to elicit their obedience. Divine commandment is likewise for us a way or channel to express our gratitude for salvation by grace rather than a requirement in order to attain salvation by our works.

Deu 31:6 Be strong and courageous, don't be afraid nor be scared of them, for Yahweh your God, He it is who goes with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you-
See on 31:17; Josh. 1:6. Dt. 4:31 and 31:6,8 say that despite the sins Israel may commit, their Angel-God "will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant... He will not fail thee". But then Dt. 31:17 says that because the people would disobey Him, God "will forsake them... and they shall be devoured... and I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought". We have seen that in the Pentateuch, especially in God's dealings with Israel on their journey,
God is to be conceived of as an Angel; which would explain the apparent fickleness shown here.

Deu 31:7 Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which Yahweh has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it-
"Cause them to inherit it" could imply that their inheritance was still conditional. For the inheritance was predicated upon their obedience, and they were disobedient. So they would only enter it thanks to Joshua / Jesus.

Deu 31:8 It is Yahweh who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you neither forsake you. Don't be afraid neither be dismayed-
Note that the promise of Moses that God would not fail nor forsake Joshua, but would be with him (Dt. 31:8) was similar to the very promise given to Moses which he had earlier doubted (Ex. 3:12; 4:12,15). Such exhortation is so much the stronger from someone who has themselves doubted and then come to believe.

Deu 31:9 Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests the sons of Levi, who bore the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh, and to all the elders of Israel-
The word of his God was in his heart, as he stood there before Israel, that people whom he loved, those for whom he wished to make atonement with his own life, even his eternal life. " Yea, he loved the people" is the Spirit's comment (Dt. 33:3- the " he" in the context seems to be Moses). It could only be the Spirit which would write so concisely. " Yea, he loved the people....they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words" . This is God's comment on that last meeting between Moses and Israel. And then he pours out his heart to them, he reels off what we have as the book of Deuteronomy (it takes about four hours to read it through loud), writes a copy of the Law (31:9; notice how Dt. 24 was *written* by Moses, Mk. 10:5), sings a Song to that silent multitude (surely with a lump in his throat, especially at points like 32:15), and then he turns and climbs the mountain to see the land and meet his death. The fact it all happened on his birthday just adds to the pathos of it all (Dt. 31:2). The huge amount of work which he did on that last day of his life looks forward to the Lord's huge achievement in the day of his death. No wonder Yahweh describes that day of Moses' death with an intensive plural: "The days (i.e. the one great time / day) approach (s.w. "at hand", "made ready") that thou must die" (Dt. 31:14). It seems that he said much of the book in one day; hence his repeated mention of the phrase " this day" throughout the book. The people were often reminded that they were about to “go over [Jordan] to possess” the land (Dt. 11:8,11 RV), as if they were on the banks of Jordan almost. In reality that speech of Deuteronomy was the outpouring of his heart, pleading with Israel to be faithful to the covenant, encouraging them to be aware of their weakness, encouraging them to go forward and inherit the Kingdom. Not only do we have a powerful type of the Lord Jesus in all this; Israel assembled before him really do represent us. Dt.32:36 (" the Lord shall judge his people") is quoted in Heb. 10:20 as relevant to all of us.

Deu 31:10 Moses commanded them saying, At the end of every seven years, in the set time of the year of release, in the feast of tents-
LXX "After seven years" may suggest this refers to a special ceremony to be performed seven years after they had entered Canaan, when all the land was intended to be subdued before them.

Deu 31:11 when all Israel has come to appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He shall choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing-
We note the frequent references to Yahweh choosing a specific geographical location for the sanctuary. This apparently was not fulfilled, for the ark moved around a lot. This was a tacit reflection of Israel's disobedience, and of how the inheritance of the

Kingdom was to be reinterpreted and rescheduled until the last days.

Deu 31:12 Assemble the people, men, women and the little ones and your foreigner who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear Yahweh your God and observe to do all the words of this law-
All Israel were envisaged as attending this ceremony; but as noted on :11, it never happened. The "foreigner" could refer to the members of the "mixed multitude" amongst them, or may reflect Yahweh's hope that some like Rahab and the Gibeonites would accept covenant relationship with Yahweh rather than having to be destroyed.

Deu 31:13 and that their children, who have not known, may hear and learn to fear Yahweh your God as long as you live in the land where you go over the Jordan to possess it-
The idea is that fearing Yahweh would lead to their living long in the land. But they didn't fear Yahweh. The fact Israel did prolong their days for some centuries in the land, despite their disobedience, is therefore a reflection of God's great patience with them.

Deu 31:14 Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, your life will end shortly. Call Joshua and present yourselves in the Tent of Meeting, so that I may commission him. Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the Tent of Meeting-
See on Dt. 31:9. Yahweh said that He would give Joshua a charge; but Moses gave Joshua the charge (Dt. 31:14,23). God was so strongly manifested in Moses.

Deu 31:15 Yahweh appeared in the Tent in a pillar of cloud. The pillar of cloud stood over the door of the Tent-
LXX "And the Lord descended in a cloud", as if the theophany of Sinai was now repeated. The Angel in the pillar of cloud shone forth.

Deu 31:16 Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, you shall lay down to sleep with your fathers, and this people shall rise up and play the prostitute after the strange gods of the land where they go to be among them, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them-
See on Dt. 34:6. A few hours before the death of Moses, he had been telling Israel: "While I am yet alive with you this day (for a few more hours), ye have been rebellious against Yahweh; and how much more after my death?" (Dt. 31:27). Earlier that same day the Angel had told him: "Thou shalt *lie down* (mg.) with thy fathers (cp. the Angel lying him down in the grave)... and this people will *rise up* (i.e. immediately after his death), and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land" (Dt. 31:16). No wonder this was ringing in Moses' ears as he came to his death. Yet he triumphed in the fact that a

minority would not give way. *His very last words* were a confident exaltation that ultimately Israel would overcome their temptations, the influence and idols of the surrounding world. But he knew that the majority of them would spiritually fall because of these things. Therefore he was looking forward to the minority in Israel who would gloriously overcome, who would come to the Kingdom, the land of corn and wine, when the heavens would drop dew. This is clearly the language of Ps. 72 and Isaiah about the future Kingdom. Moses met death with the vision of the faithful minority in the Kingdom, in the promised land, having overcome all their besetting temptations. And the Lord Jesus died with exactly that same vision (Ps. 22:22-31; 69: 30-36).

Deu 31:17 Then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and I will hide My face from them and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall come on them, so that they will say in that day, 'Haven't these evils come on us because our God is not among us?'-
This was envisaged as happening in the next generation (:16). But the tragedy was that for all their sufferings, Israel generally didn't come to this realization, and will only fully do so in the last days. So we see here God's desperate hope for them, a hope which was a reflection of His love.

Deu 31:18 I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods-
These words were spoken by the Angel in the pillar of cloud whose face was now shining forth (:15). The idea practically may be that the shekinah glory would no longer be seen in the tabernacle.

Deu 31:19 Now therefore write this song for yourselves and teach it to the children of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel-
In illiterate society, songs were the usual way to remember beliefs and history and keep them alive. It was God's intention that His people would sing this to themselves, ever reminding themselves of His grace and purpose with them, and of their likelihood to waste it all by falling away.

The Songs of Moses at the Red Sea and at his death were sung by a stuttering man (Ex. 4:10). This shows for all time how God works through those who apparently are unsuited for His work.

Deu 31:20 For when I have brought them into the land which I swore to their fathers, flowing with milk and honey, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat,

then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise Me and break My covenant-
They carried the idols and tabernacle of false gods with them through the wilderness (Ez. 20:7,8; Acts 7:43). So it was grace indeed to speak in terms of their future apostacy and acceptance of other gods. Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 31:21 When many evils and troubles have come on them, this song shall testify before them as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed; for I know their imagination which they plan this day, before I have brought them into the land which I swore-
Seeing they had the idols already with them (Ez. 20:7,8; Acts 7:43), it was clear that they intended to use them in Canaan. God knew their hearts, and realized this was "their imagination". Constantly we see God's focus upon the state of the heart.

Deu 31:22 So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the children of Israel-
We note the continual emphasis upon "the same day" and "this day..." throughout Deuteronomy. A fair case could be made that all this happened on the last day of Moses' life; an intense final day of a very busy life.

Deu 31:23 He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you-
"I will be with you" surely refers to God, but Moses at the end of his life was totally identified with God, and spoke personally on His behalf.

Deu 31:24 When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book-
Ex. 40:33 is perhaps the clearest basis for the words of Jn. 17:4. This describes how Moses "reared up" the tabernacle, representing us (2 Cor. 6:16); "So Moses finished the work" God had given him to do. Dt. 31:24 likewise speaks of Moses finishing the work. The Hebrew for "reared up" is also used in the context of resurrection and glorification / exaltation. As our Lord sensed His final, ultimate achievement of the Father's glory in His own character, He could look ahead to our resurrection and glorification. He adopted God's timeless perspective, and died with the vision of our certain glorification in the Kingdom. This fits in with the way Psalms 22 and 69 (which evidently portray the thoughts of our dying Lord) conclude with visions of Christ's "seed" being glorified in the

Kingdom. There are a number of passages which also speak of the temple (also representative of the ecclesia) being a *work* which was *finished* (e.g. 2 Chron. 5:1). In His moment of agonized triumph as He died, the Lord Jesus saw us as if we were perfect.

“It is finished" has some connection with the Lord loving His people “to the very end" (Jn. 13:1- *eis telos*). To the end or completion of what? Surely the Lord held in mind Moses’ last speech before he died. Then, “Moses had finished writing all the words of this Law in a book, even to the very end (LXX *eis telos*)" (Dt. 31:24). It was Moses’ law which was finished / completed when the Lord finally died. Again we marvel at the Lord’s intellectual consciousness even in His death throes. The fact He had completed the Law was upmost in His mind. This alone should underline the importance of never going back to reliance upon that Law, be it in Sabbath keeping or general legalism of attitude.

Deu 31:25 he commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of Yahweh saying-
Presumably to the Kohathites (Num. 4:4,5) who carried the ark; but only the priests could touch it, so perhaps they are in view here, as the ark had to be touched in order to fix the scroll of the law to the side of it (:26). The priests often carried the ark (Josh. 3:3; 4:9,10; 6:6,12; 8:33; 1 Kings 8:3).

Deu 31:26 Take this book of the law and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh your God, that it may be there for a witness against you-
This may have been the book of the law which was found in Jeremiah's time, having become detached from the ark.

Deu 31:27 For I know your rebellion and your stiff neck; even while I am alive with you this day you have been rebellious against Yahweh, and how much more after my death?-
Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience.

Deu 31:28 Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth to witness against them-
It was specifically Moses' song which called heaven and earth to witness (Dt. 32:1).

Perhaps the idea was that "earth" was witness in that a copy of the law or the song was to be placed by the ark; and God in heaven was witness too.

Deu 31:29 For I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will happen to you in the latter days, because you will do that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands-
God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

Deu 31:30 Moses spoke in the ears of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were finished-
The implication would be that the song was Divinely inspired, it came to him and he spoke or sung it to them until the revelation had finished.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 32

Deu 32:1 Give ear, you heavens, and I will speak. Let the earth hear the words of my mouth-
The echoes of Deuteronomy in the Lord's goodbye speeches shouldn't be missed; for Moses at this time truly was a superb type of the Lord Jesus. Deuteronomy concludes with two songs of Moses, one addressed to the Father (Dt. 32), and the other to his people (Dt. 33). It is apparent that the Lord's final prayer in Jn. 17 is divisible into the same two divisions- prayer to the Father, and concern for His people. It has been observed that the prayer of Jn. 17 is also almost like a hymn- divided into seven strophes of eight lines each. It would appear to be John's equivalent to the record in Mk. 14:26 of a hymn being sung at the end of the Last Supper.

The lives of both Moses and the Lord ended with a farewell discourse and prayer. Not only do the words of the Lord consciously allude to Moses' words in Deuteronomy, but John's comments do likewise. John's comment that "Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world..." (Jn. 13:1) is without any doubt referring to the well known [at the time he was writing] Jerusalem Targum on Dt. 32: "And when the last end of Moses the prophet was at hand, that he should be gathered from the world...".

Significantly, the Pentateuch begins with the account of the creation of "heaven and earth" and concludes with Moses appealing to the "heavens and earth" of Israel (Dt. 32:1; 33:28). This is not to say that Genesis 1 and 2 *only* recount the creation of Israel; but it was probably understood by early readers and hearers as God's account of the creation of the land on which Israel found themselves living. For an observer on the earth / land of Israel, the impression is given that the whole of creation came into existence on account of Israel. The stars etc. came into existence to give light on the earth / land of Israel; just as in the new creation, all things likewise "are" for *our* sakes, even if the rest of the world benefits too.

Let's remember that under inspiration, Moses wrote Genesis, presumably during the 40 years wandering. He therefore wrote it in a context- of explaining things to Israel as they stumbled through that wilderness, wondering who they were, where they came from, where they were headed. This explains why there are so many links within the Pentateuch- e.g. the Spirit "flutters" over the waters in Gen. 1:2, just as God like an eagle [a symbol of the Spirit] "flutters" over Israel in bringing about their creation as a nation (Dt. 32:1). The point is that what God did at creation, He can do at any time. As He made the waters "swarm" in Gen. 1:20, so He made the waters of the Nile "swarm" with frogs (Ex. 7:28) in order to save His people from a no-hope, chaotic, disordered, hopeless situation. The command to subject the animals in Eden [the land promised to Abraham?] corresponds to later commands to subject the tribes living in the land (Gen. 1:28 = Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). The "fear and dread" of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the "fear and dread" which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21; 3:8; 11:25).

These words are described as a song which Moses sung (:44; Dt. 31:30). The Songs of Moses at the Red Sea and at his death were sung by a stuttering man (Ex. 4:10). This shows for all time how God works through those who apparently are unsuited for His work.

Deu 32:2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall condense as the dew, as the small rain on the tender grass, as the showers on the herb-
This reads in LXX as a commandment to accept the teaching of Moses in this song: "Let my speech be looked for as the rain, and my words come down as dew".

Deu 32:3 For I will proclaim the name of Yahweh. Ascribe greatness to our God-
See on 1 Cor. 10:4; Jn. 17:8. Moses is asking them to glorify God as he had done, inviting them to make his life path that of every Israelite: "For *I* have called on the name of the Lord: assign *ye* greatness to our God" (LXX). Yet Israel came to glorify Moses as a person, as religious people do, without seeing the reality of this invitation to be like Moses personally. Paul grasped this, and says that we each with unveiled face have

seen a greater glory than Moses saw; thus inviting us to be like Moses but to see even far greater glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

"Proclaim the Name" (Ex. 33:19; 34:5) is the same phrase used about 'calling upon the Name' (e.g. Dt. 28:10). The calling out / proclamation of Yahweh's Name, in the Gospel and ultimately in the declaration of the Name on the cross (Jn. 17:26), elicits a desire to call that Name upon us, which we initially do through baptism into that Name. And like Moses, we in turn proclaim the Name to others (Dt. 32:3 s.w.).

"I have proclaimed the name of the Lord" (Dt. 32:3 LXX) was surely in Christ's mind in His goodbye prayer of Jn. 17:26; and those words are in the context of Moses' song, which roundly exposed Israel's future apostacy. The character, the fundamental personality of God, is declared through appreciating human weakness and apostacy. Christ's words of Jn.17:26 were likewise in the context of revealing apostacy and future weakness. Thus through recognition of sin we come to know God; this is the fundamental message of Ezekiel and other prophets. Through knowing our own sinfulness we know the righteousness of God, and vice versa. Thus properly beholding the righteousness of God as displayed on the cross ought to convict us of our sinfulness, as it did the people who saw it in real life (they "smote upon their breasts" in repentance, cp. Lk. 18:13). As Christ declared God's Name just before His death (Jn. 17:26), so did Moses (Dt. 32:3 LXX). Moses saw at the end of his life that there was no third way: it was either complete dedication and salvation, or rebellion and condemnation. See on Dt. 28:58.

The Lord told the Father that He had given the disciples His words, “and they have received them” (Jn. 17:8). This is evident allusion to the editorial comment in Dt. 33:3 about how all Israel received God’s words through Moses. Likewise “I manifested Your name... they have kept Your word” (Jn. 17:6,26) = “I will proclaim the name of the Lord... they have observed thy word” (Dt. 32:3; 33:9). One marvels at the way the Lord’s mind linked together so much Scripture in the artless, seamless way in which He did.

The Lord Jesus fed off the majesty of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4)- this was how inspirational He found the things of the Name. To fear the Name of Yahweh was to “observe to do all the words of this law” (Dt. 28:58). Meditation and sustained reflection upon the characteristics of God as epitomized and memorialized in His Name will of itself lead to a conformation of personality to that same Name. If we declare that Name to others, they too have the chance to be transformed by it- thus Moses comments: “Because *I* will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe *ye* greatness unto our God” (Dt. 32:3).

We in our turn are to manifest God's Name by outgoing witness; so many of the Psalms were written in order to do just that. Moses 'proclaimed the name of Yahweh' (Dt. 32:3 RV)- just as the Angel had proclaimed the Name to Moses in Ex. 34. In perceiving God's

Name we are seeing something which cannot be kept to ourselves; God's personality of itself bids us proclaim it. And Moses goes on in the same verse to urge Israel to do as he was doing: "Ascribe *ye* greatness unto our God".

Deu 32:4 the Rock; His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He-
The Lord's final address to His people before His death was based upon these last words of Moses. “Holy Father... righteous Father” (Jn. 17:11,25) was a form of address which the Lord had in a sense lifted from Moses when he addresses God as “righteous and holy” (Dt. 32:4 LXX).

Deu 32:5 They have dealt corruptly with Him; they are not His children any more because of their blemish. They are a perverse and crooked generation-
Moses is saying that his prophesy that they would "corrupt themselves" would indeed come true (Dt. 31:29). Dt. 4:16 says that this corruption with or of Yahweh would be through idolatry and making images. It is man who is made in the form / image / likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Our emphasis must be upon replicating God's thinking in ourselves, making ourselves after His image and likeness. Rather than seeking to worship a physical image of Him in the form of an idol or animal. To do so is to corrupt both Him and the humanity which He intends to be in His image and likeness.

AV "Their spot is not the spot of His children" effectively refers to this corruption of Yahweh's image. But there is specific allusion to the marks which idolaters placed on their bodies and foreheads; given specific latter day significance in Rev. 20:4.

This description of Israel is quoted about the world in Phil. 2:15. If God’s people worship this world’s idols, then they are counted by God as the world. "Corrupted" is s.w. "'destroyed" or "perish". All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew word for "corruption" also means "destruction", for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves. Apostate Israel are spoken of as the pagan world; and therefore at the day of judgment the rejected of the new Israel will be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32); assigned their portion “with the unbelievers” (Lk. 12:46).

Deu 32:6 Do you thus repay Yahweh, foolish people and unwise? Isn’t He your father who has bought you? He has created you and established you-
The appeal is to their salvation history- Israel's redemption [being "bought"] from Egypt (Ex. 15:16), their establishment in the land and creation as a nation at Sinai. So often, their experience of these things is alluded to in the law as a basis and reason for their loyalty to Yahweh's laws, and living in a culture of grace and kindness to others- given their own experience of grace. We too must never forget our own spiritual path and

redemption by God's hand, active throughout our lives. Such personal reflection upon our life's path is therefore necessary if we are to continue to be awed by His grace to us.

Deu 32:7 Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father and he will show you, your elders and they will tell you-
In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. We are to learn from history, not as a merely fascinating exercise. But the Bible is history, and yet it is a living word to us. Israel were supposed to reason back from the actions of Egypt towards them, and their weakness spiritually at that time. And to respond personally to that grace.

Deu 32:8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel-
See on Dan. 10:20,21; Ex. 24:9-11. A total of 70 bulls were offered at the feast of ingathering. Rev. 5:9 presents us with the picture of men and women redeemed from *every* kindred [tribe / clan], tongue [*glossa*- language], people [a group of people not necessarily of the same ethnicity] and nation [*ethnos*- ethnic group, lit. 'those of the same customs']. This means that, e.g., not only redeemed 'Yugoslavs' will stand before the throne in the end; but Macedonians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrans, Bosnians... every ethnic group, with every custom, will have representatives who will have believed the Truth and been saved. This idea is confirmed by considering how 70 bullocks had to be sacrificed at the feast of ingathering (Num. 29), prophetic as it was of the final ingathering of the redeemed. But 70 is the number of all Gentile nations found in Gen. 10. And it is written: "When he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Dt. 32:8). A total of 70 went down with Jacob into Egypt; and thus 70 seems an appropriate number to connect with the entire Gentile world. My point is, representatives of *all* of them will be finally ingathered. It could be that this conversion of all men occurs during the final tribulation (Rev. 14:6); but it seems to me that the context demands that people from every nation etc. are already redeemed in Christ and await His return.

The Canaanite explanation of the family of the gods was that it contained a total of 70 gods – Ugaritic Tablet II AB 6.46 speaks of the "seventy sons of Asherah". This is re-focused by the record of Genesis 10 – which speaks of 70 nations of men. Likewise Gen. 46:27 and Ex. 1:5 speak of the 70 sons of Jacob – and Dt. 32:8 says that the number of the Gentile nations was fixed "according to the number of the sons of God" or, "Israel"

(according to some texts). The belief in the 70 gods of the Canaanite pantheon is therefore re-focused down to earth – where there were 70 sons of Jacob, 70 nations in the world around Israel, and Dt. 32:8 may imply that each is cared for by a guardian Angel in Heaven.

According to Dt. 32:8,9 LXX, humanity has been divided up "according to the number of the angels of God"; each nation has its Angelic representative in Heaven. These representative, all righteous Angels are spoken of as being 'punished' in the sense that their charges on earth are punished. Note the parallelism in Is. 24:21,22:

"Yahweh will punish

The host of heaven in heaven

And on earth the kings of the earth".

This doesn't mean that the representative Angels are themselves sinners; but they are identified in the court of Heaven with those on earth whom they represent. We think of Angels representing nations in Daniel and Zechariah.

Deu 32:9 For Yahweh's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance-
We are His inheritance, and we are His. An inheritance was of major significance to the Semitic mind. We see here how we are all things to Him, and He is to be all things to us, and no mere passing religious hobby. Israel were to be God's inheritance if they were obedient (Ex. 19:5). They weren't, but His love was such that He still took them as His inheritance.

Deu 32:10 He found him in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness. He embraced him, He cared for him-
God's search for man is a repeated theme of the prophets. "Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, I saw your fathers" (Hos. 9:10). "He found him in a desert land... He encircled him, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of his eye" (Dt. 32:10). "I said, Here am I, here am I... I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people... I called, no one answered" (Is. 50:2; 65:1,2; 66:4). "I have found David my servant" (Ps. 89:20). So it's not us as it were reaching out to God; He is fervently reaching out to us, and we have to come to realize that. We don't so much as find God, as realize that He already is earnestly with us. Every man and woman is somehow a life "bound in the bundle of living in the care of the Lord" (2 Sam. 25:29). We come to realize that before we were formed in the womb, God knew us (Jer. 1:5). God hunts for us like a lion, Job came to realize; and in this "You show yourself wonderful to me" (Job 10:16). And we are searching for God. God is not indifferent to our searching for Him. Those awestruck moments of wonder, of radical amazement, are where God finds us at the time we are searching for Him. Both sides are seeking each

other; and in those moments, they meet. As a Jewish poet put it: "And going out to meet thee / I found thee coming toward me". In those moments, heaven and earth kiss each other. There is a click, a flash, between Almighty God and us- as we stand at a bus stop, turn left into Acacia Avenue, lay there on our bed meditating.

He kept him as the apple of His eye-
One of the most sensitive spots on the body. Anyone who even comes near God's people stimulates a natural response from God, so sensitive is He to our pain in this life. We are the apple of God's eye (Ps. 17:8; Dt. 32:10), and His word must be as the apple of our eye (Prov. 7:2). We dwell in God, and His word dwells in us (Jn. 15).

Deu 32:11 As an eagle that stirs up her nest and flutters over her young, He spread abroad his wings. He took them, He carried them on His feathers-
The way that Israel were intended to be a missionary nation is brought out very beautifully by the way that God speaks of carrying Israel on eagles' wings out of Egypt (Dt. 32:11). Apparently, the eagle throws one of its young into the air and catches it, bearing it on its wings, until it learns to fly freely, and then the others learn from this how to fly. If this is the right track of interpretation, then we are left with the conclusion that it was God's intention that all the Gentile world were intended to be God's ultimate children, and that they would learn from the example of Israel. But Israel failed to fly as God intended, and thus they were not the intended example for others. Note in passing how God's intention is that we should fly freely- not merely be His initiative-less servants for the sake of it.

Moses is depressed by Israel complaining at how boring the manna was. He doubts God's earlier promises to him: " Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight (God said he had, in Ex.33:17)...have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto them, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers (not "our" - notice the uncharacteristic separation between Moses and Israel). Whence should I give flesh unto all this people...if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in the sight (as God had earlier promised him that he had)" (Num. 11:12). God was the father and conceiver of Israel, the one who would carry them to the land (Ex. 19:4; 33:15; Dt. 32:11,12; Hos. 11:1); it is as if Moses is saying: They're your children, you look after them, don't dump them on me. Although compare this with his earlier love for them, willing to sacrifice himself for them. God then says that He will provide more food for Israel. But Moses almost mocks God: "Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them?". And the Angel angrily replied: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not" . If he had faith, Moses surely would have realized that if God could provide manna, he

could provide any food. Moses seems to have suffered from fits of depression and also high spirituality.

Deu 32:12 Yahweh alone led him, there was no foreign god with Him-
Although there was no pagan god with Yahweh at the time of the exodus, there was with Israel- for they took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea, carrying the tabernacle of Moloch with them for guidance as well as Yahweh's (Acts 7:43), just as we are tempted to take the world with us through the waters of baptism rather than seeing it as cut off from us (Ez. 20:7,8).

Right at their birth by the Red Sea, the Almighty records that "the people feared Yahweh, and believed Yahweh, and His servant Moses" (Ex. 14:23). No mention is made of the Egyptian idols they were still cuddling (we don't directly learn about them until Ez. 20). Nor do we learn that this "belief" of theirs lasted a mere three days; nor of the fact that they rejected Moses, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. "There was no strange god" with Israel on their journey (Dt. 32:12 AV); but there were (Am. 5:26). The reconciliation is that God counted as Israel as devoted solely to Him.

The degree to which righteousness is imputed to us is hard to feel. Dt. 32:12 states that there was no strange God with Israel- but Ez. 20 says they took the idols of Egypt with them. God counted wayward Israel as righteous; at that time, as Balaam said, God did not see iniquity in Israel, nor behold the perversity that was in Jacob. Paul speaks of the fruits of righteousness, the same Greek word translated "justification" (Phil. 1:11). Justification by faith brings forth fruits of righteousness. When the disciples argued about who should be the greatest, the Lord replied that " it is not so among you: whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister" (Mk. 10:43 R.V.). He expected them to live up to the righteousness which He imputed to them.

Deu 32:13 He made him ride in victory on the high places of the earth and fed him with the increase of the field. He caused him to suck honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock-
See on Ps. 81:16. The promised land was to flow with milk and honey to those who kept covenant. And yet Saul later precluded the people from experiencing the blessings of the covenant by petty legalism and a desire for personal control. The people were obedient to his word, but then totally disobeyed Yahweh's command about not eating blood as a result of it (1 Sam. 14:25,33). Tragically, Israel went back to those very “high places” to worship the local idols, as the prophets so often lament.

Deu 32:14 butter of the herd and milk of the flock with fat of lambs, rams of the breed of Bashan and goats, with the finest of the wheat. Of the blood of the grape you drank

wine-
Such agricultural abundance is all the stuff of the blessings for obedience. They were disobedient, but still God blessed them with the blessings for obedience- in the hope that such grace would elicit obedience and faithfulness to Him. But tragically it didn't. The very opposite (:15).

Deu 32:15 But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked. You have grown fat. You have become covered with flesh. Then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation-
See on Dt. 31:9. Moses in Deuteronomy so many times warns that Israel would become unfaithful to God once they became prosperous. This is a major theme with him. Any request for material prosperity must be made knowing that really this is not for the best spiritually. And God must struggle with those requests as a parent does with a request for something which they want to give, because they love their child, but know that it will almost certainly be misused. It's no surprise therefore that the majority of God's people have been poor- it is the poor who respond to the Gospel (Mt. 11:5), and the wealthy are a minority amongst us (1 Cor. 1:26).

"Jeshurun" means 'the upright one'. But they were never upright, and were rebellious from the day Moses knew them. But this is how they were seen by God when He fell in love with the people in the wilderness, not seeing iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). "Lightly esteemed" is s.w. "disgrace".

Deu 32:16 They moved Him to jealousy with strange gods, they provoked Him to anger with abominations-
God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

Deu 32:17 They sacrificed to demons, not God, to gods that they didn't know, to new gods that came up recently, which your fathers didn't fear-
Demons are associated with idols, and they are not the gods which they are believed to be (:21; 1 Cor. 10:20). The language of demon possession we meet in the Gospel records is therefore the language of the day to describe healing of illnesses attributed to demons; but demons have no real existence because there is only one God.

Dale Martin in an article points out that there are six different Hebrew words which are all translated 'daimon' in the Septuagint Greek version of the Old Testament, and this is the term which the New Testament uses for 'demons'. He concludes: “Ancient Jews used *daimonion* to translate five or six different Hebrew words. In the ancient Near Eastern context, those words referred to different kinds of beings ... What they have in common, nonetheless, is that they all were thought of as gods – in fact, as the gods other people falsely worship: the gods of the nations... we find no equation of fallen angels with Greek *daimons*” (pp. 662, 670). As an example, the Hebrew 'sedim' translated "demons" in Dt. 32:17 and Ps. 106:37 is defined by Martin as follows: "In the ancient Near Eastern context, the word sedim is related to the Assyrian sidu, which referred to the great bull statues in front of the Assyrian palaces, sometimes depicted with wings. According to some modern commentators, the word *adon* originally meant simply “lord” and served as a divine title like “Baal” or “Adonai”. It could, therefore, be taken to refer to ancient gods of Canaan and other surrounding people, who could have viewed them as good powers or gods". The connection between demons and idols is quite clear, both from context and linguistic analysis.

Deu 32:18 Of the Rock who became your father you are unmindful, and have forgotten God who gave you birth-
See on Gen. 49:24. As discussed on :7, their problem was that they refused to accept the historical perspective on their lives. They were not awed by the way God had brought them by grace to their present location. Like spoilt children, they came to presume upon special grace as the norm, and failed to see the wonder of it. We note that we have here an example of where God likens Himself to a woman, something unusual in the religious thinking of the times.

Deu 32:19 Yahweh saw and abhorred, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters-
Scripture repeatedly speaks as if God notices things and is then hurt by what He sees (Jonah 3:10; Gen. 29:31; Ex. 3:4; Dt. 32:19; Ez. 23:13; Is. 59:15 cp. Lk. 7:13). If He knew in advance what they were going to do, this language is hard for me to understand. But God is therefore hurt and 'surprised' at sin- He saw Israel as the firstripe grapes, but they were worshipping Baal even then (Hos. 9:9). Thus God can allow Himself to feel an element of surprise- and this was a shock to Jeremiah, who queried: "Why are You like a man who is caught by surprise...?" (Jer. 14:9).

Deu 32:20 He said, I will hide My face from them. I will see what their end shall be, for they are a very perverse generation-
God Himself knows the end from the beginning and need fear no man; but His Angels do not have ultimate knowledge or strength, and therefore such language is more suited to them. This ‘language of limitation’ may refer to the Angels rather than God personally.

He *can* see all things, and yet in the time of Israel's apostacy He hides His face from them (Mic. 3:4 cp. Dt. 32:19,20). He enters fully into our humanity by as it were limiting His omniscience and omnipotence in order to relate with us in real time.

Children in whom is no loyalty-
"Loyalty" is the word for "faith" or "trust". Such trust in the Father should have come naturally, but from babyhood they revolted against Him. *Pistis*, one of the NT words for 'faith' is used here in the LXX, and is translated in the LXX as both 'faith' (e.g. Dt. 32:20; Prov. 12:22) and 'truth' (Prov. 12:17; 14:22; Jer. 5:1). Indeed, another word used in the LXX is 119 times translated 'truth' and 26 times 'faith'. There *is* a connection between true knowledge of the Gospel and faith. And this faith is the basis for our works. We don't just learn the propositions of the one faith before baptism, and forget them. The triumphant spiritual life *lives them out*.

Deu 32:21 They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God. They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities-
We read of God being slow to anger (Ex. 34:6), at others, of Him not restraining His anger, or restraining it (Ps. 78:38; Is. 48:9; Lam. 2:8; Ez. 20:22), and holding His peace (Is. 57:11; Ps. 50:21), and being provoked to anger by the bad behaviour of His covenant people (Dt. 32:21; Ps. 78:58; Is. 65:3; Jer. 8:19). God clearly has emotions of a kind which are not unrelated to the emotions we experience, as beings made in His image. But those emotions involve a time factor in order to be emotions. We read of the anger of God "for a moment" (Ps. 30:5; Is. 54:7,8), and of His wrath coming and going, leaving Him "calm" and no longer angry (Ez. 16:42). When we sin, we provoke God to anger- i.e. at a point in time, God sees our sin, and becomes angry. This is attested many times in Scripture. But it's meaningless if God is somehow outside of our time and emotions.

I will move them to jealousy with those who are not a people, I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation-
This is interpreted in the New Testament as referring to the conversion of the Gentiles (Rom. 10:19; 1 Pet. 2:10). It was intended to provoke them firstly to jealousy, but then to accepting the same God of Israel which the Gentiles had accepted. Paul sees the Jewish anger at Gentile conversion to Christ as a reflection of their jealousy. If Gentiles became followers of some idol cult, the Jews would have been indifferent. But their jealousy was provoked by Israel accepting Jesus of Nazareth as God's Son and Saviour. This jealousy was and is surely a reflection of a bad conscience, just as subconsciously Joseph's brothers knew that Joseph was not dead but alive, and standing before them. It was Israel's 'knowledge' of the Gospel they had heard which is related by Paul to their anger and jealousy. And we see the same today in many who exhibit anger and jealousy over the faith of others. This is a function of their 'knowledge' which they are in denial of.

Deu 32:22 For a fire is kindled in My anger, which burns to the lowest Sheol. It devours the earth with its increase, and sets the foundations of the mountains on fire-
Gilgamesh and the pagan myths presented whole groups of gods as responsible for and presiding over death and the underworld, and another, separate, pantheon of gods as involved in creation. The Biblical emphasis upon one God is significant and unusual; it is Yahweh who sends man back to the dust from which He created him, and the same Yahweh who is in total control of *sheol* [the grave or underworld], and in a sense even present there (Dt. 32:22; Job 26:6; Ps. 139:7,8; Prov. 15:11; Am. 9:2). The same God is in control of the earth, as taught here by God through Moses. The state of the dead is defined in Genesis as a return to dust, and later Scripture emphasizes that this means unconsciousness, for the righteous merely a sleep in hope of bodily resurrection. This was radically different to the ideas espoused by the peoples amongst whom Israel travelled and lived.

Deu 32:23 I will heap evils on them. I will spend my arrows on them-
These arrows are alluded to with reference to the Babylonian desolation (Lam. 3:13; Ez. 5:16). "Evil arrows" were thought to be cast by displeased gods; but here Yahweh insists that there is no supernatural evil, and He is going to be the one who fires such arrows. His omnipotence meant that there was no place left for any understanding of "evil" as coming from some cosmic evil being, such as the "satan" of modern theology.

Deu 32:24 They shall be wasted with hunger and devoured with burning heat and bitter destruction-
The curses to come upon Israel as a result of the latter day invasions are described in terms which are extremely apposite to modern warfare. The plagues to come upon Israel as a result of the invasions are almost impossible to identify with anything presently known: "a consumption... a fever... an inflammation... an extreme burning... blasting... the burning ague that shall consume the eyes" (Dt. 28:22; Lev. 26:16) all seems to echo the language of nuclear fall-out. "They shall be burnt... and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction" (Dt. 32:24) is similar. The release of complex chemical weapons, as well as nuclear detonation, would explain why rainfall patterns will be interrupted during this latter day tribulation (Dt. 28:23). The fall-out from such weapons would create the murderous rain of dust upon the land which Dt. 28:24 speaks of: "The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed". It is twice emphasized that those in the land would suffer blindness (Dt. 28:28,29), which may also be related to such nuclear or chemical fallout. This has not yet happened; the context invites us to read this as literal rather than figurative. We know that the latter day invaders who attack Jerusalem will both fight each other and have their eyes rot in their sockets (Zech.

14:12), the implication being that they use their weaponry against each other as well as against Israel. Their earlier use of these weapons would account for this blindness coming upon Israel, and again we see the principle that what the attackers do to Israel will be inflicted upon them.

I will send the teeth of animals on them and the poison of crawling things of the dust-
The whole record of Adam and Eve in Eden is alluded to multiple times in Moses' law. As they were given a command not to eat, so Israel were asked not to eat certain things. As there was a snake who was there in the 'land' of Eden, so there was the equivalent amongst Israel- the false teachers, the tribes who remained, etc., the "serpents of the dust" (Dt. 32:24- an evident allusion to the language of the snake in Eden).

1 Kings 22:22 gives an insight into the workings of the court of Heaven, with an Angel told: "Go out and do so". This describes the Angels being sent out from the court of Heaven to do God's word. So when we read of God sending lions (2 Kings 17:25,26), sending wild beasts and famine (Lev. 26:22; Ez. 5:17; Dt. 32:24), sending locusts (Joel 2:25), it would seem that Angels are sent forth from God's throne in order to command animals to obey God's word. And moreover, He sends an evil spirit between men (Jud. 9:23) and stubborn hearts are also sent from God (Ps. 81:13). The same Angels who are sent to control the animals can also therefore work to give men certain attitudes of mind.

Deu 32:25 Outside, the sword shall bereave and inside, terror shall be on both young man and virgin, the nursing infant with the grey-haired man-
During their latter day tribulation, Israel will experience intense "terror" (Lev. 26:16), which would be enough to kill them (Dt. 32:25). This extraordinary level of paranoia will be modelled upon that of Jacob as he faced Esau - representing Israel's confrontation with the Arabs in the last days (Jer. 30:5,7). This state of fear will result in many Jews going to live in Jerusalem, as happened during the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions (Jer. 35:11). Ezekiel had prophesied of this time: "Terrors (an intensive plural - i.e. 'the one great terror') by reason of the sword shall be upon my people" (Ez. 21:12). Likewise our Lord spoke of "fearful sights" being seen in latter-day Israel (Lk. 21:11). This fear will be absolute paranoia: "I will make you a terror to yourself" (Jer. 20:4) because of latter day Babylon's invasion; "ye shall flee when none pursueth you... I will send a faintness into their hearts... the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them" (Lev. 26:17,36). "I will bring the land into *desolation*" (Lev. 26:32) uses a Hebrew word which can imply stupefaction by fear. This paranoia will be associated with a manic depression which will have its roots in a chronically bad conscience towards God, going back thousands of years to their national childhood: "I will... cause sorrow of heart... they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity... and also in the iniquity of their fathers shall they pine away" (Lev. 26:16,39). Note how the *land* will be brought into this mental desolation. Frequently the land of Israel is paralleled with the people (e.g. Jer.19:14 cp.

26:17). The intense desolation of Jewry will be reflected physically in the state of their land. And the resolution of this psychological torment will only be through repentance and acceptance of the Saviour Messiah whom they crucified.

Deu 32:26 I said I would scatter them afar, I would make their memory to cease from among men-
But by grace, God never did this; He preserved their name / memory. Yahweh's Name, by contrast, was to be an eternal memory (Ex. 3:15). He was to be remembered for how He had articulated His Name in how He had historically acted in saving the patriarchs, and He would be remembered for how He was going to act to save His people from Egypt. What was to be memorialized was therefore His actions, rather than simply the letters YHWH. It was His wonderful works which were to be remembered [Ps. 111:4, s.w. "My memorial"]. By contrast, the sinful works and persons of the wicked would not be remembered / memorialized, be they Amalek (s.w. Ex. 17:14; Dt. 25:19), or God's apostate people (s.w. Dt. 32:26).

Deu 32:27 but I feared the provocation of the enemy, lest their adversaries should judge wrongly, lest they should say, 'Our hand is exalted, Yahweh has not done all this'-
But this was the argument used by Moses when God had threatened to destroy Israel and make of him a great nation instead. Now we see God as it were persuaded by Moses' argument, and adopting it as His own. We see here His remarkable humility and openness to influence by our prayers and reasoning before Him.

Deu 32:28 For they are a nation without wisdom; there is no understanding in them-
This could continue the quotation of the enemies in :27, but it seems to lead on rather to :29- their lack of understanding refers to their refusal to understand that one could have chased a thousand (:30). Wisdom and understanding is therefore effectively referring to faith, trust that the promises of God will be indeed fulfilled. Any wisdom or understanding that doesn't lead to this is useless. This is the fallacy of academic Bible study. It was and is the mistake of Judaism.

Deu 32:29 Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!-
Faith is all about realizing that action and attitudes now will affect our eternal future. The way of the flesh is to just live for the present- and not consider the future, let alone the final end of all things at the day of judgment. In allusion to this verse, the same phrase is used of how Daniel understood the latter end of Israel (Dan. 10:14), and how the final generation of repentant Israelites will "consider" at their "latter end" after they have experienced the wrath of God (Jer. 23:20; 30:24). But they were to consider the

"latter end" of things in this life, and not wait until condemnation at the last day before perceiving the ultimate truth of life and death. And we can do the same.

Deu 32:30 How one could have chased a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight, had not their Rock sold them and Yahweh delivered them up!-
Verses 30-33 could refer to Israel, who "could have chased a thousand...", or to her enemies. Thus GNB "They fail to see why they were defeated; they cannot understand what happened. Why were a thousand defeated by one, and ten thousand by only two? The LORD, their God, had abandoned them; their mighty God had given them up. Their enemies know that their own gods are weak, not mighty like Israel's God. Their enemies, corrupt as Sodom and Gomorrah, are like vines that bear bitter and poisonous grapes...".

Deu 32:31 For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges-
The idea may be that the Gentiles tacitly recognized that Yahweh was superior to their gods / rock. Or the lament may be that the Gentiles, like Israel, failed to perceive ultimate realities with the understanding of faith: "For their gods are not as our God, but our enemies are void of understanding" (LXX).

Deu 32:32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter-
GNB takes this as referring to Israel's enemies, but it could as well refer to Israel. For Moses has just stated that Israel are spiritually as Sodom and will be treated like Sodom (see on Dt. 29:23). The idea would be that they were presently sowing seeds of attitudes which would come to fruition in the grapes of judgment.

Deu 32:33 Their wine is the poison of serpents, the deadly venom of asps-
Again, we could with GNB read this as referring to Israel's enemies, but it could as well refer to Israel. The grapes and wine of blessing could have their awful counterpart in the grapes of Divine wrath.

Deu 32:34 Isn't this laid up in store with Me, sealed up among My treasures?-
The reference is to the judgment of the last day (:35), which will be like being given a cup of bitter wine to drink (:32,33). God giving people wine to drink is a double symbol- either of condemnation [as here], or of blessing. It is why the communion service is a cause for self-examination, for we must ask ourselves whether we are drinking His cup to our eternal blessing or condemnation.

Deu 32:35 Vengeance is Mine and punishment, at the time when their foot slides; for the day of their calamity is at hand. The things that are to come on them shall make haste- We must remember that “Vengeance is *mine* [not ours, not the state’s], and requital" (Dt. 32:35), and God will take that vengeance at the last day and not necessarily in this life (Is. 63:4). In another sense, that taking of vengeance, that requital, was worked out by God on the cross. There the Lord Jesus was clothed with the ‘garments of vengeance’ (Is. 59:17); the day of the crucifixion was “the day of vengeance" (Is. 63:4). This is one reason why God doesn’t operate a tit-for-tat requital of our sins upon our heads- because He dealt with sin and His vengeance for it in the cross, not by any other way. Hence David calls Yahweh the “God of revenge", the one *alone* to whom vengeance belongs (Ps. 94:1,3). Our response to all this is to believe that truly vengeance is God and therefore we will *not* avenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19). I take this to apply to all the micro-level ‘takings of vengeance’ which we so easily do in our words, body language, attitudes etc., in response to the hurt received from others. The cross alone enables us to break the cycle. All the sins, all the grudges that called for revenge or "vengeance", were to be placed upon the scapegoat, and it was released into the desert (Lev. 16:10). They could watch it scampering away into the bush. This is how we are to understand the placing of human sin- yes, the sins committed against you this day by others- upon the Lord as He hung on the cross.

As Moses addressed the people at that point, these things were "at hand" and "make haste". There are several times when God warns that generation that they will not last many days in the land if they are disobedient. The scenario of judgment is implied to be coming upon that generation. But it didn't. God hung on with Israel for centuries. It was like the kind of relationship which we have often observed in life- one party passionately loves the other, but the other doesn't respond is constantly unfaithful to that love, of which they are completely not deserving. It's a Hosea and Gomer situation. And this is God's love for Israel. But just as such relationships usually come to an end at some point, even it takes decades, so in the end, Israel walked out of it with God and slew His own Son.

Deu 32:36 For Yahweh will judge His people and have compassion on His servants when He sees that their power is gone, that there is none remaining, shut up or left at large- See on Dt. 31:9. Israel assembled before Moses really do represent us, for this is quoted in Heb. 10:20 as relevant to all of us coming before judgment. But our verse goes on to say that at this very time of judgment, He will have compassion upon His people. Which is a comforting thought to take with us to the judgment seat of Christ.

"For the Lord shall judge His people" is quoted in Heb. 10:20 concerning the judgement seat. But the context here is wonderful. Israel are hopeless sinners under judgment, and God on the basis of pure pity for them, rather than their obedience, relents of judgment.

And His judgment of them is paralleled with His having compassion upon them. I don't wish to imply that convicted sinners are just waved through into the Kingdom because God feels sorry for people in the misery of their gnashing of teeth. But all the same, we must give the argument here its full wonderful weight. God's judgment is His compassion. And He will show that compassion on the basis of pure pity rather than obedience.

Deu 32:37 He will say, Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge-
Yahweh was the rock of Israel, but it seems just as they sacrificed to Yahweh so they did to idols (:38); as they called Him their rock and refuge, so they did the idols. This verse explains the pity and compassion God will show to His condemned people (:37). He will look back, from that point of final judgment, to how all their lovers and gods had not helped them. And this only elicits His final compassion to them rather than solely His wrath.

Deu 32:38 which ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you! Let them be your protection-
They offered the best of their sacrifices, the fat, to their idols. They are bidden now call upon all the things they have previously trusted in, be it missile systems or religion, and finally realize that in Yahweh and His Son alone can be their salvation. Those things are now effectively dead, and will not "rise up" in resurrection; for Yahweh alone is the God of resurrection. "Protection" is s.w. "hiding place". It is Messiah, the Lord Jesus, who will be Israel's latter day "covert [s.w.] from the tempest" of the invaders (Is. 32:2). See on :43.

Deu 32:39 See now that I, even I, am He. There is no god with Me. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. There is no one who can deliver out of My hand-
The force of "See now" is that this is God speaking to Israel in their latter day condemnation (:36 = Heb. 10:20), giving them the one last desperate chance which a remnant will accept. They are bidden accept Yahweh for the "I am" which He uniquely is, and finally quit idolatry and all other gods for all time. They are to recognize that He has slain them and can alone make alive; and Ez. 37 speaks of Israel's national death and resurrection.

Deu 32:40 For I lift up My hand to heaven and say, as surely as I live forever-
This is God's final oath that finally, judgment will not be further delayed and is about to fall (:41).

Deu 32:41 if I whet My glittering sword and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My adversaries and will punish those who hate Me-
LXX "I will sharpen my sword like lightning". As explained above, these things will come to full term in the very last days, when finally judgment will no longer be endlessly delayed, but Yahweh's sword will fall in judgment, He will take hold upon judgment and fulfil it.

Deu 32:42 I will make My arrows drunk with blood. My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the head of the leaders of the enemy-
This devouring of the flesh of the slain enemies of Israel is specifically applied to the last days in Rev. 19:18,21. "The head" is Hebrew *rosh* and may refer to the latter day *rosh* which invades Israel and is destroyed in Ez. 38. The destruction of *rosh* in Ez. 39 is described in similar terms as used here.

Deu 32:43 Rejoice, you nations, with His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants. He will take vengeance on His adversaries and will make expiation for His land, for His people-
LXX "Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, and let all the angels of God worship him; rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him". These words are interpreted in the New Testament as referring to the Lord Jesus being worshipped by the Angels when He is brought into the world at His second coming (Heb. 1:6); and the Gentiles rejoicing with Israel in Jesus as Christ (Rom. 15:10). The Messiah Jesus is in view as the final salvation for Israel (see on :38). But salvation in Him will be predicated upon Israel's final repentance and turning to Him whom they once slew.

Deu 32:44 Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun-
This exactly corresponds to the command "write ye", you plural (Dt. 31:9). Joshua was to assist Moses in doing this and he did so. We marvel at the internal correspondence within the Biblical record, which to me is the most powerful evidence of its Divine inspiration.

Deu 32:45 When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel-
Moses, perhaps on the very last day of his life, assembled all Israel by their tribes, and with a voice no doubt cracking with emotion, *pleaded* with them to understand that *there's nothing like the God of Israel and His Truth*, and it must therefore be at the very centre, at the very *core*, of a man's soul: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun…who is like unto thee, O people saved by Yahweh… Set your hearts unto all

the words which I testify among you this day... for it is not a vain thing for you; *because it is your life*" (Dt. 33:27,28; 32:46,47). "The love of Christ constrains us".

Deu 32:46 he said to them, Set your heart to all the words which I testify to you this day, which you must command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law-
The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 32:47 For it is no vain thing for you, because it is your life-
Enter into the *passion* of it all. The man who was willing to give his eternal life for them, about to die for the sake of their provocation- singing a final song to them, giving a final speech, which showed that he knew perfectly well that they would turn away from what he was trying to do for them, and therefore the majority of them would not be saved. As he came to the end of his speech, he seems to have sensed they didn't grasp the reality of it all: "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Dt. 32:47); and thus his speech rises to a crescendo of intensity of pleading with them, after the pattern of the Lord.

The idea of not taking Yahweh's Name "in vain", 'vanity' (Ex. 20:7), is often associated with idolatry. Israel never formerly rejected Yahweh, and never became atheists. They mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry on the basis that they claimed that they worshipped Yahweh through worshipping the idols. This is what emboldened them to later place idols in Yahweh's temple. They were taking Yahweh's Name as a form of vanity, "in vain", a kind of idol. Thus their relationship with Yahweh was not to be a "vain thing" (Dt. 32:47).

And through this you shall prolong your days in the land, where you go over the Jordan to possess it-
"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 32:48 Yahweh spoke to Moses that same day saying-
We note the continual emphasis upon "the same day" and "this day..." throughout Deuteronomy. A fair case could be made that all this happened on the last day of Moses' life; an intense final day of a very busy life.

Deu 32:49 Go up into this mountain of Abarim, to Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab that is opposite Jericho, and see the land of Canaan which I give to the children of Israel for a possession-
Moses seeing the Kingdom but being unable to enter it, nor himself lead God's people into it, points forward to how the law of Moses gave a vision of the Kingdom, but was unable to bring us into it. That required the work of Joshua / Jesus. "Abarim" means 'the regions beyond'. Moses and his law gave an insight into the Kingdom, the region beyond him. For the culture of grace and kindness, centered around the sacrificed future Messiah, the Lord Jesus, was the outcome of the law. But it was unattainable by weak men.

Deu 32:50 Die on the mountain and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people-
Moses being gathered to his people by an Angel (Dt. 32:50) may also refer to his spirit / Angel returning to where the guardian Angels of his ancestors were. This solves the considerable difficulty of his ancestors being physically dead and decayed, and being

buried in a different place from where Moses died. LXX "be added to thy people" suggests God keeps a record of all Israel. The command to die suggests Moses was being asked to be willingly complicent with the idea of his death, just as Isaac was, and as the Lord Jesus was.

In those hours as Moses stood there saying those words of Deuteronomy, and then as he sung that song of Moses to them of Dt. 32, I think we see Moses at his finest. His voice would have been that of a young man, and yet with all the passion of meaning of his 120 years. And then he blesses those assembled tribes, the *love* of that man for Israel flowing out, with that same wondrous voice. "Yea, he *loved* the people". And then, no doubt with a lump in his throat, swallowing back the tears, he turned and walked away, up that mountain, higher and higher, with the blue mountains of Moab shimmering in the distance. "That selfsame day" Moses spoke Deuteronomy, God commanded him: "Get thee up into this mountain... and behold the land... and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people" (Dt. 32:50). Like the Lord Jesus, he received a commandment to die (Jn. 10:18; 14:31), and yet he presumably did not know how to consciously fulfil it according to his own actions. He climbed the mountain alone, that same day he spoke Deuteronomy. Presumably he spoke Deuteronomy in the morning, sung the song of Moses, and then "that selfsame day" died. It would have taken him time to climb the mountain, to be met at the top by the Angel, who then showed him the land, kissed him (see later) and buried him. Presumably he died late in the day, watching the sun setting over the promised land- perhaps at the same hour Jesus died. The pathos of the scene is wondrous, the Song of Moses as it were can be heard still echoing. Yet in the sadness of it all, we see prefigured the death of Christ for us. It was for their sakes that Moses didn't enter the land, remember. That is the emphasis the Spirit gives. As he climbed, for it would have taken a while, perhaps he thought back to those years in Egypt, the struggle of his soul in those years. You may think I'm being over emotional, but it seems to me as he climbed he would have thought back to his dear mum to whom he owed his relationship with God, the mother he'd doubtless disowned for forty years, admitting that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He would have reflected how at age 40 he was honest with himself, how he told the world who his real mother was (probably, tragically enough, after her death, sad that her son seemed to have rejected her for the pleasures of Egypt), how he had refused to be called any longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I mean, if we had say 24 hours to live, and we were told to go for a walk before we died, I guess we'd think back to our childhood for at least a moment, wouldn't we. And he was a man, just like you and me, with all a man's feelings, all a man's memories, all a man's humanity. I believe, although I can't prove it, that he wept all the way to the top, climbing farther and farther away from the people he loved, knowing that the majority simply didn't understand him and what he had suffered for them. And perhaps as he sung the song of Moses, he thought back to those weak years in Midian, to Zipporah, to the

arguments with her, to the pain of the divorce, to the Ethiopian woman, to the long lonely days with the animals. And then to the wonder of the Red Sea, to the nervousness of meeting the Angel, to the joy of that communion in another mountain. He knew that Angel well, they spoke face to face as men who are friends speak to each other (Ex. 33:11).

Deu 32:51 because you trespassed against Me in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah of Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because you didn't sanctify Me in the midst of the children of Israel-

Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. His faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. We have seen something of the intensity and passion of his love for Israel, to the point where he was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation. In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. For their sakes he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that therefore "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness "shall not enter into the land", with reference to how when Moses called the people "rebels" and beat the rock, he was disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience; and on yet another, his prayer to the effect that he didn't want to be in the land if his people weren't going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel's sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways! Thus Moses says that he must die "Because ye [plural] trespassed against me" (Dt. 32:51 AV). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). Moses was a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). See on :3.

Deu 32:52 For you shall see the land before you, but you shall not go there into the land which I give the children of Israel-

This is laboured by God so many times. Moses had carefully omitted the reason why he could not enter the land when explaining it to Israel. He was now reminded of it; for God wanted him to die not in denial of his sin, but fully recognizing it. And He works likewise in our lives, leading us to a crescendo of humility by the time we die.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 33

Deu 33:1 This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death-
"Man of God" refers to a prophet (1 Sam. 9:6; 1 Kings 12:22; 13:14 etc.). What Moses now says is presented as reported speech directly inspired by God, presumably written down by Joshua after Moses' death.

Deu 33:2 He said, Yahweh came from Sinai and rose from Seir to them-
Most Rabbis are insistent that the Hebrew for "came from Sinai" effectively means "came down upon", referring to God's manifestation upon Sinai. The idea of John Thomas was that this verse refers to a 'march of the rainbowed Angel', the saved believers, from the judgment seat in Sinai, from whence they march to destroy various European nations in Israel. There are multiple problems with this view, not least that Moses here is recalling an incident in the past, when Yahweh "came" upon or from Sinai. Surely the theophany on Sinai is in view, perhaps the idea being that the Angels who 'came down' then continued to march with Israel through the wilderness. "Rose from Seir" uses the word for the rising of the sun; therefore He "shone forth" from Paran. It was as if the sun was arising on a new day; but Israel turned away from entering the Kingdom, even though it was made possible for them.

He shone forth from Mount Paran-
The significance of this is in that this was from where the 12 spies set out from in their faithless exploration of Canaan (Num. 13:3,26). They failed to walk in step with the Spirit. There were ten thousands of Angels going with them in glory in order to give them the Kingdom, but they were faithless and turned back.

He came with ten thousands of holy ones. At His right hand was a fiery law for them-
Deborah alludes to this verse in saying that she has experienced the same in the victory over Sisera (Jud. 5:4,5). She feels as if she sees and feels "this Sinai" shaking, as if Deborah felt herself back there standing before Sinai witnessing the great theophany there, in that she has seen it before her eyes, as it were, in what God has now done in giving her victory against Sisera. This is the power of Biblical history. There is a living word which continues to speak to us; the historical victories of God are replicated, in essence, in our own experiences.

Dt. 33:2,3 RVmg. bring out the solidarity between the Angels and Israel by describing them both as thousands of saints / holy ones. It would appear that all the people of Israel had a guardian Angel- this seems to be implied by Ex. 7:4 "(I will) bring forth Mine

armies (of Angels), and My people the children of Israel", implying that there were two armies leaving Egypt- one of Angels, another of their charges. Thus we read in Ex. 12:41 "it came to pass that *all* the hosts of the LORD (a phrase often used about the Angels- but here concerning the Israelites too) went out from the land of Egypt". In the same way as the Angels were especially Israel's guardians in guiding them out of Egypt, it may be that the Angels minister in a guardian capacity to us especially in leading us out of the world to baptism (cp. the Red Sea). Heb. 1:14 offers tentative support in that the Angels are said to "minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation". At baptism we become heirs of salvation (Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:27-29)- those who "shall be heirs" are those as yet outside the promises of salvation. Confirmation of all this is provided by a careful reading of Dt. 33:2,3. This describes God coming "unto them" (Israel) "with ten thousands of saints"- i.e. Angels- and giving them "a fiery Law". The next verse records: "Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy Hand (Angelic language)... every one shall receive of Thy words". Here the saints appear to be the people, thus showing that God's love to Israel was shown by each of them having an Angel (thousands of saints for thousands of people), who individually taught them the word of God, albeit all at the same time. The Angels in the court of Heaven are watching us, almost with baited breath. We are made a theatre unto the Angels, as if they are in the audience as we act out our lives (1 Cor. 4:9 RVmg.).

Deu 33:3 Yes, He loved the people-
LXX "And he spared his people" could refer to God's sparing of the people after they declined to enter the Kingdom (see on :2), or the reference may be to how Moses spared the people through the love of his intercession and self sacrifice. This simple clause is one of the few which state so baldly the sublime truth- that God loves His people. But we could also read this as a parenthesis, added by the Divine inspiration of the editor of Deuteronomy, simply stating that Moses loved the people.

The word of his God was in Moses' heart, as he stood there before Israel, that people whom he loved, those for whom he wished to make atonement with his own life, even his eternal life. "Yes, he loved the people" is the Spirit's comment (Dt. 33:3- the "he" in the context seems to be Moses). It could only be the Spirit which would write so concisely. "Yea, he loved the people... they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words". And then he pours out his heart to them, he reels off what we have as the book of Deuteronomy, written at the end point of the spiritual growth of Moses. But in reality that was the outpouring of his heart, pleading with Israel to be faithful to the covenant, encouraging them to be aware of their weakness, encouraging them to go forward and inherit the Kingdom. In those hours as he stood there saying those words, and then he sung that song to them of Dt. 32, I think we see Moses at his finest. And then he blesses those assembled tribes, the *love* of that man for Israel flowing out, and then, no doubt with a lump in his throat, swallowing back the tears, he turned and

walked away, up that mountain, higher and higher, with the blue mountains of Moab shimmering in the distance. Even before that, surely his voice had faltered, even broken down, when he spoke to them of the tragedy of their future apostasy, of how the gentle and sensitive woman among them would eat her own children. And how the days would come when they would awake in the morning and say 'Would God it were evening'. As he foresaw in essence the horrors of the Nazi camps, and of so much else... he could only have said those words with tears and passion. For "he loved the people". If ever there was an understatement...

The pathos of the scene is wondrous. Yet in the sadness of it all, we see a type, more than a type, a superb image, of the death of Christ for us. It was for their sakes that Moses didn't enter the land, remember. That is the emphasis the Spirit gives. As he climbed, for it would have taken a while, perhaps he thought back to those years in Egypt, the struggle of his soul in those years. You may think I'm being over emotional, but it seems to me as he climbed he would have thought back to his dear mum to whom he owed his relationship with God, the mother he'd doubtless disowned for forty years, claiming that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter; until at age 40 he was honest with himself, he told the world who his real mother was, he refused to be called any longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I mean, if we had say 24 hours to live, and we were told to go for a walk before we died, I guess we'd think back to our childhood for at least a moment, wouldn't we. And he was a man, just like any of us.

And perhaps he thought back to those weak years in Midian, to Zipporah, to the long lonely days with the animals. And then to the wonder of the Red Sea, to the nervousness of meeting the Angel, to the joy of that communion in another mountain. He knew that Angel well, they spoke face to face as men who are friends speak to each other (Ex. 33:11). How fitting that at the top, he met that Angel again. The same love, the same open-faced friendship would have been there. The Angel showed him the Kingdom, opening his eyes to see to the very boundaries of the land. And then he buried him, laying him in the grave in hope of better days, when Christ would come and raise his people, when God's people would at last be obedient. What an end. Out of weakness, such weakness, he was made strong. His temperamental faith, with its flashes of devotion, turned into a solid rock, a real ongoing relationship with a loving Father. *Every one* of his human relationships had failed: with his brother and sister, with his wife, with his people. But finally that lonely man found his rest in Yahweh, Israel's God, he came to know Him as his friend and saviour. No wonder he is held up, by way of allusion throughout the New Testament, as our example.

All His saints are in Your hand. They sat down at Your feet; each receives Your words- LXX "all his sanctified ones are under thy hands; and they are under thee; and he received of his words". This initially speaks of how Moses received God's words and

shared them with Israel, who were placed in his hand. But it all looks forward to the Lord Jesus. The Lord told the Father that He had given the disciples His words, “and they have received them” (Jn. 17:8). This is evident allusion to the editorial comment in Dt. 33:3 about how all Israel received God’s words through Moses. Likewise “I manifested Your name… they have kept Your word” (Jn. 17:6,26) = “I will proclaim the name of the Lord… they have observed thy word” (Dt. 32:3; 33:9). One marvels at the way the Lord’s mind linked together so much Scripture in the artless, seamless way in which He did.

Deu 33:4 Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance for the assembly of Jacob-
It might help if we try to visualize the practical benefits of keeping the laws. "In keeping of them is great reward", David commented (Ps. 19:11). Moses likewise: "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes… *for our good always*" (Dt. 6:24)- not for their irritation, or as a pointless test of obedience. Perhaps this is why the giving of the Law is described as an expression of God's *love* for Israel (Dt. 33:2-4). It was the loving marriage contract between God and Israel. We must see the keeping of the law by the faithful Israelite as being done within a certain spiritual atmosphere. It would have been impossible to keep all those laws from a series of deliberate acts of the will. The truly obedient Israelite would have developed a way of life and thinking, a culture of kindness to others, which achieved obedience to them. This was surely how Jesus was able to perfectly fulfil the Law. "If a man do (the commands) he shall even live in them" (Lev. 18:5) seems to refer to this atmosphere of obedience.

Deu 33:5 He was king in Jeshurun when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together-
God imputed righteousness to Israel at this time, seeing them as Jeshurun, the upright one, not perceiving iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21); because He so loved them. He fell in love with them in the desert. LXX "And he shall be prince with the beloved one, when the princes of the people are gathered together with the tribes of Israel". The thought in this case would be looking ahead to Messiah as the beloved one.

Deu 33:6 Let Reuben live, and not die, nor let his men be few-
Reuben was the firstborn but was demoted because of his sin. But he is mentioned here in first place. The request for him not to die, and to not have few descendants, may be a statement to the effect that Moses wished that the effect of all curses for disobedience would finally be removed. And that only will come true in the Kingdom of God when the Lord Jesus returns.

At this point we would expect Simeon to be blessed, but he is apparently omitted. Although the Alexandrian LXX renders the last part of this verse as "Let Simeon be very numerous". At the census taken when they left Egypt, Simeon numbered 59,300, but

only 22,000 at the census taken at the end of the wanderings. So Moses may therefore be wishing that Simeon would stop declining and grow. But we note that there are at least 24 lists of the 12 sons of Jacob / tribes of Israel. And they each slightly differ. The names are in different orders, and some are omitted- e.g. Levi is sometimes omitted, or the two sons of Joseph are sometimes listed, and sometimes not. Simeon and Levi were cursed because of how they had treated the Hivites (Gen. 49:5-7). Levi had no allocation of land, and Simeon's small portion was carved out of that of Judah (Josh. 19:1-9). Yet Levi were somehow justified because they had not allowed their cursed state to stop them serving Yahweh (Dt. 33:8-11), whereas Simeon perhaps wallowed in his curse and didn't seek to rise above it.

Deu 33:7 This is for Judah. He said Hear, Yahweh, the voice of Judah-
The implication was that Judah would be an intercessor with God who would be heard as Moses had been. And clearly the reference ultimately was to the Lord Jesus.

Bring him in to his people-
This could be read as a desire for the coming of this Messianic intercessor from the tribe of Judah.

With his hands he contended for himself-
The idea is as in AV that his hands would be made strong, just as the hand of Joseph's were (Gen. 49:24- another type of Christ).

You shall be a help against his adversaries-
The Messianic intercessor descendant of Judah was clearly to be strengthened for his task by Yahweh, just as happened with the Lord Jesus (Ps. 80:17).

Deu 33:8 Of Levi he said-
Again we note that this is reported speech, written up under inspiration presumably by Joshua.

Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove at the waters of Meribah-
LXX "whom they tempted in the temptation; they reviled him at the water of strife". It was this provocation which led Aaron to sin by striking the rock rather than speaking to it. Yet despite that sin, the Urim and Thummim remained on Aaron. They were the two stones on the breastplate which flashed out yes / no responses to prayers and questions.

"Holy one" is 'consecrated one'. The Levites were consecrated in God's eyes by their zeal (motivated by the word) to rid Israel of apostacy; this is what constituted them Yahweh's "holy (sanctified) one" (Dt. 33:8,9). The Lord alludes to this: "Sanctify them through (i.e. through obedience to) Your word" (Jn. 17:17), as the Levites were sanctified (1 Chron.

23:13 Heb.). Through His allusions to this, the Lord Jesus was telling the disciples not to be frightened to stand alone from the community they knew and respected.

But the allusion may be to the waters of Massah and Meribah in Ex. 17. We learn from Dt. 33:8-11 that in some way at this time, some of the tribe of Levi showed themselves faithful to God, whilst others didn't, and the faithful Levites opposed the unfaithful ones- although this isn't here recorded. This kind of faithfulness was shown again at the time of the golden calf, and therefore the system of the firstborn being priests was changed so that the tribe of Levi became the source of the priests. Priesthood was therefore given on the basis of qualification, and Levi's behaviour at this point was one of those qualifications: "Of Levi he said, Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one [the faithful Levites] whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove [the unfaithful Levites] at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your word and keep Your covenant. They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering on Your altar".

Deu 33:9 who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your word and keep Your covenant-
The loyal Levites were asked to kill their own brothers and neighbours in their tribal encampment area (Ex. 32:27). The 3000 may have been the apostate amongst the tribe of Levi (Ex. 32:28). So we are wrong to think that all the Levites were loyal to Moses and spurned the golden calf. Indeed it could be that those slain were the unfaithful amongst the tribe of Levi.
"The men which You gave me out of the (Jewish) world... they have kept Your word" (Jn. 17:6) compares with the faithful Levites being "given" to Aaron / the priesthood out of Israel (Num. 3:9; 8:19; 18:6); at the time of the golden calf they "observed Your word, and kept Your covenant" (Dt. 33:9), as did the disciples. The relationship between Moses and the Levites was therefore that between Christ and the disciples- a sense of thankfulness that at least a minority were faithful. See on Jn. 17:6; Jn. 17:17.

These words are alluded to by the Lord Jesus in explaining why He felt closer to those who listened to His word than to His natural family (Mk. 3:21,31-35; Mt. 12:46-50). He read these same words that we do. To feel this closely to those who are, like us, God's spiritual children, can seem an impossible challenge at times; especially in family-based societies where life is one endless social club.

Deu 33:10 They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law-
"They shall..." was a command more than a predictive prophecy. Much which appears to

be prophecy, such as the passage about the rebuilding of the temple at the restoration in Ez. 40-48, is command more than prediction. For the priesthood failed to teach Israel as here envisioned. See on :11.

They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering on Your altar-
LXX "they shall place incense in the time of thy wrath continually upon thine altar". The idea, as in :7, is that just as Moses and Aaron had saved Israel by their intercession, so the future descendant of Judah and Levi would do so. And the ultimate fulfilment is in the Lord Jesus.

Revelation describes Angels rushing in response to human prayers, vials of judgment being poured out on earth as a result of the incense of prayer accumulating...this is the power of prayer. If prayer is like incense, we must give Dt. 33:10 RVmg. its full weight- that incense would come up "in your nostrils". This is how intimately we are invited to see our prayers being received by God; this is the power of prayer. The golden vials full of prayers of Rev. 5:8 become the vials of judgments which are poured out on the land in Rev. 8:5- so close is the connection between the events that mould history, and the incense of prayer.

Deu 33:11 Yahweh, bless his substance-
This request for material blessing was in the light of the fact they had no land inheritance, and lived on their share of the gifts given to Yahweh. So the fulfilment of this blessing was dependent upon Israel's obedience. See on :10.

Accept the work of his hands-
That work was intercession for Israel; see on :10.

Strike through the hips of those who rise up against him, of those who hate him, so that they will not rise again-
The reference may be to the rising up against the established priesthood of Num. 16. But the permanent, final crushing of those who rise up against Levi surely refers to the final latter day destruction of all opposition to the ultimate priest and intercessor, the Lord Jesus. The language is used about opposition to Him (Ps. 69:24).

Deu 33:12 Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of Yahweh shall dwell in safety by Him. He covers him all the day long-
The reference is clearly to the presence of Yahweh dwelling between the cherubim over the ark. The temple was to be built in Benjamin's territory in Jerusalem. But David, a man of Judah, often appropriates this language to himself. For the Psalms speak of him as being covered by the wings of the cherubim, as if he were located on the mercy seat or lid of the ark where the blood of atonement was scattered every year, covered by the wings of God's cherubic care. "The beloved of Yahweh" was Solomon, so there may be a hint here of the potential possible for Solomon. But he failed, and so the prophecy and

potential came fully true in the Lord Jesus. I noted on :5 that the LXX there speaks of Messiah as the beloved of Yahweh, so this may be the reference here too.

He dwells between His shoulders-
This could mean that Yahweh dwelt between the shoulders of Benjamin, just as the breastplate of glory was between the shoulders of the high priest. It would be another indication that the special presence of God in the tabernacle and with the high priest was in essence and spirit possible for all God's people. This came to full term when the veil was torn down at the Lord's death, and Paul argues that all of us can like the high priest enter into the holiest with the Lord's blood of atonement.

Deu 33:13 Of Joseph he said, His land is blessed by Yahweh for the precious things of the heavens, for the dew, for the deep that couches beneath-
Ephraim and Manasseh demanded more land at the time of Josh. 17:14, but their argument was weak because they had been given ample land, but they refused to drive out the Canaanites or clear the forests in it (Josh 17:15). They claimed they deserved it because they had been "blessed". By saying this they were twisting scriptures which speak of their blessing (Gen. 48:20; 49:25,26; Dt. 33:13-17), and therefore demanding more territory which was easier to live in. But the promised "blessing" didn't require they be given more land, and the other tribes were also "blessed". This is typical of how people take one verse here or there to justify their own secular claims.

The blessing of dew was withdrawn during the three and a half years of Elijah's ministry, as he pleaded with Israel to repent. And so it will happen in the latter day Elijah ministry. Only when Israel repent will these blessings be realized again. God "will not be unto the residue (remnant) of this people as in the former days... the heavens shall (now) give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things" (Zech. 8:10-12). The dew will come upon the whole land, because only this righteous remnant of Israel will be left alive. We note that dew represents teaching in Dt. 32:2, and the repentance of Israel and restoration of blessing will be due to their response to the teaching of the Elijah ministry.

Deu 33:14 for the precious things of the fruits of the sun, for the precious things of the growth of the moons-
An allusion to the idea that on each new moon, a different type of fruit tree begins to ripen its fruit. This seems to me an example of where wrong scientific understandings are used without correction. But perhaps Rev. 22:2 is the final fulfilment, when the forest of trees of life will bring forth fruits every month, i.e. at the monthly new moons.

Deu 33:15 for the chief things of the ancient mountains, for the precious things of the everlasting hills-

LXX "from the top of the ancient mountains, and from the top of the everlasting hills". The idea of abundant fruit (:14) on the very top of huge mountains is the language of the establishment of the Kingdom (Ps. 72:16).

Deu 33:16 for the precious things of the earth and its fullness, the good will of Him who was manifested in the bush. Let this come on the head of Joseph-
LXX "let the things pleasing to him that dwelt in the bush come on the head of Joseph". The will of the God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush was clearly the salvation of Israel. And that salvation would be associated with abundant fertility of the land in physical terms.

On the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers-
Just as Levi was separate from his brethren and commended for it (:9), so with Joseph. "Separated" is the word for Nazirite. He was literally 'Nazirited', consecrated, from among his brothers; this could be a reference to how he was the family priest, wearing the coat of many colours; and how he was clearly consecrated by God as well to be the family's saviour. Joseph's separation from his brethren, by their choice, was what separated him unto the things of God. And in so many lives, separation from the community of brethren, by their choice rather than pushing off in a huff from them, is what brings a person to special service toward God. And enables them to thereby save their brethren. Job would be a classic example, coming to full term in the Lord Jesus (Heb. 7:26), who was separated from and by sinners that He might save sinners. See on :24.

Deu 33:17 The firstborn of his herd, majesty is his. His horns are the horns of the wild ox; with them he shall push all the peoples to the ends of the land-
The idea may be that God would have potentially enabled Ephraim and Manasseh to do the bulk of the work in driving out the tribes. But half of Manasseh wanted to remain beyond Jordan, and there is no evidence they lived up to this potential at the time of the conquest. Just as so many are given the potential power to inherit the Kingdom, but refuse to use it. Moses 'prophesied' that Ephraim would "push the people [Gentile inhabitants of the land] together to the ends of the earth / land" (Dt. 33:17). And yet Hos. 7:8 cp. Ps. 106:34-36 criticize Ephraim for *failing* to push the people out of the land. Moses' prophecies about the tribes sound like predictions; but they were actually commands which those tribes had the freewill to obey or not.

They are the ten thousands of Ephraim; they are the thousands of Manasseh-
See on Gen. 48:5. The way Jacob insisted on blessing Ephraim as the firstborn seems to show some kind of favouritism and a desire to see his grandson living out his own experience, i.e. the younger son who fought his way up and received the blessings as opposed to the rightful heir. Ephraim becomes a code-name for apostate Israel

throughout the prophets. And yet God accepted Jacob's preferential blessing of Ephraim and repeated this in Dt. 33:17. Jacob foresaw how Simeon and Levi would be especially responsible for 'houghing the ox' (Gen. 49:6 RV), or bullock (Concordant Version), i.e. Christ (Dt. 33:17 RV), the bullock of the sin offering (Heb. 13:11-13). Gen. 49:6 can also be rendered, with evident Messianic reference, 'murdering the prince' (Gen. 49:6 Adam Clarke's Translation).

Deu 33:18 Of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out-
The idea was that Zebulun would be blessed in her voyages by sea, in line with the blessing of Gen 49:13 "Zebulun will dwell at the haven of the sea. He will be for a haven of ships. His border will be on Sidon". But this didn't happen. Zebulun was to dwell along the sea coast (LXX), where ships unload [a "haven"], "beside the sea" (GNB), until Sidon. But this wasn't the case. The canton of Zebulun even in Ezekiel's prophecy of the restored Kingdom was to be nowhere near Sidon, and Zebulun never had a border unto Sidon. According to Josephus (Ant. 19:10,16), Zebulun was never even bounded by the sea, being cut off by Asher. So again we see a case of a potential Kingdom blessing which was never realized. And this must be the great tragedy for God, to see so much potential wasted in so many lives. What joy for Him when we at least seek to fulfil those potentials He has given us.

And Issachar, in your tents-
Issachar was to have prosperous harvests so that they rejoiced in their homes ["tents", Dt. 16:7]. The contrast is with how Zebulun were intended to "go out" in trading and be blessed, and Issachar likewise in their more localized activities.

Deu 33:19 They shall call the peoples to the mountain. There they will offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they shall draw out the abundance of the seas, the hidden treasures of the sand-
The idea is that they would invite the Gentiles to the mountain of God's inheritance, His Kingdom established in the land (Ex. 15:17). And the grateful Gentiles would bring their offerings and gifts to the land in response. Hence LXX "for the wealth of the sea shall suckle thee, and so shall the marts of them that dwell by the sea-coast". This is all the language of the restored Kingdom of God in Israel (Is. 60:5,6,16; 66:11,12). The nations of the world were imagined as arriving at the sea ports in their territory. But instead, Israel retreated into mere religion rather than spirituality, and were not a light to the Gentile world as intended. Indeed instead of restoring the Kingdom as intended in those Isaiah passages, they instead became elitist and xenophobic towards Gentiles. And so the new Israel must learn from this.

The calling of 10000 men of Naphtali and Zebulon to Mount Tabor by Barak and Deborah surely was some fulfilment of the otherwise enigmatic Dt. 33:19: "They shall call the

peoples to the mountain. There they will offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they shall draw out the abundance of the seas". This prophecy has as context "the ten thousands of Ephraim; they are the thousands of Manasseh" (Dt. 33:17). The impression is given there that they would offer sacrifice there on "the mountain" and share the spoil of "the seas" [nations], and possibly this happened as Deborah sung the song of Jud. 5. The people of Ephraim and Manasseh are first in the list mentioned in Jud. 5 as those who supported the thousands of Zebulon and Naphtali, and who assembled to the mountain of Tabor. Asher and Dan are criticized in Jud. 5 for not assembling to Tabor because they were too concerned with their business in their ports on the coast. But Dt. 33:19 LXX promises blessing to Zebulon and Naphtlai from the coast: "For the wealth of the sea shall suckle thee, and so shall the marts of them that dwell by the sea-coast".

Deu 33:20 Of Gad he said, He who enlarges Gad is blessed-
If Israel had been obedient, their borders could have been enlarged (Dt. 12:2). It seems God would have done this especially for Gad, even for the sake of one faithful man. Yet there's no evidence it ever happened; another potential set up which was left unfulfilled because of the chronic lack of vision and satisfied-with-what-I-have attitude of God's people. Who knows the height and depth, length and breadth of what could have been for God's people? And the same is true for us today. According to Israel's perception of the land, so it was defined for them.

He dwells as a lioness and tears the arm, yes the crown of the head-
LXX "as a lion he rested, having broken the arm and the ruler". The reference may specifically be to the destruction of the latter day invader of Israel, with Gad identified with the latter day lion of Judah, Messiah Jesus (Gen. 49:9).

Deu 33:21 He provided the first part for himself, for there was the lawgiver's portion reserved. He came with the heads of the people. He executed the righteousness of Yahweh, His ordinances with Israel-
LXX "And he saw his first-fruits, that there the land of the princes gathered with the chiefs of the people was divided; the Lord wrought righteousness, and his judgment with Israel". The reference may be to how Gad was apparently the leader of the "heads of the people" of Gad, Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh who wanted to take their inheritance east of Jordan (Num. 32:2,6,25). The idea therefore was that they were told by Moses to see the inheritance they were allowed east of Jordan as merely a firstfruit of greater inheritance. Just as we are invited to receive firstfruit of inheritance of the Kingdom through the gift and experience of the Holy Spirit. But as with so many today, the first fruit was treated as the full experience, with no spiritual ambition to inherit more. "He executed the righteousness of Yahweh, His ordinances with Israel" would

then be a very positive take on how the men of Gad apparently obeyed the agreement to go over Jordan and help their brethren inherit the Kingdom.

Deu 33:22 Of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's cub that leaps out of Bashan-
The reference may specifically be to the destruction of the latter day invader of Israel, with Dan identified with the latter day lion cub of Judah, Messiah Jesus (Gen. 49:9). Bashan simply refers to the fact it was an area known for lions (Song 4:8). Or perhaps there will be some specific latter day fulfilment of this in the area of Bashan. There may have been a potential initial fulfilment in Samson who was from Dan.

Deu 33:23 Of Naphtali he said, Naphtali, satisfied with favour, full of the blessing of Yahweh, possess the west and the south-
Blessing is here associated with favour, or grace. The connection between blessing and forgiveness / salvation is widespread throughout Scripture: Dt. 33:23; Ps. 5:12 (blessing = grace) Dt. 30:19; Ps. 3:8; 24:5; 28:9; 133:3 (= salvation); Ex. 12:32; 32:29; Num. 24:1; 2 Sam. 21:3; Ps. 67:1 (cp. context); Lk. 6:28; Acts 3:26; Rom. 4:7,8; 1 Cor. 10:16; Gal. 3:14 (= forgiveness). So it seems Moses had in view the day when Naphtali would have spiritual blessings.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 33:24 Of Asher he said, May Asher be blessed with children. Let him be acceptable to his brothers; let him dip his foot in oil-
These blessings look ahead to a day when Joseph would no longer be separate from his brothers (:16) and Asher would no longer be despised by his brothers. One great joy of the Kingdom will be the ultimate reconciliation between brethren. The blessing of oil

doesn't refer to the discovery of crude oil in Israel, but refers to agricultural blessing of olive oil as in Job 29:6; Gen. 49:20.

Deu 33:25 Your bars shall be iron and brass-
LXX "His sandal shall be iron and brass". The sandal or foot spoke of inheritance, so this may be a wish that Asher have iron and brass within their territorial inheritance (Dt. 8:9).

As your days, so your strength will be-
The idea is as the Vulgate "let thine old age be as thy youth", wishing the blessing of Moses upon Asher. Again we see Moses set up as a realistic pattern to be followed, rather than to be as it were worshipped as an unapproachable icon, as Judaism effectively came to do.

Deu 33:26 There is none like God, Jeshurun-
The appeal is to realize that their God is incomparable with any other god or idol.

Who rides on the heavens for your help, in His excellence on the skies-
Through it all we sense the great love of Yahweh, manifest in that Angel, for His servant. And this all typifies the tenderness of God for Jesus in his time of dying. As we think of the Angel lowering the body of Moses, with his arms around and underneath him, it seems no accident that the last words of Moses spoke of this very thing: "There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency in the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee... Israel then shall dwell in safety alone (language of the future Kingdom, Ez. 29:26; 34:25): the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by Yahweh... thine enemies shall be subdued unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places" , i.e. their idols (Dt. 33:26-29 AV). Surely these Moses' last words could not have been said without his voice cracking with emotion.

Deu 33:27 The eternal God is your dwelling place-
LXX "And the rule of God shall protect thee". This looks ahead to the Kingdom, when the rule of God will be openly upon earth.

Underneath are the everlasting arms. He thrusts out the enemy from before you and said 'Destroy!'-
LXX "Perish!". And yet although the Canaanites were thrust out by God from before them, they refused to accept this potential power to inherit the Kingdom. Just as so many do today.

Deu 33:28 Israel shall dwell in safety alone-
LXX "Israel shall dwell in confidence alone on the land of Jacob". They would not share the land with other tribes, they alone would be there, and the other tribes would become part of Israel. In Ps. 4:8 David spoke of how God alone "makes me dwell in safety alone". The very same Hebrew words occur in Dt. 33:28 – Israel will "dwell in safety alone" in the Kingdom. David felt that even in the midst of hardship, this time of Kingdom blessing had come for him internally, in the peace of his own mind. Likewise in our lives the essence of the Kingdom can come. We live the eternal life now.

The fountain of Jacob in a land of grain and new wine. Yes, His heavens drop down dew-
Paul evidently disapproved of Jacob's attitude in falsely obtaining the physical blessing from Isaac (Rom. 12:20 surely alludes to it); but his evil deception of his father was used by God to grant him the physical blessing (Gen. 27:28 is confirmed by God in Dt. 33:28), even though at the time he was dressed like a goat, connecting himself with fallen Adam and the rejected at the day of judgment; "Deceiving and being deceived" certainly rings bells with Jacob (2 Tim. 3:13).

The passage in :26-29 speaks of God's dramatic intervention to permanently save Israel from their enemies in the last days, and associates this with the heavens dropping dew upon the land. Seeing this is a normal thing to happen, the implication must be that during the time of their enemies' domination the dew had not come. See on :13.

Deu 33:29 You are happy, Israel. Who is like you, a people saved by Yahweh, the shield of your help, the sword of your excellence!-
LXX "and his sword is thy boast". Israel would finally come to a point where they boasted not in their own strength [unlike today] but in Yahweh's saving work for them in giving them the Kingdom.

Your enemies shall submit themselves to you; you shall tread on their high places-
LXX "Upon their neck". But "high places" would be a reference to the idolatrous "high places", which the prophets lament were a spiritual snare to Israel. Moses' final wish and knowledge was that ultimately, Israel would quit with idolatry and be Yahweh's alone. Seeing that he had predicted their spiritual failures, Moses perhaps had his eye on the day when finally God's people shall conquer all their temptations, even if only a minority of those with whom God works actually get there in the end, all the same, a minority will, and they will be God's true Israel.

Moses' books were helping the wilderness generation to see where they were coming from historically. Passages like Gen. 12:6 now take on special relevance: "The Canaanites were then in the land". Moses was saying this as his people were about to enter a Canaan likewise occupied by Canaanites. He was bidding the people see their

connection with their father Abraham, who then lived with Canaanites also in the same land. Gen. 15:1 introduces us to Abraham as a man who had God as his "shield"; and Dt. 33:29 concludes the Pentateuch by saying that Israel as a nation should be happy because *they* have Yahweh as their "shield".

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 34

Deu 34:1 Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, opposite from Jericho. Yahweh showed him all the land of Gilead to Dan-
This presumably required supernatural vision, it was a vision of the Kingdom. This vision may not have just been literal, because in Dt. 33 the blessings of Moses imply his foresight also of their future experiences in that land, especially in the last days. It was from "Abarim" (Dt. 32:49). Moses seeing the Kingdom but being unable to enter it, nor himself lead God's people into it, points forward to how the law of Moses gave a vision of the Kingdom, but was unable to bring us into it. That required the work of Joshua / Jesus. "Abarim" means 'the regions beyond'. Moses and his law gave an insight into the Kingdom, the region beyond him. For the culture of grace and kindness, centered around the sacrificed future Messiah, the Lord Jesus, was the outcome of the law. But it was unattainable by weak men.

Deu 34:2 and all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah to the hinder sea-
The idea is that he saw the western boundary, having seen the northern boundary in :1. The renowned Hebrew commentator Rashi claims "to the hinder sea" should be "unto the last day". As noted on :1, I suggest that the vision was not only geographical, but also of how things would be in the land over time, especially in the last days, as explained on Dt. 33.

Deu 34:3 and the South and the Plain of the valley of Jericho the city of palm trees to Zoar-
If indeed (see on :1,2) Moses saw not only geographically but also over time, he would have seen the events around Jericho as the walls fell, and seen things like the casting of the temple items in 1 Kings 7:46- which was done in the plain of the valley of Jericho. The LXX puts this description in terms of the promises made to Abraham which will be alluded to in :4: "from the River of Egypt unto the Great River, the River Euphrates, and unto the Western Sea".

Deu 34:4 Yahweh said to him, This is the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, saying 'I will give it to your seed'. I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there-

Moses' final experience was to view the land just as Abraham did, looking to all points of the compass and then receiving the promise that he would one day, not immediately, eternally inherit it (Gen. 13:14,15). So Moses was comforted that he was indeed a seed of Abraham.

Deu 34:5 So Moses the servant of Yahweh died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Yahweh-

Moses died "by the mouth of the Lord (Heb.). "By the mouth of the Lord" can imply a kiss; as if the Angel kissed Moses, and this resulted in his death. Remember, the Angel was Moses *friend* (Ex. 33:11). It was a reversal of how the Angel created Adam and breathed into his nose the Spirit; now the Angel kisses Moses and takes it away. And then he buried him, laying him in the grave in hope of better days, when Christ would come and raise his people, when God's people would at last be obedient. What an end. Moses seems to have foreseen this when he said that “We bring our years to an end with a sigh”, a final outbreathing (Ps. 90:9 RVmg.). And then the Angel built a sepulchre. Just picture that Angel perhaps digging, yes *digging* the grave, building the sepulchre of the rocks laying around in that cleft in the mountain. In the context of Moses leading Israel, we are told: "As a beast goeth down into the valley (tired at the end of a day, led there to drink by a loving owner), the Spirit (Angel) of the Lord caused him to rest" (Is. 63:14). Moses was buried by the Angel in a valley in the mountain (Dt. 34:6). The Hebrew translated " rest" means both to physically lay down and to comfort. So we have the picture of the Angel comforting Moses with the hope of resurrection, kissing him goodnight as it were, and then laying him down in the grave. The softness of God at the death of Moses, the gentleness, prefigured above all the gentleness, in a sense, of the Father with His Son at the cross; and His gentleness with each of us in out time of dying. Let's remember this idea. For short of the second coming, we're all mortal. There's something wondrous about the death of Moses. It's as if God took Moses' funeral- and said in truth 'This is the best man I've yet known', as a man might say at the funeral of his best friend.

Deu 34:6 He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth Peor, but no man knows of his tomb to this day-

This was the very place where they camped after being rejected from entering the land (Dt. 3:29). In his death, Moses was completely identified with his sinful people, as was the Lord Jesus. For those association with Him, sin itself is thereby no longer a barrier between God and man. Is. 63:14 says that the Spirit [the Angel] caused Moses to rest as a man leads his animal to water in a valley. The way the Angel buried Moses is very touching. “According to the word of Yahweh” (:5) can bear the translation “By the kiss of Yahweh”, as if the Angel with whom Moses was used to speaking face to face, as a man speaks with his friend, kissed him and as it were reversed the kiss of life, took his breath

/ spirit away, and laid him down to rest there on the mountain, then carried the body down to the valley and buried him there, to rest until the resurrection. The softness, respect and gentleness of God with His beloved in their time of dying comes over very strongly here.

An alternative reconstruction of the death of Moses is possible. Rabbinical commentators claim that "he buried him" (Dt. 34:6) is reflexive; it means that Moses buried himself. For confirmation of this, see S.R.Hirsch, *The Pentateuch*, Vol. 5 p.685 (New York: Judaica Press, 1971). It is the same Hebrew construction as in Lev. 22:16 and Num. 6:13. In this case, the description of Christ as 'making his own grave' (Is. 53:9) could be read as an allusion to the death of Moses. Therefore the pattern of events was perhaps something like this: The Angel showed Moses the land; Moses, in the presence of the Angel, dug his own grave and lowered himself into it, as a conscious act of the will, in obedience to God's command (as the prototype of the Lord Jesus). The prophesy that Moses would *lie down* in death takes on a literal sense in this case (Dt. 31:16). Then the Angel kissed him, and he died. The Angel then built up the sepulchre over his body. Personally I feel this was what happened, but I am cautious to strongly push ideas which rely on a fine point of Hebrew grammar.

Deu 34:7 Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his youth abated-
Moses was one of those old people who still had a 'young' attitude to life; not for him the cynicism which comes with old age; hence Deuteronomy is at times optimistic about people with what could be seen as an almost naive youthful optimism. One wonders whether he was therefore right to accept Jethro's advice that he needed to arrange helpers lest he wear out (Ex. 18:18), seeing that God had kept him so physically strong, and continued to do so. Strong defines those Hebrew words as meaning that his newness, his youth, had not been chased away (NEV "abated") by the years, as happens to most men. He had all the energy, intellectually and physically, of a 21 year old, yet with all the sadness and knowledge of God of his 120 years. All the times we read he "rose up early" to commune with God demonstrate his energy, his enthusiasm for the word of the God of Israel (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4).

Moses accepted Jethro's advice on the basis that he will "surely wear away" (Ex. 18:18); even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7), and God surely would not have asked him to do the impossible. Jethro at this time seems to have seen Yahweh as only one of many gods; he was a pagan priest. He prophesied that if Moses followed his advice, "all this people shall go to their place in peace" - which they didn't. Num. 10:31 suggests Moses saw Jethro's knowledge of the desert as better than the Angelic "eyes"

of Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3) who were going ahead of the camp to find a resting place (Num. 10:33 cp. Ex. 33:14 cp. Is. 63:9). It seems Moses recognized his error on the last day of his life, when he admits Yahweh, not Jethro's wisdom, had led them (Dt. 1:33). Likewise Paul in his final communication comments on the way that Mark with whom he had once quarrelled was profitable to him (2 Tim. 4:11).

Deu 34:8 The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended-
Dt. 9:1 records Moses' assumption that Israel would enter Canaan on the day that he died: "You are to pass over the Jordan this day". But they did not pass over that day because they mourned for Moses 30 days. It is possible that Moses felt so despised by them that he assumed there would be no period of mourning for him.

Deu 34:9 Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him, and the children of Israel listened to him and did as Yahweh commanded Moses-
We must compare this with Num. 27:18: "Yahweh said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him". Because Joshua had the Spirit, Moses was told to lay his hand on him. Yet Dt. 34:9 says that Moses laid his hand on him so that Joshua might receive the Spirit. Here we see the upward spiral of spirituality at work- those who are of the Spirit are made more spiritual.

Deu 34:10 There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face-
Messiah was the prophet promised "like unto" Moses (Dt. 18:15,18; Acts 3:22). This may therefore be a note to the effect that the Messiah had not yet arisen at the time of writing. Gideon was bidden rise up to the example of Moses- for there were many similarities between his call by the Angel, and the Angelic calling which Moses received at the burning bush. Thus Gideon was called to follow the Angel in faith, "because Ehyeh is with you" (Jud. 6:16)- a direct quotation from the Angelic manifestation to Moses in Ex. 3:12. And yet he responds: "Alas! For I have seen Yahweh's envoy face to face!" (Jud. 6:22). Gideon knew full well that Moses had seen the Angel "face to face" (Dt. 34:10). Gideon's fear is therefore rooted in a sense that "No! I'm simply *not* Moses!". And it's the same with us. We can read of all these reasons to believe that Moses is really our pattern, and respond that "No! This ain't me...". But there, in the record of Gideon and his success, lies our challenge to rise up to the spirit of Moses.

Deu 34:11 in all the signs and the wonders which Yahweh sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land-

Of all the miracles God has worked, those involved with the salvation of Israel from Egypt are repeatedly presented as the greatest ever done, and thereby Moses becomes the most spectacular Old Testament channel for the work of God's Spirit. And this reflects the personal wonder of the way God brought each of us out from the world onto the path to His Kingdom. For those raised Christian, this is so hard to perceive adequately enough.

Deu 34:12 and in all the mighty hand and in all the great terror, which Moses worked in the sight of all Israel-
The idea is that the hand of Moses did these things, hence GNB "the great and terrifying things that Moses did in the sight of all Israel". But the "great terror" was done by the mighty hand of Yahweh (Dt. 4:34; 26:8). The final accolade for Moses was that his hand was hand in hand with God's, he was a willing partner in the salvation of God's people. The same phrase "great terror" is used in Jer. 32:20,21, but the point is made that this was an ongoing work "unto this day". This is the power of event in Biblical history. Those events are no mere past actions that are completed. God's word becomes a living word, as we perceive that the same hand which worked in those historical events is bringing about the essence of those events in our own lives.